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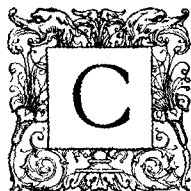


THE ROCKY PASS AT KALGAN, OVER WHICH GENGHIS KHAN AND HIS MONGOLS ONCE SWEEP

Across Mongolia by Motor-Car

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CHAREERING madly in a motor-car behind a herd of antelope fleeing like wind-blown ribbons across a desert which isn't a desert, past caravans of camels led by picturesque Mongol horsemen, the twentieth century suddenly and violently interjected into the Middle Ages, should be contrast and paradox enough for even the most blasé sportsman. I am a

naturalist who has wandered into many of the far corners of the earth. I have seen strange men and things, but what I saw on the great Mongolian plateau fairly took my breath away and left me dazed, utterly unable to adjust my mental perspective.

When leaving Peking in late August, 1918, to cross the Gobi Desert in Mongolia, I knew that I was to go by motor-car. But somehow the very name "Mongolia" and "Gobi Desert" brought

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such a vivid picture of the days of Kublai Khan and ancient Cathay that my clouded mind refused to admit the thought of automobiles. It was enough that I was going to the land of which I had so often dreamed.

Not even on the railway when I was being borne swiftly toward Kalgan and saw lines of laden camels plodding silently along the paved road beside the train, or when we puffed slowly through the famous Nankau Pass and I saw that wonder of all the world, the Great Wall, winding like an enormous serpent over ridge after ridge of the mountains, was my dream-picture of mysterious Mongolia dispelled. I had seen all this before, and had accepted it as one accepts the motor-cars beside the splendid walls of old Peking. It was all too near, and the railroad had made it commonplace.

But Mongolia! That was different. One could not go there in a roaring train. I had beside me the same old rifle and sleeping-bag that had been carried across the mountains of far Yunnan, along the Tibetan frontier, and through the fever-stricken jungles of Burma. Somehow, these companions of forest and mountain trails, and my reception at Kalgan by two khaki-clad young men, each with a belt of cartridges and a six-shooter strapped about his waist, did much to keep me in a blissful state of *unpreparedness* for the destruction of all my dream-castles.

That night as we sat in Mr. Charles Coltman's home, with his charming wife, a real woman of the great outdoors, presiding at the dinner-table, the talk was all of shooting, horses, and the vast, lone spaces of the Gobi Desert—but not much of motor-cars. Perhaps they vaguely realized that I was still asleep in an unreal world and knew that the awakening would come all too soon.

Yet I was dining that night with one of the men who had destroyed the mystery of Mongolia. In 1916, Coltman and his partner, Oscar Mamen, had driven across the plains to Urga, the historic capital of Mongolia, just south of Irkutsk. But most unromantic and incongruous, most disheartening to a dreamer of Oriental dreams, was what I learned a few days later when the awakening had really come—that among

the first cars ever to cross the desert was one purchased by Hutukhtu, the Living Buddha, the god of all the Mongol Lamas.

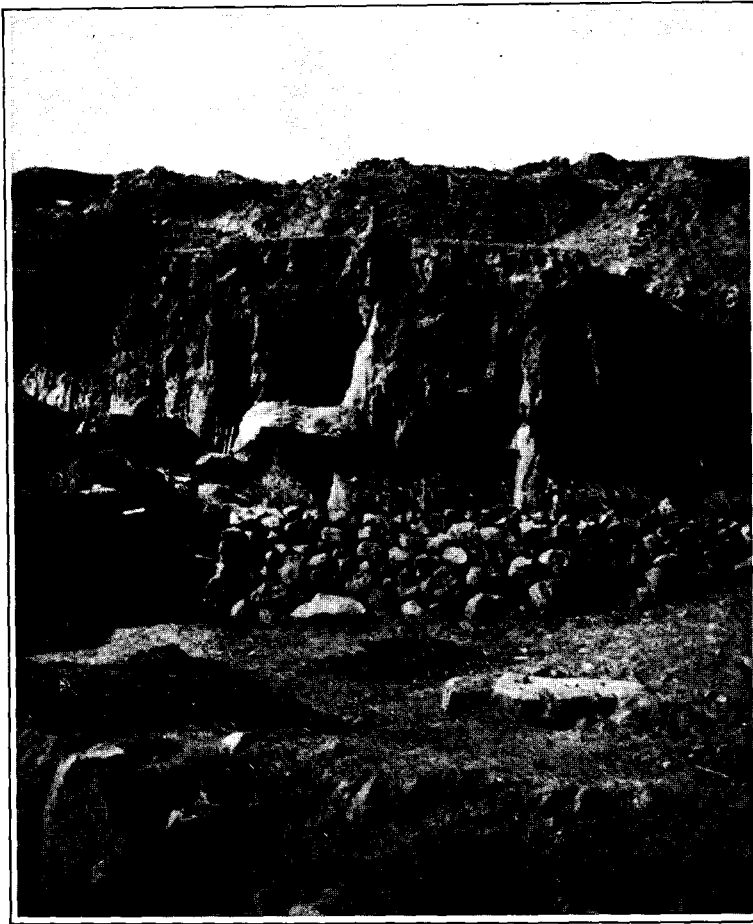
In his palace at Urga, at the base of Bagdin-ol ("God's Mountain") he sits in splendor, with a telephone at his hand and electric lights above his head, amid a chaos of Occidental inventions—microscopes, cinematographs, gramophones, cameras, and an unending list of trinkets illustrated in catalogues and folders sent from the four corners of the world.

When Hutukhtu learned of the first motor-car to cross the plains he forthwith demanded one for himself. What need had he now for horses or man-borne chairs? When he and Mrs. Hutukhtu leave the palace (if she ever does) to make their pilgrimages of state it should be in a manner which would impress their subjects far more than any retinue of followers, be they ever so gorgeous.

So Hutukhtu's motor-car was brought safely through the rocky pass at Kalgan and across the seven hundred miles of plain to Urga by way of the same old caravan trail over which, centuries ago, Genghis Khan had sent his wild Mongol raiders to conquer China. Whether or not Hutukhtu will soon tire of this purchase as of his other trinkets, matters not, for the end will not be then. The seclusion of his sacred city is gone forever and the motor-car has come to stay.

