

run, he vanished in the north as swiftly as the shadow of a cloud. I was glad that no shot had been fired at this king of the desert.

Twilight came on about five o'clock, and electric torches were produced for the compass readings. A little later, after a drive of nearly 60 km, we pitched camp. The difficult going of the first days had made severe inroads into our petrol supply. One gallon lasted us for hardly more than 3 km. We buried 35 gallons at camp No. 124 for our return journey, which left us with 135 gallons. Our plan was to keep together for 230 km till we reached some place where we might suitably leave the lorry and cover the last kilometers to Altmish-bulaq in the small car.

On November 14th we continued along the same splendid gully; but after the first few kilometers its bottom grew narrower and softer, winding W. S. W. between low pinkish hills splashed with black. Gradually it became less well-defined in open country.

### THE SAND-DUNES OF THE GHASHUN-GOBI

The lorry led the way; no-one could judge the difficulties of the ground better than Tserat. Sometimes, when he dipped into a hollow, the lorry disappeared altogether. If he remained in sight for a long time, we could be sure that the ground was firm. If he suddenly stopped, we knew that he had got stuck in a soft place. Our course was westerly; and the ground fell very slowly in this direction.

It was half-past three, and we had covered nearly 60 km, when the gully finally came to an end, merging into low sand-dunes. The motor-lorry had got stuck, and could not move. From its roof we examined the ground in every direction through glasses. Sand, sand, sand everywhere: nothing but a sea of dunes to the west, the north-west and the north. The small car went ahead to look for a place where we could get through. But finding none, we turned back eastward for 15 km and pitched camp. We could reconnoitre the next day from that point. It was the Ghashun-gobi, one of the wildest deserts on the face of the earth, that had stopped our advance westward.

Reconnaissances to north and south on November 15th were without result. That gully the day before had been a deceiver; and the advance into the Ghashun-gobi had mulcted us of a fair part of our petrol-supply. We saw six wild camels, but did not interfere with them. Once or twice we passed little dried-up salt lakes, as white as snow. And several times we noticed paths that had been trampled into being by wild camels, leading to springs that only they knew of.

We returned eastwards in our own tracks with the intention of making a new advance to the west, south of the outer range of mountains. At camp No. 124 we dug up the petrol tins we had left there. We covered the stretch to Lo-t'oching in twilight and gathering darkness. Our progress was quicker now that we were not losing time over the everlasting compass-bearings for the map.