

Morning broke as we appeared upon the plateau ; a faint blue haze hung over the low hills which edged the plain and stretched away in the far distance. An extraordinary bounding sense of freedom came over me as I looked on that vast grassy plain, extended apparently without limit all round. There was no let or hindrance—I could go anywhere, it seemed, and all nature looked bright, as if enticing me on. Here and there in the distance could be seen collections of small dots, which, as we came nearer, proved to be herds of camels and cattle. Numbers of larks rose on every side and brightened the morning with their singing. Small herds of deer were frequently met with ; bustard too were seen, while numbers of geese and duck were passing overhead in their flight northward. The entry to Mongolia was entrancing, and the spirits of the whole party rose as we marched cheerily over the plains.

Away in the distance we had seen some black spots from which faint columns of blue smoke were rising peacefully in the morning air. These were the yurts, or felt tents, of the Mongols, towards which we were making.