

## RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE CARAVANS AT SEBESTEI

Before I fell sick it had been our intention to leave LARSON and a number of the Mongols with the whole of our heavy baggage at Sebestei, while the whole staff with the necessary luggage and provisions and all of our 113 camels betook themselves to Ta-shih-t'ou. The camels were then to have been left behind with the Chinese merchants at this place, to be fattened up with beans or oats; and the rest of our Mongols were to stay behind to look after them. A caravan of hired camels was then to have been sent back to Sebestei to fetch the luggage that had been left and LARSON and his Mongols. Then, either on hired camels or on the best of our own, I and the whole staff and the Chinese boys were to have proceeded via Tash-bulaq to Hami, where we had hoped to arrive by Christmas.

On account of my sickness, however, this plan was slightly changed. Thus, HUMMEL and I were also to remain behind at Sebestei. The doctor absolutely forbade my continuing on camel-back, and prescribed a couple of week's complete rest. During this fortnight of rest the others, who would resume the journey westwards, ought to be able to procure a cart with a team of mules and horses with which I might be taken, without the risk of a relapse, to Hami.

LARSON considered the risk of dumping the heavy baggage at Sebestei all too great, because of possible robber-bands; and he suggested that it be taken along with them, our own camels going under load. He would march at night, so that the animals could graze during the day. I approved his plan the more readily, as I have always been unwilling to leave valuable baggage behind anywhere, for one can never be sure of its being fetched afterwards.

It was by a curious dispensation of Providence that our marching route happened to cross the route taken by NORIN's column just at the Sebestei spring. Since NORIN had a couple of days' start owing to the fact that his road was straighter than ours it had hung by a hair whether we should find him at the spring.

In the course of the conferences held on December 14th NORIN suggested that he and BERGMAN should remain behind with HUMMEL, and myself, an extra point in favour of this proposal being that it would give him an opportunity of making a more comprehensive topographical and geological investigation of the from many points of view interesting country in the neighbourhood of Sebestei. Moreover, both he and BERGMAN had more than enough to keep them busy with the expansion of notes and inking-in of maps. Needless to say, both HUMMEL and I saw our enforced sojourn at Sebestei in quite other and brighter colours when it had been settled that NORIN's and BERGMAN's tent was to remain beside our yurt during this uncertain period. We had seen all too little of each other on the long journey from Pao-t'ou, but now they were to throw in their lot with us for — Heaven alone knew how long.