

Always new landscapes. Now we ride in among dunes covered with a luxurious growth of magnificent, dark-green saxaules. This bush, which often grows tree-high, is called by the Mongols *jagh* or *dzagh*; but it also bears the name of honour *modone-khan* or king of trees, on account of the fact that its wood does not, like that of other trees, crackle or sing when thrown on the fire. It has, moreover, another quality to recommend it in that it produces extremely little smoke. Its Latin name is *Haloxylon persicum*.

At Dzaghin-khuduk or The Saxaule Well we stopped for a while and drank of the cool, sweet water. The well has been dug in rather loose soil with an admixture of sand; and in order to prevent its collapsing the mouth has been reinforced with bent tree-trunks, forming a solid ring at ground level. The caravan animals watered from a hollowed out wooden trough.

Our caravan had lost itself in the saxaule wood, and I caught it up just as the mounted Mongols were looking for the track. In a short time we were on the right road again, and the Mongols, followed by the long procession, went on over dunes and between bushes, singing as they marched. They looked as solemn and grave as cypresses. And so to Shine-usu, The New Water, where we camped.

LARSON was still ahead with the provision caravan; and it was always easy to recognize his camping grounds, as for example at Tsaghan-deresun, where after a cloudy day we pitched our tents on September 3rd.

We had not progressed far next day in the hilly country we were now traversing before we met a picturesque caravan of fifteen Chinese, men, women and children with a dozen camels on the way from Chen-fan in Kansu, where they had gone in the hope of improving their fortunes. But they had found all the cultivable soil already under the plough, and were accordingly now on their way back, with their little stock of worldly goods, to their old homes in Hou-tao, which is to say, at the northern bend of the Huang-ho. The whole caravan was led by a little boy. The women, sitting on their bundles and bales, with babies in their laps, looked ragged, dirty and poor enough. The menfolk walked alongside, on foot.

The surface of the moon can scarcely be more desolate than the country through which we were now riding. Sterile, dried up, with scarcely so much as a parched and languishing tussock to show.

Camp XXIX was pitched at a well with tolerable water, but surrounded with very meagre pasture. Here all the pack-saddles were taken off, and the camels that showed any signs of chafing were rubbed with a kind of salve. One of them was in such a bad state that he was allowed to travel without a load and was fed with flour and butter.

A whirlwind came suddenly sweeping over the desert and struck the long side of my tent with such violence that in less than a second every one of the eleven iron