

prised chiefly cloths, tea, cigarettes and various groceries. Only three of the men had come this way before and knew it. Some of the camel-owners were Hui-hui or Tungan, i. e. Mohammedans. These are said to be shrewder business men than the Chinese. They had been on the way from the Edsen-gol for eighteen days, while we had covered the distance in twenty days. But these wandering merchant communities begrudge themselves any day of rest that is not forced upon them by snow or storm. They counted on being in Guchen within a month; they had set off from Kuei-hua on October 2nd.

On arriving at their destination they generally set their camels to pasture till the autumn, when they set out on the return journey with fresh loads. Sometimes, however, they may start out on the return journey after two months, during which time the camels are fattened with special fodder.

They had several horses in their caravan, and used thin, white felt mats to protect the loads in rainy weather. HUMMEL and Professor SIU bought a number of these to line their tents, and indeed they made the tents considerably warmer than before.

We entered one of the caravan tents, being received in a very friendly way by these simple coolies. Four or five of them sat chatting and smoking their long pipes; six others lay wrapped in their originally white sheep-skins, sleeping in all possible queer positions. They snored loudly, and the most curious noises came now and again from the depths of their sheep-skins. They ushered us forward to the place of honour near the short side of the tent. On the ground they had felt mats to sit upon; near the tent-poles stood a couple of little low wooden chests, beside the foremost of which a fire burned in an iron ring. A kettle was sputtering over the fire and some tea-pots were boiling at the side. The kettle contained *mien-t'iao-tze*, long narrow strips of dough that are cooked in water. They sat noisily devouring this sort of vermicelli soup, and the sleepers were woken up to partake in the meal. They also ate *lao-ping*, a kind of bread; and another item on their menu was *niu-jou*, or beef, of which they had bought a supply at the Edsen-gol. We guests were given cups of boiling hot tea. One always finds these simple Chinese caravan men cheerful, friendly and contented; and they invariably treat visitors with polite hospitality. They laugh and chatter and enjoy themselves; one never finds them care-worn or sullen; yet they are said to earn no more than five dollars a month for their daily drudgery and their night marches through Asia. For these caravans travel only at night.

After the meal they went back to their long pipes, lighting them at the fire. All the questions we put to them were answered with the greatest readiness, all talking at once and correcting one another.

This big caravan was an imposing sight. It was ten times bigger than ours and had four times as many camel-pullers as we. Everything functioned like clock-work, the various tasks being carried out with ease and address. The differ-