We arose long before daylight on the morning of August 29th. In the courtyard lanterns flashed and disappeared like giant fireflies as the *mafus* (muleteers) packed the baggage and saddled the ponies. The cars had been left on the plateau at a mission station called Hei-ma-hou to avoid the rough going in the pass, and we were to ride there on horseback while the food and bed-rolls went by cart. There were five of us in the party—Mr. and Mrs. Coltman, Mr. and Mrs. Lucander and myself. My object was to see the country preparatory to planning a campaign of zoological work for the following summer. Coltman's was to visit his trading-station in Urga, where Lucander was to remain for the winter.

The sun was an hour high when we clattered over the slippery paving-stones



VILLAGES ARE HALF DUG, HALF BUILT INTO THE HILLSIDES AND WELL-NIGH INVISIBLE

to the north gate of the city. Kalgan is built hard against the Great Wall of China—the first line of defense, the outermost rampart in the colossal structure which for so many centuries protected China from Tartar invasion. Beyond it there was nothing between us and the great plateau.

After our passports had been examined we rode through the gloomy chasm-like gate, turned sharply to the left, and found ourselves standing on the edge of a half-dry river-bed. Below us stretched line after line of double-humped camels, some crowded in yellow-brown masses which seemed all heads and curving necks, and some kneeling quietly on the sand. From around a shoulder of rock came other camels, hundreds of them,

treading slowly and sedately, nose to tail, toward the gate in the Great Wall. They had come from the far country whither we were bound.

To me there is something fascinating about a camel. Perhaps it is because he seems to typify the great waste spaces which I love, that I never tire of watching him swing silently, and seemingly with resistless power, across the desert.

Our way to Hei-ma-hou led up the rocky river-bed, with the Great Wall on the left stretching its serpentine length across the hills, and on the right picturesque cliffs two hundred feet in height. At their bases nestle mud-roofed cottages and Chinese inns, but farther up the river the low hills are all of loess—brown, wind-blown dust, packed hard,

which cuts like cheese. Deserted though they seem from a distance, they really teem with human life. Whole villages are half dug, half built into the hillsides, but are well-nigh invisible, for every wall and roof is of the same brown earth.

Ten miles or so from Kalgan we began on foot the long climb up the pass which gives entrance to the great plateau. I kept my eyes steadily on the pony's heels until we reached a broad, flat terrace half-way up the pass. Then I swung about that I might have, all at once, the view which lay below us. It justified my greatest hopes, for miles and miles of rolling hills stretched away to where the far horizon met the Shansi Mountains.

It was a desolate country which I saw, for every wave in this vast land sea was cut and slashed by the knives of wind and frost and rain and lay in a chaotic mass of gaping wounds—cañons, ravines, and gulleys, painted in rainbow colors, crossing and cutting one another at fantastic angles as far as the eye could see.

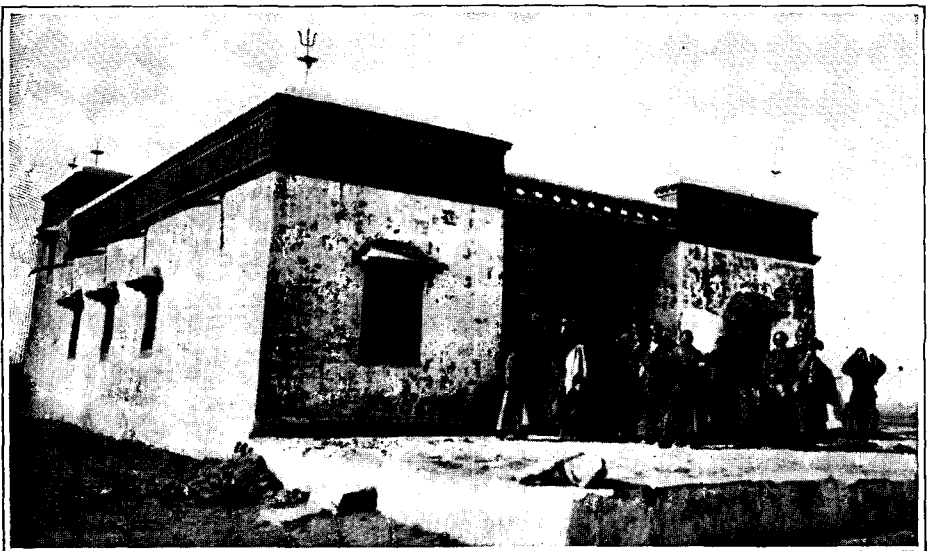
When a few moments later we reached the very summit of the pass, I felt that no spot I had ever visited satisfied my preconceived conceptions quite so thoroughly. Behind and below us lay that stupendous relief-map of ravines and

cañons; in front was a limitless stretch of undulating plain. I knew then that I really stood upon the edge of the greatest plateau in all the world and that it could only be Mongolia.

We had tiffin at a tiny Chinese inn beside the road, and trotted on toward Hei-ma-hou between waving fields of wheat, buckwheat, millet, and oats—oats as thick and "meaty" as any horse could wish to eat. For sixty miles beyond Kalgan the industrious Chinaman has reclaimed the "desert" with his hoe and plow, and each year pushes forward the line of cultivation a score of miles into the untouched plain.

After tiffin Coltman and Lucander galloped ahead while I trotted along more slowly in the rear. It was nearly seven o'clock and the trees about the mission station had been visible for half an hour. I was enjoying a gorgeous sunset which splashed the western sky with gold and red, and lazily watching the black silhouettes of a camel caravan swinging along the summit of a ridge a mile away. On the road beside me a train of laden mules and bullock-carts rested for a moment with the drivers half asleep. Over all the plain there lay the peace of a perfect autumn evening.

Suddenly, from behind a little rise, I heard the whir of a motor engine and



LAMAS IN FRONT OF THE TEMPLE NEAR PANG-KIANG



CAMELS STILL PLOD THEIR SILENT WAY ACROSS THE AGE-OLD PLAINS

the raucous voice of a klaxon horn. Before I realized what it meant, I was in the midst of a mass of plunging, snorting animals, shouting carters, and kicking mules. In a moment the caravan scattered wildly across the plains and the road was clear save for the author of the turmoil, a black automobile.

