

REPLY FROM PEKING

In reply to all the requests and applications that SIU and I had addressed to our Committee in Peking the latter had now, in their letter of August 6th, answered 'yes'. I had asked that a Swedish philologist and an astronomer, who were not included in the contract of April 26th, might be allowed to join the expedition and meet us in Urumchi.

My request to be permitted to establish five permanent meteorological stations instead of the four mentioned in the contract was likewise granted. Accordingly, the station that had been agreed upon for Charchan was to be divided into two, one at Charkhliq and the other on the Khotan-darya.

NEIGHBOURS AND VISITORS

Our nearest neighbours were a Mongol family whose members had their yurts just to the south of our main camp. Every day the mistress of the yurt, a nice little old woman with fine features and bearing the name MANEGA, came with a pail of milk for *noyan*, that is to say, myself.

Other Mongols, both from the surrounding district and further afield, frequently paid us visits. A red beggar-lama of north Mongolian race told us that he had settled down in our wood to rest for a while. Once, he said, bound together with another lama, he had journeyed from Urga to Tibet, but without having the strength to complete his pilgrimage. He had been in Kobdo, Uliasutai and Kulja.

Near the Oboin-gol about forty-five li to the south of the prince's residence, lived the TANGUT GEGEN or the Tibetan Incarnation. He had spent forty-eight years on the Edsen-gol. He had a big yurt, partly furnished as a temple. Every day he left his tent at special hours of prayer to blow hollow tones in his conch shell horn. Why, among all Asia's hidden corners, he should have pitched upon just the Edsen-gol delta as his place of residence was a mystery.¹

VISIT FROM A RUSSIAN COUPLE

An unexpected guest was the Russian SEMUKOV, who had been travelling in the region to the north-west of Ghashun-nor to collect local fauna for the museum in Urga. He had heard that we were encamped with our caravan at Tsondol and

¹ In the book »A Desert Journal» (in Swedish »Ökenbrev») by the three English missionaries in Suchow, EVANGELINE and FRANCESCA FRENCH and MILDRED CABLE, there is a passage about this TANGUT GEGEN, relating how on a visit to the Edsen-gol he was captivated by a young woman whom he took to wife. On account of his marriage he was expelled from the monastic order to which he belonged in Tibet, but he remained on the Edsen-gol and there became a holy man. F. B.