

At times the ground looked level and solid; but it was horribly treacherous on account of its softness, and was continually forcing us to make capriciously winding detours. We in the small car made our way towards Boro-obo, a small hill on the northern side of the lake. At last we got stuck, and walked up to the obo. From there we had a splendid view over the whole of the lake, with the blue-green shimmer on the ice.

We proceeded westward, and the sun set. Our route crossed a belt of tamarisks, scrub and dry wood in soft sand. Several others followed, separated from one another by strips of level, barren gravel. The going was rather unpleasant. And things grew worse. We had halted in a sandy spot with the small car. The four lorries stopped. Now one, now another moved forward a little, but stopped again. We drew up to them. Now three of them were stuck fast in the sand. Out with rope-mats, jacks and spades! One after another was dug out, and its engine hummed a little till the car got stuck again. It took an eternity. At last we saw that all efforts were fruitless. Despite the moonlight, it was too dark to be able to cope with the situation. I ordered the men to pitch camp.

Soon dinner was served, though we had nothing to drink. We were all tired and thirsty, especially the men in the lorries, who had got stuck about fifty times in the course of the day. We had just finished the meal when the water patrol returned with three petrol-tins full of fresh water. Tea was served.

We had learned that a motor-road ought not to be made north of Sogho-nor, but rather across the arms of the delta by means of bridges.

Next day every lorry stuck in the sand after a drive of less than fifty meters. It was a couple of hours before all were freed and the convoy was bumping up and down between clumps of tamarisk and scrub-clad dunes, through sand and dust that whirled up in impenetrable clouds.

We were swathed in these suffocating clouds, out of which only the nearest car loomed up like a phantom. We swayed and jolted along till we reached the river, when we followed its right bank. The Oboin-gol does not contain a drop of water at this time of the year. The track we were following ran along the outermost edge of the erosion-terrace of the river. Soon it grew too narrow, and there was danger of someone falling over the edge and ending up wheels in air in the dry river-bed. We called a halt, and our spades set to work again. The men dug away obstructing hummocks and made the road wider.

At last the convoy was on a broader road. The track left the river-bank and wound in among thick tamarisk bushes. It would have taken a good deal less to make some people sea-sick; we were flung this way and that and had to hold on tight, while the whole landscape disappeared in clouds of dust. But at last we drove up on firm, hard ground: the barren plateau around the yamen of the Torgut prince.

The prince was not there; but his 'Minister of Justice' received us in a large yurt which was erected in the middle of an enclosure of mud walls. We told