

Around us and ahead of us to the west lay the undulating plain of the Mongolian plateau, as boundless as the sea. The road was even and hard, and we made good speed. Large herds of antelopes bounded gracefully past over the steppe.

Just as the twilight was spreading its wings over the silent land EFFE had a puncture and had to change a tyre. They had to work with the help of the headlights and electric torches.

By the time we approached Ikhe-nor (Great Lake) GEORG and TSERAT had both the tents up. In my airy dwelling the stove was lighted, and a lamp lit up the interior. We had no beds; sleeping-bags were spread out on the ground with a thin mattress, some blankets and a piece of canvas between.

While we were sitting with crossed legs on our respective sleeping-places, writing up our diaries and waiting for dinner, a small snowstorm blew up. The tent-cloth flapped and banged, the poles creaked, the lamp swung to and fro and whirling snowflakes pattered against the tent. Large tarpaulins were spread over the cars and roped fast. In the evening the whole countryside was white and wintry.

The night was cold, but on the morning of November 19th the thin layer of snow had for the most part evaporated, and the sun shone brilliantly from a flawless blue sky. We were approaching a district with a bad reputation. To the south, on the other side of the Lang-shan range, the robber general SUN had his army quartered in the country between Pao-t'ou and Wu-yüan, along the loop of the Yellow River; and the Mongols there and to the north of this region had had painful experiences of marauding bands. These wild fellows were fond of accosting travellers in the Yang-chang-tze valley, through which we were to pass in the course of the day. Orders were therefore given that all firearms should be held in readiness; and cartridge-belts were dealt out to our marksmen.

It took some time to thaw the oil in the motors, which had frozen hard as stone during the night; and the sun was high when GEORG and TSERAT rolled off from the camp. The map-making cars followed a little later.

The caravan-road, hard and level, led us between scattered tufts of vegetation and small earthen mounds or low hillocks as far as Chendamen. Here GEORG had come across a flock of sheep and their shepherd. He had bought two sheep from the latter for five dollars and had already slaughtered them. The shepherd was allowed to keep the skins.

Along the road, which from now on took us among low broken hills, BERGMAN pointed out many old graves, marked with stones laid in rectangles. They may date from the time of the Huns or the Turks.

In the valley of the Khonin-chaghan-chölo-gol there was a little stream, partly frozen, on whose banks we had encamped in 1927; and here some Chinese settlers had established themselves. From the west came a stately caravan of no less than 593 camels, striding with slow, dignified gait and bearing three flags, on