

with us from the outset. Some were newly purchased and had no long and tiring desert marches behind them. All, however, were in splendid trim.

A hearty farewell grip, and the three men with their light little caravan disappeared between the poplars and tamarisks of the wood.

LARSON'S BOAT READY

After the departure of MARSCHALL and WALZ on their several ways with all my letters my time was no longer taken up with the business of correspondence, and I was able to turn my attention to my projected trip to the lakes. Accordingly, as soon as I had seen WALZ off on his long journey I went and inspected LARSON's wonderful boat, which had now lain a-drying for long enough. Together with HASLUND I went for a trial trip on the river. It was a bumpy voyage. The boat was still too heavy and it lay too deep in the water. The deck had to be taken off and the canoes chipped out to about half their thickness.

LARSON set about the task immediately. The work went on all day and was continued in the evening by the light of the camp-fire. Glowing coals were placed in the bottoms of the canoes, which were then easier to hollow out. So the work went on the whole of the next day, and the heaps of chips and shavings grew up apace around the carpenters. The 17th of the month had been fixed for the start. We had no time to lose, for the river had already begun to sink.

The canoes were now forty-five centimeters in breadth at their widest part, about at the water-line, and at the gunwale thirty centimeters. They were separated from each other by a distance of thirty-five centimeters, being joined by means of two strong cross-pieces. The lid of a crate was laid over the interval between the prows. This was to be my mapping and writing-table. Between the inside gunwales of the two canoes was placed a wooden plank upon which I was to sit, with one leg in each canoe, and for the rest — suspended as it were over the water. HASLUND, the crew, had his place on another little cross-plank in the stern, where he had his paddle at hand. In this tub, then, we went for another trial trip on the 16th, and found our craft much lighter and more seaworthy.

As our little craft could not be weighed down with any baggage, LARSON was to follow on the left bank with a little caravan, keeping in constant touch with us and determining the camping-sites in concert with us. Professor SIU and LI were to accompany him, as they both wished to see the lakes. HEMPEL and ZIMMERMANN were also to make their way to the lakes with their own little caravan, charting the western arm of the lower Edsen-gol, which is called the Oboin-gol, and on their return journey the arm that was said to flow furthest east.