I wish I could make you who spend your lives within a city know how strange and out of place that motor seemed alone there upon the open plain on the borders of Mongolia. Imagine a camel or an elephant with all its Oriental trappings suddenly appearing on Fifth Avenue! But you would think at once that it had escaped from a circus or a zoo and be mainly curious as to what the traffic policeman would do when it did not obey his signals.

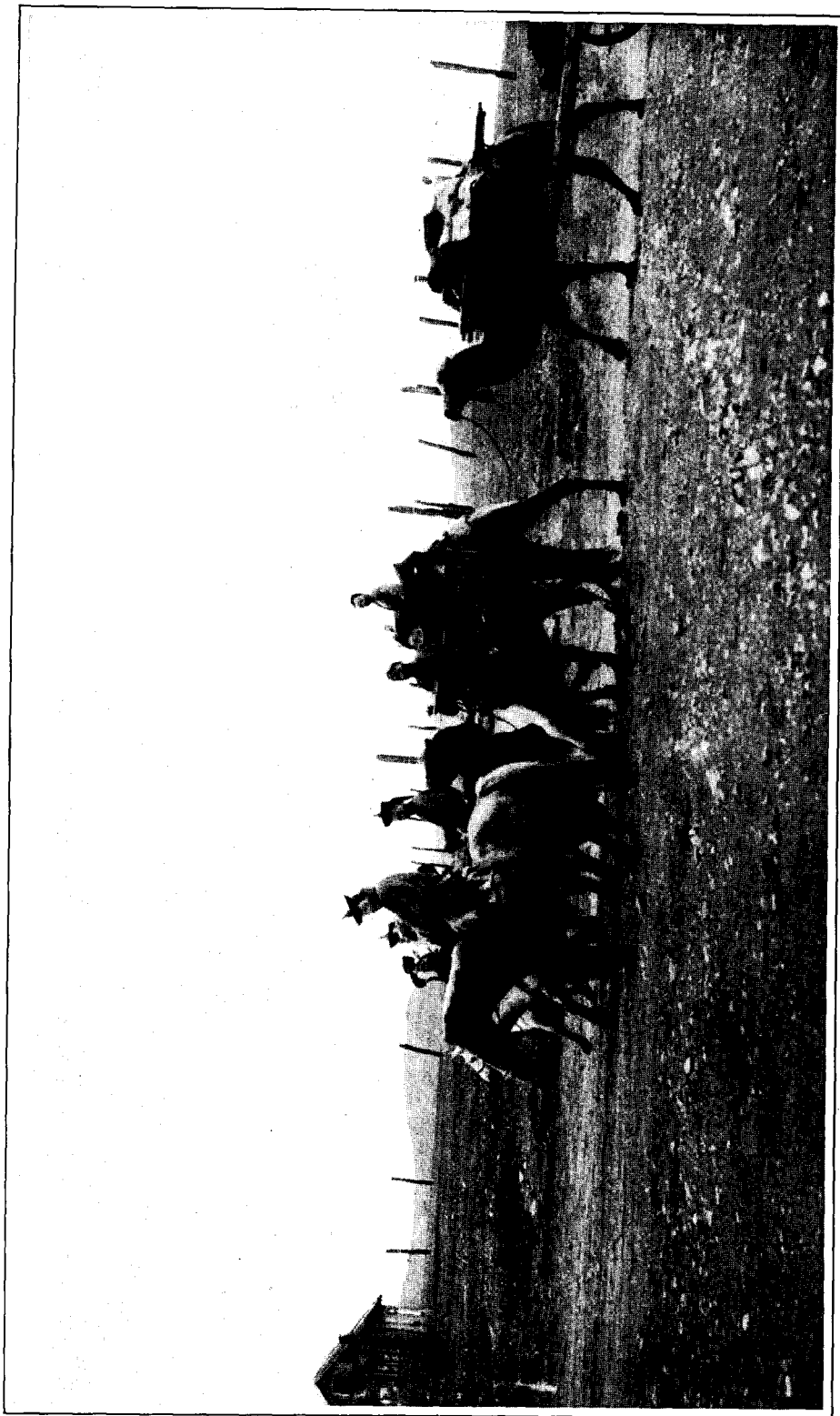
But all its strangeness and the fact that it was a glaring anachronism, did not prevent me from abandoning my horse to the *mafu* and stretching out comfortably on the cushions of the rear seat. There I had nothing to do but collect the remains of my shattered dream-castles as we bounced over the ruts and stones. It was a rude awakening, and I felt half ashamed to admit to myself as the miles sped by that the springy seat was more comfortable than the saddle on my Mongol pony.

But that night when I strolled about the mission courtyard, under the spell

of the starry desert night, I drifted back again in thought to the glorious days of Kublai Khan. My heart was hot with resentment that this thing had come. I realized then that, for better or for worse, the sanctity of the desert is gone forever. Camels will still plod their silent way across the age-old plains, but the mystery is lost. The secrets which were yielded up to but a chosen few are open now to all, and the world and his wife will speed their noisy way across the miles of rolling prairie, hearing nothing, feeling nothing, knowing nothing of that rustless desert charm which led men out into the great unknown.

At daylight we packed the cars. Bed-rolls and cans of gasoline were tied on the running-boards and every corner was filled with food. Our rifles were ready for use, however, for Coltman had promised a kind of shooting such as I had never seen before. The stories he told of wild rides in the car after strings of antelope which traveled at fifty or sixty miles an hour had left me mildly skeptical. But then, you know, I had never seen a Mongolian antelope run.

For twenty-five or thirty miles after leaving Hei-ma-hou we bounced along over a road which would have been splendid except for the deep ruts cut by mule- and ox-carts. These carts are the despair of any one who hopes sometime to see good roads in China. Their spike-



SHIFTING CAMP AT URGA BY MEANS OF PONIES AND CAMELS

studded wheels cut into the hardest ground and leave a chaos of ridges and chasms which always grow worse.

