

their goods (sheep's and goat's wool and hides). Outer Mongolia was at that time visited with cattle-pest and drought, a natural consequence of the fact that the GEGEN HUTUKHTU, the incarnation in Urga who had died two years previously, had as yet no successor. Now they were on the way to Beli-miao, where they were going to enquire whether one might continue to Kuei-hua without the risk of attack by robbers.

The other caravan came from Ku-ch'eng-tze (Guchen). The owner was himself travelling with the company. He rode in a covered cart drawn by a camel. The equipage looked curious enough in the pale light, and the cart went creaking past among the silent steps of the camels.

We found next day that the caravans of the night before had encamped a little below us in the valley. The old man in the cart had heard that we had a doctor with us, and at daybreak he had himself carried to our camp by four men on an improvised bier. He had swollen knees and a scorbutic condition of the gums. He was duly treated and then carried back to his camp to continue in his cart to Kuei-hua.

By eight o'clock it was already warm and the sky brilliantly clear. There was a lovely breeze to counteract the burning sun on our backs. We crossed a belt of low hills and ridges, the highest of them provided with an obo. Although this was one of the highest points on our way from the Khujirtu-gol to the Edsen-gol one scarcely noticed it, as the climb on both sides of this flat pass is very gradual.

BEGINNING OF THE WINDING ROAD

At the bottom of the slope the way divides. The right-hand road, which is an old caravan route called The Small Road, leads up into Outer Mongolia to Uliasutai; the left road, that we followed, swings off somewhat to the south and is called The Winding Road.

Travelling over a plain bordered by hills we reached the defile at Murguchik. Here are assembled all the river-beds of the countryside; and in the narrow but short valley the grass luxuriates on the banks of a little streamlet which soon runs dry. The hills fall rather steeply to the bed of the valley.

We pitched our tents in the grass. The camels looked really imposing as they wandered about browsing in the luscious grass with the dark walls of the valley as a background. While we were eating lunch a merchant-caravan on the way to Liang-chow passed by.

At Murguchik we found ourselves quite near the spot where the DUNDA GUNG (The Middle Duke) had set up his yurts. The only politeness we showed him was that SIU and I sent him our visiting cards. This ruler is not exactly famed for his hospitality to foreigners, not, at any rate, the one who was ruling here in 1900. It