

less for this lovely little wood to propagate itself, for wandering camels would not leave a single new shoot uneaten. Most of the trees were in their prime, magnificent and beautiful; some few were ancient and wasted. A few of the trunks had lost their crown yet still had living shoots to show. One or two dried trunks had been riven from their roots by storms and lay on the ground like fallen heroes. The highest living trees measured eighteen to twenty meters.

Between the poplars grew reeds, and it was a pleasure to walk about and see with what a ravenous appetite the camels ate. They were obviously in the camels' seventh heaven.

But the loveliest of all was to listen to the soughing in the leaves of the trees. One is not exactly spoiled with such melodies in the Gobi Desert, and one seemed to hear greetings in this soughing from Sweden's woods and forests and one's dear ones at home.

We received a visit from three wandering lamas or begging monks who had been journeying with their camels for five years. They were from Tushetu-khan in Outer Mongolia. They had recently come from Peking, where they had been to worship the TASHI LAMA, and now they were on their way home. They used to stay for weeks and months in every monastery they passed, and they begged their way along from yurt to yurt. From us, too, they received a tribute.

In the open space between the circle of tents a huge bonfire of dried trunks and branches was now lit. The gramophone was brought out and the well-known marches, arias and songs re-echoed in the cool night round the warming fire. The stars peeped down through the foliage, while from between the trunks of the trees we saw the moon rise over the dunes. Suddenly we heard a new melody, older than any we had on the gramophone. A large merchant caravan was approaching from the west, and it had bells in different keys, a whole carillon keeping perfect time. It sounded delightful indeed.

### TALE OF CARAVAN ROBBERY

TSERAT came up to the fire and told us that this caravan of a hundred camels, thirty merchants and twenty servants on the way from Hami to the Edsen-gol, had been attacked by robbers, six days' journey to the west of Ghashun-nor. They had been plundered of 1,400 dollars and all their sheepskin coats. They had managed to hide a hundred dollars, but these had now been spent. The goods, hides, wool, dried fruits, had not interested the bandits. A comical element in the story was this: only one of the merchants was armed with a rifle, but in one of the monasteries the monks had advised them not to provoke people with weapons, and the rifle had therefore been left behind in the monastery. It was thus an easy matter for four bandits to intimidate fifty men and treat them as they wished.