The road was bordered by Chinese villages, built of straw-mixed mud, of course, and fields of oats or millet waved their drooping heads as far as we could see. The Mongol, above all things, is not a farmer; possibly because many years ago the Manchus forbade him to till the soil. Moreover, he is as awkward on the ground as a duck out of water and is never comfortable. The back of a horse is his real home, and he will do wonderfully well any work which keeps him in the saddle. So he leaves to the plodding Chinaman the cultivation of his boundless plains while he herds his fat-tailed sheep or goats and cattle.

In three hours we had left the last Chinese house behind us and were driving toward a low range of hills behind which lay Tabul. Here, some distance from the road, is the house of a lone horse-trader, Larsen by name, one of the few foreigners who live on the plateau between the frontier of Chinese cultivation and Urga.

Until we reached Tabul there had been much water—small streams, ponds, and even lakelets—but when the hills had begun to sink on the horizon behind us, we entered upon a vast rolling plain, with but little water and without a sign of human life save now and then a train of mule-carts or a camel caravan.

We were on the Gobi Desert, but it hardly measured up to what the name implies. It resembled nothing so much as the prairies of Nebraska or Dakota, and amid the short grass, larkspur and purple thistles glowed in the sunlight

like tongues of flame. As a matter of fact, although the whole section through the center of Mongolia is called the Gobi Desert, no real desert is encountered between Kalgan and Urga. But farther to the west, the Gobi deserves its name, and Sir Francis Younghusband has said that in all his travels he has never seen a

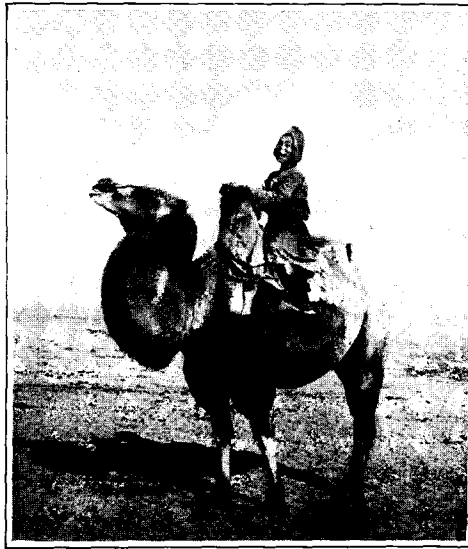
more desolate waste of sand and gravel.

There was no lack of bird life. In the ponds which we passed earlier in the day, we saw hundreds of mallard ducks and spectacled teal. The car often frightened golden plover from their dust-baths in the road, and crested lapwings flashed across the prairie like sudden storms of autumn leaves. Huge golden eagles and enormous ravens made tempting targets on the telegraph-poles, and in the

morning before we left the cultivated area we saw cranes in thousands.

In this land where wood is absent and everything is of value that will make a fire, I wondered how the telegraph-poles remained untouched, for every one was smooth and round without a splinter gone. The method of protection is simple and entirely Oriental and effective. When the line was first put through, the Mongol government stated in an edict that any man who touched a pole with knife or ax would lose his head. Even on the Mongolian wastes, the enforcement of such a law is not so difficult as it might seem, and after a few heads had been taken by way of example the safety of the line was assured.

Just before we camped at night we saw the first Mongol *yurt*—the felt-covered, portable house which forms the only home of the desert nomads. It is a circular latticed framework, cone-shaped



A YOUNG MONGOL CAMEL-HERDER

in its upper half, with an open apex to emit the smoke from the fire which burns inside and directly underneath. It is warm and comfortable and can be easily moved when the owners shift from the summer to the winter grazing-grounds.

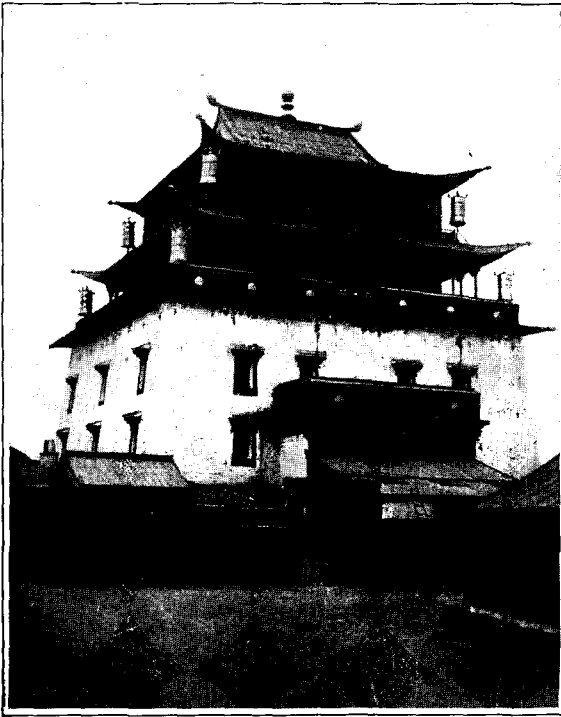
The sight of this *yurt* told us that we were within the real Mongol territory and well outside the sphere of Chinese influence. For some distance beyond the actual limit of cultivation the country is peopled by a half-breed stock of Mongol and Chinese who have a none too savory reputation. It is well to guard one's camp at night and always to have a

the most peaceful spot in all the world. Even far Tibet has seen its share of war and turmoil, but Mongolia with its few thousand wild, hard-riding soldiers has kept free from internal trouble or international complications.

Our camp the first night was on a hill-slope about one hundred miles from Heima-hou. As soon as the cars had stopped, our man was left to untie the sleeping-bags while the rest of us scattered over the plain to hunt material for a fire. *Argul* (dried dung) forms the only desert fuel, and, although it does not blaze like wood, will "boil a pot" almost as quickly as charcoal. I was elected to

be the cook, a position with distinct advantages, for in the freezing cold of early morning I could linger about the fire with a good excuse.

