

On the morning of the 12th, however, MENTU came rushing up all out of breath, crying: »They're coming!» »Who?» I demanded. »TSERAT and MATE! And they've got the thief and the stolen camels with them!»

TSERAT and MATE LAMA were each leading two camels, and between them marched the miscreant with a rope round his neck, the ends of which were held by the two Mongols. His hands were tied behind his back and he walked with bent back and dragging steps. It looked as if he were on his way to the place of execution — and perhaps he thought that he was.

He was duly made fast to a solid chest. As the Mongols suspected that he would try to escape at the first opportunity that offered, a pair of iron shackles that could not be opened without a key were improvised for his feet.

The first thing the Mongols did when they had him secure was to take the flour, rice, dried fruit and so on that he had stolen and strew it over the dunes in the hard wind. The sacks were torn to rags and a stolen spoon was broken in pieces. No-one was willing to eat or to use stolen goods.

I discussed the case with Professor SIU and left the entire matter in his hands. Now that I had got the two camels back again the man did not interest me in the slightest. I was only unwilling that he should be let loose on the way we had come, for then he might steal camels from NORIN and YUAN. SIU considered that law and justice should run their course, and that it would be wrong simply to let him go. He ought to be handed over to the representatives of justice in Mao-mu on the Edsen-gol, where he would certainly be sentenced to a term of imprisonment. It was decided, then, that the fellow should be taken with us and kept under surveillance. On arrival at the Edsen-gol he was dismissed and taken a long way from the camp before being released.

After TSERAT and MATE, who had been under way for over thirty hours, had slept a good part of the day they were summoned to my tent to give a report. Their account was most exciting, but it would take us too far if it were reproduced here.

SANDSTORM

At midday a whirling sandstorm came sweeping up from the north-west, and drift sand hissed and lashed over the desert. The velocity of the wind was nineteen second/meters. A yellow-grey haze hovered over the horizon, which everywhere became indistinct and diffuse. A regular fusillade of myriads of grains of sand lashed against the canvas of the tents. Only the finest, which are rather dust than sand, can penetrate the texture of the canvas. They came raining uninterruptedly into the tent and gradually covered everything. When, towards evening, the storm showed signs of abating, the only visible objects in my tent were the box I used as a table and the chair. The bed was apparent only as a