

HASLUND had purchased two sheep for four dollars apiece, and before setting off in the afternoon we had at last a proper meal of meat, a luxury that had long been absent from our menu.

On September 17th we resumed our march over sandy wastes clad with tamarisks and saxaules, over sterile plains and past a little open spring with salt water. In some places there were luxuriant growths of grass in the form of little islands while in others they formed regular hedges — a very unexpected sight in this desolate country. Sheep and goats grazed in the grass.

### ARSHAN-OBO AND ITS HEALTH SPRING

We came to a carefully constructed obo made of clay and branches and in shape somewhat like a *stupa*. It was surmounted with all sorts of sacrificial gifts hung up among faggots and twigs. At the eastern foot was a little wall, scarcely a meter high, surrounding the blessed spring of crystal-clear and completely sweet and cold water which was not less than three meters deep. This water is supposed to have a beneficial effect on the health and is used by the Mongols as a medicinal spring. The name Arshan-obo also indicates this. The water flowed freshly and copiously, forming a little streamlet that soon disappeared in the sand. I could drink four cups from this lovely spring with a quiet mind, without needing to fear any infection, and it was the best water I had tasted for a long time. Most of the wells along our road through Alakshan contained more or less brackish water.

In the distance, towards N. N. W., one could see low mountains. The high sand on the left rose in the form of yellow hills. A Mongol came past with eight camels loaded with wool. Saxaules grew in the sand, and dead dried trunks and branches of this tough bush lay on the ground with tormentedly twisted limbs and claws reminding one of Chinese dragons.

Presently we were once more journeying over a tract with a rich growth of grass and reeds and with lots of sweet springs, the latter sometimes forming round ponds with a reedy island in the middle, and again small meres and swamps. This tract is a salvation for wandering caravans.

A little group of trees among tall tamarisks in the sand formed a pleasant picture. Some white horses were browsing near the route. The September flies and mosquitoes were a nuisance, the former especially being inclined to upset the camels.

Shara-bulung was the name of a place where a Mongolian *ael* or tent-village was situated. In the neighbourhood of this village a spring had been surrounded with a rectangular wall for bathing. At another spring horses could enter the water and wade up to their bellies to cool themselves. We pitched camp for the night at the well Suji.