It was a perfect autumn night. Every star in the world of space seemed to have been crowded into our own particular expanse of sky, and each one glowed like a tiny lantern. When I had found a patch of sand and dug a trench for my hip and shoulder, I crawled into the sleeping-bag and lay for half an hour, looking up at the starry canopy above my head. Again the magic of the desert night was in my blood, and I blessed the fate which had carried me away from the roar and rush of New York with its hurrying crowds. But I had a pang of envy when, far away in the distance, there came the mellow notes of a camel-bell. *Dong, dong, dong* it sounded, clear and sweet as cathedral chimes. With surging blood, I listened until I caught the measured tread of padded feet, and saw the black



THE GREAT LAMA TEMPLE AT URGU, CONTAINING AN IMAGE OF BUDDHA EIGHTY FEET HIGH

pistol handy, but when once within the country of the *yurts* one can feel as safe as on Fifth Avenue.

The vicinity of the caravan trails across the Gobi to the capital is an exceedingly unhealthy place for brigands, and freebooters receive but a short shrift. In fact, Mongolia during the last four troublesome years has been about

silhouettes of rounded bodies and curving necks. Oh, to be with them, to travel as Marco Polo traveled and to learn to know the heart of the desert in the long night marches!

The next morning, ten miles from camp, we passed a party of Russians *en route* to Kalgan. They were sitting disconsolately beside two huge cars,



TROPHIES OF THE MOTOR-CAR HUNT

patching tires and tightening bolts. Their way had been marked by a succession of motor troubles and they were well-nigh discouraged. Woe to the men who venture into the desert with an untried car and without a skilled mechanic! There are no garages just around the corner—and there are no corners. Lucander's Chinese boy expressed it with laconic completeness when some one asked him how he liked the country.

"Well," said he, "there's plenty of room here."

A short distance farther on we found the caravan which had passed us early in the night. They were camped beside a well and the thirsty camels were gorging themselves with water. Except for these wells, the march across the desert would be impossible. They are six or eight feet wide, walled with timbers, and partially roofed with sod. Some are very brackish, but the water is always cool, for it is seldom less than twenty feet below the surface. It is useless to speculate as to who dug the wells or when, for this trail has been used since the dawn of history. In some places they are fifty or even sixty miles apart, but usually less than that.

The camel caravans travel mostly at night. For all his size and apparent strength, a camel is a delicate animal

and needs careful handling. He cannot stand the heat of the midday sun and will not graze at night. So the Gobi caravans start about three or four o'clock in the afternoon and march until one or two the next morning. Then the men pitch a light tent and the camels sleep or wander over the plain.

At noon on the second day we reached Peng-kiang, the first telegraph station on the line. Its single mud house was visible miles away and we were glad to see it, for our gasoline was getting low. Coltman had sent a plentiful supply by caravan, to await us here, and every available inch of space was filled with cans, for we were only one-quarter of the way to Urga.

Thus far the going had not been bad as roads go in the Gobi, but I was assured that the next hundred miles would be a very different story, for we were about to enter the most arid part of the desert between Kalgan and Urga. We were prepared for the only real work of the trip, however, by a taste of the exciting shooting which Coltman had promised me.

I had been told that we should see antelope in thousands, but all day I had vainly searched the plains for a sign of game. Ten miles from Peng-kiang we were comfortably rolling along on a

stretch of good road when Mrs. Coltman, whose eyes are as keen as those of a hawk, excitedly pointed to a hillside on the right, not a hundred yards from the trail. At first I saw nothing but the yellow grass; then the whole hillside seemed to be in motion. A moment later I began to distinguish heads and legs and realized that it was an enormous herd of antelope, closely packed together, restlessly watching us.

Our rifles were out in an instant and Coltman opened the throttle. The antelope were five or six hundred yards away, and as the car leaped forward they ranged themselves into single-file and strung out across the plain. We left the road at once and headed diagonally toward them. For some strange reason, when a horse or car runs parallel with a herd of antelopes the animals will swing in a complete semicircle and cross in front of the pursuer. This is also true of some African species. Whether or not they think they are being cut off from some more desirable means of escape, I cannot say, but the fact remains that with the open plain on every side they always try to "cross your bows."

I shall never forget the sight of those magnificent animals streaming across the desert! There were at least a thousand of them, and their yellow bodies seemed fairly to skim the earth. I was shouting in excitement, but Coltman said:

"They're not running yet. Wait till we begin to shoot."

I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the speedometer trembling at

thirty-five miles, for the animals were leaving us almost as though we were standing still. But then the fatal attraction began to assert itself and the long column bent gradually in our direction. Coltman widened the arc of the circle and held the throttle up as far as it would go. Our speed increased to forty miles and the car began to gain because the antelope were running almost across our course.

They were about two hundred yards away when Coltman shut off the gas and jammed both brakes, but before the car had stopped they had gained another hundred. I leaped over a pile of bedding and came into action with the .250 Savage high-power as soon as my feet were on the ground. Coltman's .30 Mauser was already spitting fire across the wind-shield from the front seat, and at his second shot an antelope dropped like lead.

My first two bullets struck the dirt far behind the rearmost animal, but the third caught a full-grown female in the side and she plunged forward into the grass.

I realized then what Coltman meant when he said that the antelope had not begun to run. At the first shot every animal in the herd seemed to flatten itself and settle to its work. They did not run—they simply *flew* across the ground with only a blur where their legs should be. The one I killed was four hundred yards away and I held eight feet ahead when I pulled the trigger. They could not have been traveling less than fifty-five or sixty miles an hour, for they were running in a semicircle about



THE LAMAS AT URGU ARE A PICTURESQUE SET

the car while we were moving at forty miles in a straight line.

Those are the facts in the case. I can see my readers raise their brows incredulously, for that is exactly what I had done before this demonstration. Well, there is one way to prove it and that is to come and try it for yourselves. Moreover, I can see some sportsmen smile for another reason. I mentioned that the antelope I killed was four hundred yards away. I know how far it was, for I paced it off. I may say in passing that I had never before killed a running animal at that range. Ninety per cent. of my shooting has been well within one hundred and fifty yards, but in Mongolia conditions are most extraordinary.

In the brilliant atmosphere an antelope at four hundred yards appears as large as it would at one hundred in most other parts of the world, and on the flat plains, where there is not a bush or shrub to obscure the view, every stone stands out like a golf-ball on the putting-green. Because of these conditions the temptation is to shoot at impossible ranges and to keep on shooting when the game is beyond anything except a lucky chance. Therefore, if any of you go to Mongolia to hunt antelope take plenty of ammunition, and when you return

you will never tell how many cartridges you used.

