

drew past the petrol-caravan. The camels grew rather nervous, but did not lose their self-control.

Our camp for that day was pitched on the left bank of the Hailutain-gol, where the petrol-caravan overtook us in the evening. They helped us to carry over a large part of the luggage, to make it easier for the lorries to cross the river.

The Hailutain-gol is very shallow and some 200 m wide at the point of the crossing. It is divided into three arms, only one of which was not frozen. We proceeded along a soft, rather comfortable road. Where camels' dung was plentiful, TSERAT stopped and collected a few sackfuls for the camp-fires that evening.

We stopped for the night by the Khongkhorin-gol, having covered a very short stage, in fact just an ordinary camel-stage. To the south of the camp rose the mighty Khongkhor-obo on a flat-topped, black hill. Just above our camp numbers of gazelles (*Gazella subgutturosa*) came down to the brook to drink, and one of them was shot.

The morning of November 27th was bitterly cold. We got up by lamplight an hour before sunrise. The sky was clear and day was breaking. To the westward the shadow of the earth formed a dark blue crescent above the horizon. It sank and disappeared into infinity as the sun rose, giving the steppe colour and outline. I opened the tent-flaps to let the sun shine in but it gave no warmth. It is a chilly business crawling out of a sleeping-bag and putting on one's clothes, when one has no crackling fire to dress by on a winter morning on the Mongolian plateau.

But the cars were in a worse plight, with no fuel to warm up the frozen oil in the motors. One lorry got going at last, and towed the others till they could look after themselves.

On the grassy plain in front of us a number of caravan-routes intersected. Several were merely local routes, running between small temples and camping-grounds. Here and there was a Chinese trading station, consisting of a little group of felt yurts or tents. We saw nomad yurts very seldom; they existed, but mostly among the hills on either side of the road.

At Khashiatu, where we encamped, were eight large felt-covered piles of goods bound from Kuei-hua to Hami in Sinkiang. They had been dumped there about a year earlier, when the rebellion in Sinkiang made all trade impossible. We found in the place a Chinese trading-house and three curious dwellings, half yurts, half mud walls. One of DUNDA GUNG's military posts was quartered here, and a customs-house fleeced the caravans with *likin*, or inland dues. But immediately after us a supervisor from Nanking arrived. He was said to have been sent out to abolish the customs-houses at Khashiatu and other places. Let us hope that he was successful!

We went on towards the interior of Mongolia along a bumpy, winding road. Here and there long grass grew, but soon the country became broken and barren.