

From the camp outside I heard the sounds of a bustling activity and shouted orders. LARSON was setting his Mongols to work, camels were screaming angrily as the heavy chests were lifted up on their backs. Words were bandied back and forth, one heard questions and answers in Mongolian, Chinese, Swedish and German, in Danish and English.

By 5.45 a. m. we were all sitting down to breakfast — for the last time assembled at the Khujirtu-gol. LARSON was as cool as a cucumber and only longed to be off. »Is everything ready?» he demanded of MERIN, the head of the Mongols and a magnificent type looking like an Indian chief. »Yes, all the camels are loaded. We're taking just a hundred and fifty with us; ninety-eight stay behind here for the present.»

LARSON went forward to the front to lead the first section on foot. Another section was led by MÜHLENWEG. None of the other Europeans accompanied them. LARSON had eleven Mongols — all too few for such a flock of camels.

The ninety-eight camels that LARSON was not taking with him were to transport the camp to our destination for the night, about fifty li to the west. Among these camels were some of the quietest of the animals — most of them being of the number I had bought from ANDREWS.

Tents were now struck, beds and other furniture were rolled up, the camels were led forward to their loads, the camp-kitchen was packed and we waited patiently till everything was ready and we might set off. Meantime, Dr HAUDE sent up his seventy-eighth pilot-balloon. It rose to 8000 meters above sea-level and then disappeared in a cloud.

My Mongol MENTU now came up and put the red halter on my riding camel. The animal was just about to be loaded when MENTU disappeared again; nothing happened, and we sat down to wait. There was a hard wind blowing from the south, the sky was clear and the sun blazing. A herd of Mongol horses were browsing on the other side of the brook, and Hami, who could not stand horses, tried in vain to chase them away. The half sleepy atmosphere that now prevailed was the calm before the storm.

REVOLT OF THE CAMELS

The next moment there was a shout from the Mongols: »LARSON's camels!» They were pointing over the steppe to the north-west. In the twinkling of an eye our Mongols were transformed. They flung themselves up onto their swift-footed riding camels and set off at a wild gallop to the north-east to cut off the nine camels that were flying eastwards in full career. One of these still had his load on his back, a couple of the others had pack-saddles — the rest had nothing at all.

It was not hard to understand what had happened. The nine camels had shied,