Our antelopes were tied on the running-board of the car and we went back to the road where Lucander had waited. Half the herd had crossed in front of him, but he had failed to bring down an animal.

The excitement of the chase had been an excellent preparation for the hard work which awaited us not far ahead. The going had been getting heavier with every mile and at last we reached a long stretch of sandy road which the cars could not pull through. With every one except the driver out of the car, and the engine racing, we pushed and lifted, gaining a few feet each time, until the shifting sand was passed. It meant two hours of violent strain, and we were well-nigh exhausted; in a few miles, however, it had all to be done again. Where the ground was hard, there was such a chaos of ruts and holes that our arms were almost wrenched from their sockets by the twisting wheels. This area more nearly approaches a desert than any other part of the road to Urga. The soil is largely sandy but the Gobi sage-brush, and short bunch grass, although sparse and dry, still give a covering of vegetation, so that in the distance the plain appears like a rolling meadowland.



A LAMA IN A RUSSIAN CARRIAGE WITH RUSSIAN DRIVER

Not far from Ude, the second telegraph station, a Lama monastery has been built beside the road. Its white-walled temple, bordered with red, and the compound inclosing the living-quarters of the Lamas show with startling distinctness on the open plain. We stopped for water at a well a few hundred yards away and in five minutes the cars were surrounded by a picturesque group of Lamas who streamed across the plain on foot and on horseback, with their yellow and red robes flaming in the sun. They were amiable enough—in fact, too friendly—and their curiosity was hardly welcome, for we found one of them testing his knife on the tires and another about to punch a hole in one of the gasoline-cans; he hoped it was something to drink that was better than water.

The Lamas are a filthy and disgusting lot of men, but the ordinary northern Mongol has a charming personality. Every one is a study for an artist. He dresses in a long loose robe of plum color, one corner of which is usually tucked into a gorgeous sash. On his head is perched an extraordinary hat like a saucer with upturned edges of black velvet and a narrow cone-shaped crown of brilliant yellow. Two red streamers of ribbon are usually fastened to the rim at the back, or a plume of peacock feathers if he be of higher rank. On his feet he wears a pair of enormous leather boots with upturned, pointed toes. These are always many sizes too large, for as the weather grows colder he pads them out with woolen socks. Moreover, they act as a convenient receptacle for his knife, pipe, or any other articles of personal furniture which he does not wish to carry in his hand. It is nearly impossible to walk in these ungainly boots, and he waddles along exactly like a duck. He is manifestly uncomfortable and ill at ease, but put him on a horse and you have a different picture. The high-peaked saddle and the horse itself become a part of his anatomy and he will stay there happily twenty-four hours of the day.

The Mongols ride with short stirrups, and, standing nearly upright, lean far over the horse's neck like our Western cowboys. As they tear along at full

gallop in their brilliant robes they seem to embody the very spirit of the plains. They are such genial, accommodating fellows, always ready with a pleasant smile, and willing to take a sporting chance on anything under the sun, that they won my heart at once.

Above all things they love a race, and often one of them would range up beside the car and, with a radiant smile, make signs that he wished to test our speed. Then off he would go, like mad, flogging his horse and yelling with delight. We would let him gain at first, and the expression of joy and triumph on his face was worth going far to see. Sometimes, if the road was heavy, it would need every ounce of gas the car could take to forge ahead, for the ponies are splendid animals. The Mongols ride only the best, and ride them hard, for horses are cheap in Mongolia and when one is a little worn another is always ready.

Not only does the Mongol inspire you with admiration for his full-blooded, virile manhood, but you like him because he likes you. He doesn't try to disguise the fact. There is a frank openness about his attitude which is wonderfully appealing, and I believe that the average white man will get on terms of easy familiarity, and even intimacy, with Mongols more rapidly than with any other Orientals.

After leaving Ude, the second telegraph station, which is built just behind a ragged granite outcrop, we slipped rapidly up and down a succession of low hills and entered upon a plain so vast and flat that we appeared to be looking across an ocean. Not the smallest hill or rise of ground broke the line where earth and sky met in a faint blue haze. Our cars seemed like tiny boats in a limitless grassy sea. It was seventy miles across and for four hours the steady hum of the motor hardly ceased, for the road was smooth and hard. Half-way over we saw another great herd of antelope and several groups of ten or twelve, but I have not space to describe the hunt. Twice wolves trotted across the plain, and at one, which was very inquisitive, I did some shooting which I vainly try to forget.

But most interesting to me among the wild life along our way was the bustard.

It is a huge bird weighing twenty pounds or more, with flesh of such delicate flavor that it rivals our best turkey. I had always wanted to kill a bustard and my first one was neatly eviscerated at two hundred yards by a Savage bullet. I was more pleased than at getting an antelope, perhaps because it did much to revive my spirits after the episode of the wolf.

Sand - grouse, beautiful little gray birds with wings like pigeons and remarkable padded feet, whistled over us as we rolled along the road, and my heart was sick with the thought of the excellent shooting we were missing. But there was no time to stop except for such game as actually crossed our path, else we should never have arrived at Urga, the city of the Living God.

Speaking of gods, I must not forget to mention the great Lamasery at Turin, about one hundred and seventy miles from Urga. For hours before we reached it we saw the ragged hills standing sharp and clear against the sky-line. The peaks themselves are not more than a hundred feet in height, but they rise from a rocky plateau some distance above the level of the plain. It is a wild spot of granite outcrops and jagged ridges, fit setting for the most remarkable group of human habitations that I have ever seen. In a shallow basin are three large temples of white and red surrounded by hundreds upon hundreds of tiny pill-box dwellings. There must be two thousand of them and probably twice as many Lamas. On the outskirts

of the city enormous piles of *argul* have been collected by the priests and bestowed as votive offerings by devout travelers. Vast as the supply seemed, it would take all this and more to warm the houses of the Lamas during the bitter winter months when the ground is covered with snow.

The houses are built of sawn boards, the first indication there had been that we were nearing a forest country.

