

one had seen Obogen or knew anything of his whereabouts. Only Professor SIU's boy WANG related that he had woken up at two o'clock in the morning, hearing somebody grubbing about the provision-chests that were always placed near the kitchen. He had asked from within his tent who it was, and Obogen had replied that it was he, and that he was just making a fire in the stove. As this was one of Obogen's daily chores WANG had turned over and gone to sleep again without suspecting anything amiss.

The provision-chests were now examined and WU, the cook, was able to say straight out that a sack of rice, a sack of flour and a supply of tea and sugar had been stolen. He himself declared that he had been robbed of five dollars. Finally, it was found that a riding-saddle was missing. The stolen goods had evidently been loaded onto the two best camels in our caravan between two and three o'clock in the morning, and the thief had then ridden off.

As soon as the discovery was made HASLUND started off with the Mongols BATU, MENTU, TSERAT and MATE LAMA to look for the fugitive.

In Mongolia camel-thieves are regarded as the worst sort of scoundrels, and a camel-thief who is caught is beaten to death or shot without mercy. I was almost afraid at the thought that our men might find the rascal and shoot him. I wished at all costs to avoid beflecking the memory of the expedition with human blood. And at the same time I was furious at the man's villainy and felt that he should be punished.

To find the tracks of two camels where over two hundred have tramped to and fro for a couple of days is no easy job. After a lot of searching, however, they had succeeded in finding the spoor, which led up to the high sterile sand in the south. There was a fresh wind blowing, and the spoor became indistinct. TSERAT and MATE LAMA had remained behind, but HASLUND and the others, who suspected that the rogue had made tracks for our former camp, in order to continue to the east from there, determined to ride thither. They returned late in the afternoon, but without having had any luck.

That evening we were treated to one of the most splendid natural spectacles I have ever seen. It was quite dark, and in the south, west and north hung heavy, compact clouds. Among these, flashes of lightning followed each other in such rapid succession that it was impossible to count them, for there were several every second. Everything was lighted up as if it were broad daylight; it was dazzling, astounding, confusing. The flashes reached right up to the zenith, and seemed jagging everywhere at once, but one heard no thunder at all. It was like a gigantic eruption of volcanoes beyond the clouds. I sat outside my tent in the pouring rain and enjoyed the spectacle of the storm over the desolate sand dunes. »That rascal is riding on through the night,» I thought, »and the tempest is erasing his tracks.»