

THE OBOIN-GOL

At two o'clock the temperature was 20.°8 C., regular summer weather. The Oboin-gol was populous with wild ducks and geese. On the left bank of the river grew poplars and tamarisks. Here, too, were quite high sand-dunes, some of them naked.

We went drifting down the stream in the same way as on the sister river to the east. Here, however, we had only a short navigable stretch, and after drifting for an hour and a quarter we reached a point where a little side-arm flowed off by itself to the right. To the left, the river divided up into a series of small runnels flowing away from the main stream to form swamp and pools on either side.

We drifted on down the diminished river, which still fed little lateral arms till it finally dwindled away to nothing among the reeds. Here we turned. If we had tried to push on along one of the little side-streams we should never have been able to save the boat, and then it would have been very difficult to go back the way we had come, as the marshy ground would not bear a man's weight. HASLUND warped the boat back to camp. Sitting by the fire that evening I gave HASLUND instructions to ride the following morning to the south-east shore of the lake to ascertain whether one might transport the boat thither on the ox-cart.

Early in the morning of October 25th he set off, riding with BANCHE seven kilometers in a north-westerly direction till he came to a row of dunes. From here he proceeded for a further two kilometers N 60° W, which was as far as he could go. The lake was just as blue as Sogho-nor, and just as shallow. There were crowds of natatorial birds, including swans and gulls — an indication that Ghashun-nor, like the sister-lake and the river-arms, contains fish. It would be impossible to take the boat to the eastern shore on the ox-cart, as the wheels would sink into the soft ground.

An old Mongol who lived in the northernmost yurt of the Torgut settlement accompanied HASLUND on this reconnoitring trip. He told HASLUND that twenty-one years previously a Torgut had crossed the lake on the ice. From the point they had reached it was possible in winter-time to cross the lake in half a day, and farther to the west in one day. To go round the lake with pack-camels would take from three to four days. The old man declared that the Torguts now living on the south shore had never visited the north shore, for the simple reason that they had no business there.

He also spoke of three dry river-beds that flowed into the lake to the west of the Oboin-gol: the Keretin-gol (Raven River), the Mören-gol (Broad River) and the Shara-tora- or Shara-toroiin-gol (Yellow Poplar River). In March, large parts of what was now dry land to the east of the lake were flooded over. The lake was everywhere equally difficult of approach, owing to the marshy ground. During the winter months, however, it was easy to reach. The old man declared