The remaining one hundred and seventy miles to Urga is a delight, even to the motorist who loves the paved roads of cities. It is like a boulevard amid glorious rolling hills luxuriant with long, sweet grass. In the distance herds of horses and cattle grouped themselves into moving patches, and fat-tailed sheep dotted the plain like drifts of snow. I have seldom seen a better grazing country. It needed but little imagination to picture



A MONGOL WOMAN IN STREET ATTIRE

what it will be a few years hence when the inevitable railroad claims the desert as its own, for this rich land cannot long remain untenanted. It was here that we saw the first marmots, an unfailing indication that we were in a northern country. These marmots are huge fellows, about the size and build of a beaver. They are hunted for their skins, which the Mongols sell for thirty cents silver, and are interesting as being the carriers of the pneumonic plague which swept Manchuria some years ago.

The thick blackness of a rainy night had enveloped us long before we swung into the Urga Valley and groped our way along the Toola River bank toward

the glimmering lights of the Mongol city. It seemed that we would never reach them, for twice we took the wrong turn and found ourselves in a maze of sandy bottoms and half-grown trees. But at ten o'clock we plowed through the mud of a narrow street and into the courtyard of the Mongolian Trading Company's home.

For several weeks Urga had been pregnant with war possibilities. In the Lake Baikal region of Siberia there were several thousand Magyars and many Bolsheviks. It was known that Czechs expected to attack them and they would certainly be driven across the borders into Mongolia if defeated. In that event what would be the attitude of the Mongolian government? Would they intern the belligerents, or allow them to use the Urga district as a base of operations? Sarandochi, the Mongolian Minister of War and Foreign Affairs, had told Mr. Guptil that if any Magyars or Russians came into Mongolia and behaved themselves they would be allowed to remain unmolested, but that if any disturbance was created every one would be imprisoned. Nevertheless, it was a situation which needed watching.

As a matter of fact, the question had been settled just before my arrival. The Czechs had made the expected attack with about five hundred men; all the Magyars to the number of several thousand had surrendered, and the Bolsheviks disappeared like mists before the sun. The front of operations had moved in a single night over a thousand miles away to the Omsk district, and it was certain that Mongolia would be left in peace. Mr. Price's work also was done, for the telegraph from Urga to Irkutsk was again in operation and thus communication was established with Peking.

The morning after my arrival, Mr. Guptil and I rode out to see the town. Never have I visited such a city of contrasts! The outermost portion where we were living is like one of the old American frontier outposts during Indian days. High stockades of unpeeled timbers surround every house, and there is nothing of the Oriental in a general view except now and then a Chinese gate or a Mongol temple. The city is built on the bank of the Toola River, 3,700 feet

above sea-level, and across the valley are the undulating forest-clad hills of the Bogdin-ol ("God's Mountain"). This is a vast game-preserve in which herds of wapiti, pigs, and deer roam in safety. The tales of the game to be found there make a sportsman's pulses leap, but an attempt at invasion would be to court death, for it is patrolled by two thousand Lamas, who insure its sanctity.

The Chinese business section of Urga, known as *mai-ma-ching*, is separated from the Mongol part by the Russian settlement. Altogether, the city extends for five miles on the bank of the river. The Russian houses, scattered along the road, are a queer mixture of wood and plaster, and their ornate, gaily painted gables produce a strange effect in comparison with the architecture of the rest of the city. The inhabitants number about 10,000 Chinese, 2,000 Russians, and 50,000 Mongols, of which 35,000 are Lamas.

All of Urga is interesting, but the Mongol section is by far the most picturesque. Off the wide main street are numerous narrow alleys packed with native shops and overlooked by an enormous temple encircled with the tiny houses of the Lama city.

The streets are fascinating beyond description. One feels as though one were in the midst of a great circus when a group of Mongols gallops wildly down the street, past Russian carts, lines of camels, and caravans of mules and oxen. On their heads the men wear all the types of covering one learned to know in the pictures of ancient Cathay, from the high-peaked hat of yellow and black through the whole strange gamut to the helmet with streaming peacock plumes. But were I to tell about them all, I should have left none of my poor descriptive phrases for the women.

It is hopeless to attempt to draw a word-picture of a Mongol woman! A photograph will help, but to be appreciated she must be seen in all her color. To begin with the dressing of her hair. If all the women of the Orient competed to produce a strange and fantastic type, I do not believe that they could excel what the Mongol matrons have developed by themselves.

The hair is plaited over a frame into



THREE MONGOL WOMEN AND A LAMA

two enormous flat bands, curved like the horns of a mountain-sheep and reinforced with heavy bars of silver. Each horn ends in a silver plaque studded with bits of colored glass or stone, and supports a pendant braid like a riding-quirt. On her head between the horns she wears a silver cap elaborately chased and flashing with "jewels." Surmounting this is a "saucer" hat of black and yellow. Her skirt is of gorgeous figured silk or cloth and the jacket is of like material with prominent "puffs" upon the shoulders. She wears huge leather boots similar to those of the men, and when in full array she has a whole portière of bead-work suspended from the region of her ears. The elaborate head-dress is adopted only by married women, and the maidens wear their hair in simple braids. She is altogether satisfying to the lover of fantastic Oriental costumes except in the matter of foot-gear, and this slight exception might be allowed, for she has so amply decorated every other available part of her anatomy.

In the great Lama temple on the hill there is a full-length statue of Buddha, eighty feet high, and I was fortunate in witnessing an unusual ceremony to which women were admitted. As they

filed through the door each was given a few drops of holy water from a filthy jug and they then prostrated themselves before the idol, kissing the silken drape about its feet and not forgetting to gather up a handful of sacred dirt from the floor before they rose.

Outside, the populace was busy turning prayer-wheels, and in another temple five hundred Lamas sat in rows while obeisance was being performed to a high official. We could stay there only a few moments, however, for the odors from unwashed humanity were almost overpowering.

Mr. Guptil and I rode across the plain one morning to see the palace of the "Living God." He is third in rank among the Lamist hierarchy, in which he is known as the Cheptsun-dampa (Tibetan for "Venerable Best") Hutukhtu (the Mongol word for "saintly"). He lives something over a mile from the Lama city, on the opposite side of the river, hard against the base of Bogdin-ol.

