

It was not the first time during this rash road-finding expedition that we had needed angelic patience, and, Heaven knows, it was not to be the last! Instead of being united at full strength in that dangerous region, we were split up right at the start. And we had to kick our heels for five days in this place of all others.

On the morning of November 21st GEORG and JOMCHA drew off eastward. The latter ought to have been back the same evening. But the whole day passed without anything being heard of him. And two more days. He had a passport of course, but such things are no help against robbers. We had reason to be anxious about the solitary Mongol driver. TSERAT tried to read his fate in the shoulder-blade of a sheep, which was put on the fire and dried, when it broke up into irregular cracks. A longitudinal crack did not reach the neck of the shoulder-blade, so JOMCHA had got no farther than Batu-khalagh-sume! The oracle was wrong. JOMCHA took three days, not two, as TSERAT had predicted. At last he came, having left GEORG at Kuei-hua to go on by train to Tientsin. We could have started then if BERGMAN had not fallen ill. As he was running a fairly high temperature, he was ordered a few days' rest. YEW was also on the sick-list; he had broken his nose when EFFE's car stuck in the ice.

The petrol caravan passed our tents at this time. Twenty-three camels were loaded with five-gallon tins, five on each side, hanging side by side and roped fast together. So we had 1,150 gallons *en route* for the Edsen-gol. Fourteen other camels carried the men's equipment and some of our luggage.

#### WITH DIMINISHED CONVOY

Not until November 25th did the doctor allow the two patients to start, and the diminished column moved westward again. JOMCHA and CHOKDUNG were left behind in the Yang-chang-tze-ku camp to keep guard over the wrecked lorry and the 26 large drums of petrol which had to be left.

The road led westward through the winding valley, crossing and re-crossing the stream, now frozen, now open water. The valley widened out between low hills, but the stream dried up in the sand before it reached the plain. When full, it reaches the Huang-ho.

As the country opened out, the jagged ridge of the Lang-shan stood out clearly to the south and south-west. Now and then we saw the whitened skeleton of a dead camel. Wolves are common in these parts. A lively herd of ponies flew over the steppe, trying to keep pace with us. We sighted a couple of small lama temples at some distance.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes we met mounted Mongols, on camels or horses. We saw large herds of antelopes, fascinating to watch. After a time we

<sup>1</sup> Burkhantei-sume and Shire-sume. F. B.