

ARRIVAL AT THE EDSSEN-GOL

September 28th was the great day when we were to reach the river Edsen-gol.

The route led N.N.W. between tall, hemispherical vegetation-cones. To the left were visible the ruins of a house and two *suburgas*, while a little farther on were five such on the right-hand side. We once again lost ourselves in a dense labyrinth of these characteristic hillocks that owe their origin to the binding of sand and earth by the roots of the tamarisks, while the wind erodes the ground in between them. Their round cupola-shape is also, at least in part, the work of the wind.

One solitary *suburga* was quite well preserved. To the north-west our eyes were now quickened by an inspiring sight: the poplar wood on the Edsen-gol. We were soon riding between and under leafy poplars, whose foliage was already beginning to show the yellow colours of autumn. At the sides of a dried river-bed where flocks of sheep were grazing the wood was denser.

We now had a clear glimpse of water between the trees. There was the river! At first only a smaller lateral arm that was quite shallow and no more than ten meters across — and just past this the main river. BATU came to meet us to lead us to the ford. He rode ahead to show the way, followed by MENTU and at last myself. The camels hesitated slightly when confronted by the broad stream, but BATU's riding camel had already crossed the river twice and was not at all afraid; on the contrary, he seemed to enjoy the bath. Our camels had probably never seen so much water in all their lives. They followed their leader, carefully feeling their way with their fore-feet and splashing into the muddy water of the river. The greatest depth was nearly a meter, and the breadth was 212 paces.

On the farther bank (the western bank) I was met by LARSON, cheering lustily and waving his hat. On an open level space on the bank fluttered the Swedish flag from a seven meter high pole; and there stood the big mess-tent and the boys' tent, and at a little distance from the bank, at the edge of the wood, all the other tents.

The whole site was a pure idyll, the loveliest camp we had had, flowing over with everything we could desire. There were woods, grass and reeds growing man-high, dry fuel in the form of dried tree-trunks that would last ages, and a broad living river streaming past our airy habitations. I cannot describe my feelings of happiness and gratitude on our arrival at this camp, that was now to be our head-quarters for a month. Before us we had a lovely period of rest and work. Behind us we had the long journey from Pao-t'ou with its 1010 kilometers of wilderness and desert. The first big stage of our journey had been accomplished, and we could afford to relax for a while.