His palace is surrounded by an eight-foot stockade of white posts and is by no means as impressive as the Dalai-Lama's residence at Lhasa. The central pavilion is white with gilded cupolas and smaller pavilions at the side have roofs

of green. Surrounding these are temple-like structures, probably the residences for members of his court.

Many strange stories are told of the mysterious "Living God" which tend to show him "as of the earth earthy," and inordinately fond of strong drink. It is said that in former days he sometimes left his "heaven" to revel with convivial foreigners in Urga, but all this is gossip, and we are discussing a very saintly person. His passion for Occidental trinkets and inventions is well known, however, and, as I remarked in the first pages of this article, his palace is wired for telephones and electric lights. It is said that he leaves the ship of state to the guidance of his ministers, and the peaceful conditions of Mongolia during these days of strife seem to show that their heads have been wise and their hands strong.

There is much more to be told about Urga and Hutukhtu and his people, but it would require a book to do it justice instead of the limited space of a magazine article. Neither can I tell in detail of the vicissitudes of our return journey across the desert.

In this article I have tried to present a general sketch of a region about which there is much misinformation and which is destined to play an important rôle in the commercial development of the Far East.

The coming of the motor-car marks the first mile-stone in the annihilation of these great waste spaces. I might better say "wasted" spaces, for nowhere, except in Siberia, have I seen unoccupied country more pregnant with possibilities.

The prevailing impression that this part of the Gobi Desert is a land of shifting sand, incapable of producing anything except dust for Peking storms, could hardly be more untrue. On the way to Urga, the central section for perhaps two hundred miles is an arid region which will be least productive, but this is nothing like the deserts of Arizona. The Chinese have already demonstrated beyond dispute the possibilities for agriculture of the plains beyond Kalgan, and I wish the world might see the crops of oats, wheat, millet, buckwheat, and potatoes which have been forthcoming under their industrious development.

Hundreds of horses, sheep, and goats already roam the grassy hills between Turin and Urga, and these might be increased to hundreds of thousands without overcrowding.

But there is the even more practical consideration of speed in transportation which will inevitably turn the eyes of the world toward Mongolia. Glance at the map and my remarks will be elucidated. At the present time, from Shanghai, the great trade port of China, the shortest connection with the Trans-Siberian Railroad and London is by means of the line *via* Tientsin, Mukden, Harbin, and Chita. In other words, by traveling two sides of a great triangle.

Now follow the route from Tientsin to Peking, Kalgan, Urga, and Irkutsk. This is the base of the triangle. With the construction of a railroad across Mongolia there is a direct connection from Shanghai with the Trans-Siberian line at Irkutsk, and the passage to London is shortened by at least four days. The laying of the tracks would be child's play in railroad construction, and correspondingly inexpensive.

It should not be supposed that the building of this railroad is a new idea. Its importance has been obvious for years, but not long ago an agreement was made by the Russians and Chinese in which each nation pledged itself not to construct a railway without the consent of the other. With the changed post-war conditions this argument might readily be modified and British or American be employed.

An important political consideration, however, would be the attitude of the Japanese. It can readily be seen that such a railroad would draw a large part of the freight and passenger traffic between Europe and the Far East away from Manchuria, which the Japanese are making such desperate efforts to control. This would hardly be to their liking, and it is conceivable that they would oppose the project with all their strength.

Nevertheless, the building of the railroad is inevitable. Sooner or later the Gobi Desert, which the motor-car already has conquered, will be crossed by lines of steel and the mystery of Mongolia will be lost forever.

Signs and Portents

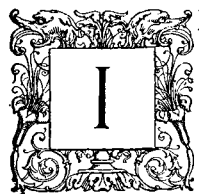
BY MARGARET CAMERON

Author of "The Seven Purposes"

[At various times in the past, *Harper's Magazine* has printed notable articles summing up the work and the views of leaders in the field of psychical research. Such articles as those by Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor J. H. Hyslop, and others have attracted the widest attention.

The present article, by a writer already well known to readers of the *Magazine*, gains an added interest from the fact that it comes at a time when the subject is apparently uppermost in the minds of thousands of intelligent men and women in every part of the world, who, turning from the tragedy of the World War and their own bereavements are asking with increased earnestness the eternal question, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

The *Magazine* makes no comment upon the actual source or ultimate significance of the story that the author tells in these pages. For her entire sincerity, however, it is prepared to vouch. It is to be pointed out that, although the dates of occurrences have been checked up with great care, it is quite possible that in the absence of any absolutely definite and authenticated records of all the actions of the war, errors of statement as to dates may have been made.—EDITOR.]



IF it be true that "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas," we may take heart, for not one but many signs, both sought and unsought, have been given to us recently out of the Invisible. While I am only one of many persons to whom these amazing assurances have come in one form or another, it is my purpose to set forth here certain incidents of my own experience having to do with public interests, hoping that those who remember the words of John—"try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world"—may recognize the signs as true signs and heed the warnings accompanying and following them.

Not that I seek to assume in any way the mantle of the prophet. My participation in this matter is entirely practical and impersonal, and is akin to that of the wireless operator who receives, and in turn transmits to those for whom they are intended, the messages conveyed through his subtly attuned instrument. Until convinced by my own experience, I had not the slightest belief in the possibility of communicating with those in

a life beyond our own, nor had I cherished a conviction that individual life continued after the death of the body. Neither had I been sufficiently interested in psychic phenomena to follow their development nor to read any book connected with the subject.

Twenty-five years ago, or thereabout, I played with a *planchette* for some time, as most young persons in more recent years have played with a Ouija board, and I was amused and puzzled by the extraordinary things it sometimes did under my hands; but I never for a moment took it seriously, never assumed that the words it wrote were dictated by a disembodied personality, and never gave much thought to the explanation of the phenomenon, content to leave the solution of that problem, with many another, to the slow, laborious processes of the scientist. Eventually, unwilling to be responsible for the faith some of my friends were beginning to manifest in what to me was merely a toy, I gave up using the *planchette* and for fifteen or twenty years I never saw one.

Early in 1918 a friend, seeking comfort for the death of her only son, Frederick, learned of these early experiences of mine and asked me to try to get into communication with him. She had little faith in the possibility of success; I had