

These sections marched abreast, and got too close to one another. LARSON soon noticed that it was no good trying to keep the camels quiet much longer, and he decided to pitch camp. As it happened, however, the whole caravan chanced to have halted in a sort of hollow beside the stream, and thinking of the possibility of flooding in case of heavy rain LARSON resolved to proceed a little further. Only a couple of hundred meters farther on was a better camping-site on a slight declivity. If he had stayed in the hollow the accident would not have taken place. But as ill luck would have it, just on this last little stretch one of the last of the files got loose and went ahead beside his comrades.

He increased his pace. The chests that comprised his load began to bump up and down and their contents to jingle. Frightened by the unaccustomed noise, he shied and bolted. The camels in the nearest files started, shied likewise, and followed suit, dragging all the others with them. The result was chaos. If they had run in an ordered troop to the west, the Mongols could have ridden past them and checked their flight. But they ran in circles for a couple of laps. Most of them jumped and bounded to get rid of their loads, that soon began to fall right and left. They flew hither and thither and seemed for the powerful camels to be as light as match-boxes. There was a crashing and a smashing sounding like the collapse of a building — it was to risk bruises or even mutilation to be in the midst of this turmoil. LARSON, who was on foot, held his rope in one hand while in the other he had his Mongolian camel crop, a yard long instrument as thick as a cudgel. With this he struck the crazed animals ruthlessly on their sensitive noses, just where the nose-pins are thrust through the cartilage. The sudden pain stunned the animals and they calmed down and remained behind. Whenever they showed signs of bolting they got a rap on the nose. LARSON had about twenty camels in his file. He hoped he might hold the lot, but a bolting string of beasts came careering from the side and charged right through his file, so that he was left with only seven. The others dashed off. MÜHLENWEG fought pluckily, and LARSON admired his presence of mind and his strength. His only fault was that he wanted to save too many at once.

Only thirteen of the hundred and fifty camels could be held back. All the others vanished like chaff on the wind. A big camel with two chests weighing together two hundred and twenty kilograms bounded over the stream like an antelope. LARSON had once been up in Mongolia with a caravan of a hundred camels loaded with hides and wool, that had revolted in the same way. And he had often had experience of minor accidents of the kind. But he had never dreamed of anything like the revolt of July 22nd, when *all* the camels had gone mad. He mumbled something about a useful lesson:

»But I'll teach you, you rascals! I'll make you go eighty li a day for eight days, with four hundred catties on your backs — that'll take the ginger out of you!«

The Mongols intended to keep a sharp eye on the camel that had begun the