

into a firm unity which allows their humanity full play, yet never makes them offend each other's feelings.

At noon on the next day we arrive at a broad flat valley completely encircled by mountains. The ground here is utterly bare, for all the grass has been devoured by hundreds of camels and sheep who regularly take their midday meal at this spot. In the middle of the valley lie two excellent springs, one of them belonging to the Harb Bedouins and the other to the Meteor Bedouins. In this poor parched country herds of animals often have to go several days' journey from where the shepherds' tents are pitched to find a grazing place. At noon each day the shepherds gather

at a spring that is the common property of the tribe. On this occasion we find the valley full of animals, and more herders and more beasts keep pouring in from the sunlit horizon. Haste and excitement prevail about the water holes, for it is no small matter to water so many thirsty creatures. The shepherds fill little sacks with water, using their camels to help them, and they will sing a rhythmical refrain of 'Hey ho, hey ho, heave ho, hey ho.'

The voice of the desert speaks in this monotonous refrain. Here is the essence of Arabia captured by the human voice and expressed in an endlessly repeated rhythm that seems to have originated in no human throat.

A GOBI DESERT INTERLUDE¹

BY SVEN HEDIN

It was one of those days that none of us will ever forget, though it passed as all other days had passed. It included marching, pitching camp, taking tea and meals, attending to the camels, seeing that they were given a chance to graze, drink, and rest, and all the other innumerable duties of caravan life. We made our usual observations, wrote in our diaries, made sketches and took photographs, released a balloon, and in short did everything we were accustomed to do. Nevertheless, a shimmer of mystery, legend, and eternity hovered over this day, a distinctive atmosphere. Taking one farther step into the enormous Gobi Desert, we felt as the crew of the Santa

Maria must have felt when, having sailed westward for weeks and weeks without sighting land, they marveled that the sea never ended. But on this momentous day we came to an oasis, and realized that after a refreshing night we should leave it and should again have to steer our course across the wide, open sea of sand.

For that day we arrived at the fabulous island of the Phoenix, where we enjoyed a short period of rest, savoring each fleeting hour of ease. It was hard indeed to depart — so hard that this day made a particularly deep impression on our memory.

At five o'clock in the morning a brazier of glowing coals had been brought into my tent to dissipate the cold night air and make it easier for me

¹From *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna National Liberal daily)

to wash, while Haude, Dettmann, and Von Kaul, assisted by two of our students, released the pilot balloon. Mento and I started to ride westward at our usual swift pace. We left camp at quarter past seven. Almost two hours before us Haslund and Hummel, Professor Siu, Hawang, Ma, and Tsui had departed together with the main part of our caravan, and we had only to follow their footsteps.

The ground was hard and salty, and southward to the left extended a high barren expanse, the beginnings of the Ala-Shan Desert, which rises in pyramidal and delta-shaped dunes from the level sandless plain. After a few minutes we came upon a hugh encampment where bales of merchandise were arranged in double rows and at least two hundred camels were waiting to be saddled with their burdens. It was a Chinese commercial caravan going from Gutyantse to Kwei-hwa-cheng. The watchdogs of the merchants soon wearied of barking at us when they saw that we continued our pace slowly and peacefully. Northward, on our right, the endless sea of the desert extended to the level blue horizon. It was as if we were riding along a coast, or even traversing a narrow stretch of land between two bodies of water, for to the south stretched the fruitless yellow sea of sand, the lifeless desert, pathless and devoid of springs. On this side the horizon assumed a different shape, the peaks of the dunes looking like the teeth of a saw.

The small details of the part of the earth's surface across which we were now slowly moving were full of variety. Now we would be riding over hard gravel steppes where stunted plants grew at considerable intervals from each other. Now we would be skirting the northern point of a little ridge of ground that would come to a cone-shaped summit like a lighthouse on the

coast. Now we would be riding over sand between the dunes, which were crowned by dark green thick-leaved tamarisks ten or twelve feet high, real symbols of rest and peace, just like the cypresses and innumerable graves of Western Asia.

The road is like a thin strand binding Sinkiang, the biggest of all the provinces, to the rest of China, though it is only a simple footpath with the footprints of innumerable camels on either side. Along this path the bells of the caravan go singing their ancient melodies; here the Chinese drone their songs; here passes the low rustling, stealthy stride of the camels; while skeletons of fallen martyrs mark our way like milestones. If we had counted these bones from the time our journey began we should have amassed an astounding pile of statistics. No caravan path in the world can compare with this one in length, and our planet contains no longer road of traffic connecting cities, nations, and peoples.

For two hours we kept advancing toward two small black spots on the western horizon. Gradually they grew larger, and presently we perceived that they were two groves of thickly leaved trees with high, mighty trunks, grouped close together, with a narrow alley passing between. We had not seen such a sight since we had left Peking, and I could hardly trust my eyes. Trees, lofty living trees, in this boundless waste. Was it a phantom or a dream? Could it really be true? I could hardly have been more surprised if some great vessel like the Empress of Russia had suddenly appeared before us in the distant blue spaces of this desert sea.

