

light cloudlets they were eternally changing, and eternally beautiful. The sun took leave of the wild elm, who knew very well that the next morning he would be bathing in warm rays from the east. The greying glow smouldered for a while and then faded over the western horizon, while the heralds of the night came riding from the east in grey-blue and violet capes. And still, for a time, there hovered in the higher layers of the atmosphere a delicate, rosy sheen, the reflection of the vanished sun.

The route led in a north-westerly direction between hills. My riding camel had got sore feet and had to be relieved. I was therefore mounted on another camel; the beast was inclined to be obstinate, and became sullen if she was not allowed to go with her comrades.

The road led on to a ridge, and from here one had the impression of being surrounded by a stormy sea. The landscape was a labyrinth of small, strongly sculptured hills, consisting partly of outcroppings of rock, and shot with red, violet and grey-green shades of colour. Occasionally we passed a tree. To the south-west, at a distance of about ten li, was situated the monastery Shardzan (Shartsan)-sume¹ — one of the eight large monasteries in Alakshan. Among them is also Tukhumin-sume.

The soil turned red; the hills were brick-red or pink. The country was bare in the extreme, only here and there did one see a parched or dying tussock. The labyrinth gradually gave place to a wide, open plain. On this plain, at Dobolor, was the homestead of a Chinese merchant. A yurt-roof was mounted on the roof of the house, giving it a curious appearance of house-cum-cupola.

The next watering place was Ulan-tologoi or The Red Head (i. e. the hill), where the well was surrounded by ox-blood coloured hills. Here we pitched camp. At Dobolor LARSON had left nine spent camels behind, under the care of one of our Mongols. HASLUND now exchanged four of these and the remaining five were left for NORIN's column to pick up when they arrived.

A caravan, one hundred and sixty camels strong, came out of the west with a clanking of bells. They were carrying sheep's wool and opium. Two of the camels bore basket-cages of precisely the same kind as the sort of camel-litters that in Persia are called »kajawah». In these covered and curtained-in cages sat women and children. Most of the men were squatting on camel-loads, where they sat shrouded in sheep-skins, the others went on foot. These merchants had their homes in Chihli, Shansi and Honan, and had been on the way from Ku-ch'eng-tze for fifty-eight days. Despite the long journey they had behind them, their camels were almost complacently fat. But then they travelled only at night, and pastured the whole day.

We bought a couple of bricks of tea for our Mongols, at fifty cents apiece.

¹ KOZLOV gives the transcription Shartszan-sume for the name of this temple, of which he also reproduces a picture in his *Mongoliya i Amdo i mertvi gorod Khara-khoto*, p. 536. F. B.