

pegs was snatched out of the ground, the tent was blown over and I, my stool and »writing-desk« went flying to the ground, enveloped in canvas folds. I had an envelope on the desk before me containing two hundred loose sheets of a carbon copy of my diary. When I had extricated myself from the folds of the tent I heard a rustling among the sheets and saw how the wind had torn open the envelope and now drove the loose leaves over the countryside like a fall of snow. In response to my shouts everybody rushed out and dashed after the sheets on their mad career in the grip of the wind. Some of them had come to a standstill in tussocks or in unevennesses in the ground. One after another of the Europeans, Chinese and Mongols returned with handfuls of crumpled sheets. One of the Mongols had seen a sheet fly »like a white bird« over the nearest row of hills to the south. LIU had run several li after a sheet. Finally, it was found that only two sheets were missing. We had such fun sorting them out that I asked my boys if they would like me to issue a new edition of »Fliegende Blätter«, but the suggestion met with no response.

On September 5th the weather was clear and calm, the country flat and desolate. Some unknown Chinese wanderer had formed some characters with white stones by the wayside; they signified a greeting from the province of Chihli. Evidently he was feeling homesick.

At our camping place for the day, Argalin-usu, we found a Chinese mud-hut, a yurt and a little enclosure of dry steppe-bushes. The owner, who lived there with seven other men, appeared jovial and contented. In an outer room his supply of flour was heaped up on the floor, while from a pole in the roof hung a couple of sides of mutton. In the living-room there was a *k'ang*, where a tea-pot sputtered over a little fire. One wall was decorated with four landscape pictures; on another of the walls we admired a horse, painted in Chinese ink. The head of the animal was turned in a neck-breaking fashion, and two legs were coquettishly lifted in the air. The legend under the picture informed one that this was »a horse of noble and beautiful forms«.

When SIU asked the merchant whether he did not find life hard and strenuous in this wilderness, he answered with a philosophic smile: »A man must do something to keep the wolf from the door«. And he probably made very easy money selling flour etc. to passing caravans and to the few Mongols that live in this desolate part of Alakshan. He had a seven days' journey to Wang-yeh-fu, called, simply, Yamen, and four days to the frontier of Outer Mongolia.

On the bank of the broad dry bed of a stream near the camp grew a solitary wild elm whose leafy magnificence was in strange contrast with the level desert country stretching away to the south like a vast expanse of sea. This lonely tree was a fine example of the bitter fight for life in these incredibly bare and desolate regions. The landscape was wonderful in its wild splendour; and we were quite spoiled with the most marvellous sunsets. In their colours and tints and the grouping of their