The grove on our left consisted of about fifty trees, and the one on the right of about one hundred and fifty. We pitched our tents on the western edge of the larger grove in the cool, refreshing shade. The encampment

was not laid out in the usual fashion. Our tents were pitched in a circle, leaving a little open place in the middle between the trees. Here we planned to light a fire in the evening. My tent was pitched under a mighty poplar tree, so that I enjoyed the cool shade as long as possible.

The little oasis, which consists of several springs, is called Olon-Torog — The Many Poplars. I recognized here my old forest friend the wild Asiatic poplar, with its rounded summit of thick leaves. It is known as the *populus diversifolia*, the diverse-leaved poplar, so called because its new leaves are small and lancet-shaped, while the leaves on its old branches are heart-shaped, with toothed edges. What surprised Hummel was the open space between the two groves, which rose like two islands out of the desert sea. No single tree grew beyond the bounds of these islands, and all were full-grown. Not one young poplar was to be seen. I felt that this fine forest had no hope of continuing to exist, since wandering camels do not spare a single new sprout.

Most of the trees were at the peak of their strength and beauty. Some were old and only barely maintained their existence. A few had lost their royal crowns but still produced fresh shoots with lancet-formed leaves on their stumpy tops. Others had died, but their roots still kept them up. One rotten tree had been uprooted by a storm and lay on the ground like a fallen hero. The loftiest of the living trees were fifty or sixty feet high. As we moved about beneath them, their trunks and leafy tops seemed like the pillars and vaults of a Gothic cathedral.

Our ships of the desert had landed us on an atoll, where cool clear water awaited us under the sago palms. My first thought was to wait here several days and taste the full pleasure of this little earthly paradise. Thick

reeds grew between the poplars, and I observed with pleasure how ravenously the camels devoured them. With their soft, fleshy lips they would work one tender green reed after another into their mouths, easily biting its tough stem, chewing it between their strong teeth, and swallowing it, preparatory to taking a new mouthful which would follow its predecessor half a minute later. One of the greatest pleasures of a long journey in the desert is to see the camels grazing, especially in such a lovely place as Olon-Torog.

After my tent was pitched I took out my writing desk as usual and sat under the thick leafy shade of the trees, looking south over the enormous expanse of yellow barren sand dunes, which seemed to threaten our little oasis like breakers of a stormy sea. Our island was clothed in the peace and rest of the Sabbath, while about us lowered the great open ocean. The most delightful thing of all was the rustling of the tree tops, and especially the rustling of the mighty poplar to whose roots my tent was fastened. Nothing is more charming or more mysterious than the play of the wind in the trees, especially in a country like this. It seems to bring greetings from home and from those one loves.

When I expressed some such thought to Siu Ping Chang, he reflected a minute and replied: '*Vous avez raison. C'est jolie, c'est très poétique.*'

How quickly the hours flew now that the day's march was over and we took our pleasure under the palms of the island of the Phoenix bird. Presently we received visitors in the form of three wandering lamas or begging monks, who had been traveling for five years with their three camels. They had come from Tashatu Khan, a province of Outer Mongolia that lies about due east from Kobdo, and were now returning from Peking, headed homeward.

They would spend weeks, or even months, in each monastery they passed, and the rest of the time begged their way from hut to hut. Upon these two sources they levied their tribute, which was gladly given.

The day was nearing its end and the sun was sinking in the western sea. In the open place between our tents a huge bonfire had been erected, whose base was built of three mighty logs from one of the fallen poplar trees. A pyramid was then constructed, the inside of which was filled with branches and twigs. When it was dark we formed a circle around the bonfire, which fierce flames devoured. Everyone witnessed this show, even the Chinese, except Siu and Ma, who wandered off on foot among the high sand dunes. At first we expected to have to search for them the next morning, but presently they saw our fire and lit another one of their own in reply.

Our phonograph was pulled out and the old familiar marches, opera melodies, and songs were intoned upon the cool night air. *Carmen*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Madame Butterfly*, *La Bohème* — not one of them was forgotten. But the loveliest sound of all was the rustling of the night breeze in the poplar trees above. The stars winked down through the leaves, and the moon rose above the dunes, climbing over the tree trunks. Then we heard another melody, older than all the phonograph tunes in the world. A big caravan was approaching from the west. Its bells gave forth different tones, and the whole rhythmical effect was utterly charming. Suddenly the noise stopped. Apparently the caravan had halted at the tents of the three monks. Ten minutes later, however, the bells began ringing again, and their sound gradually died in the east.

Serat came to the fireside and told us that the caravan consisted of a hundred

camels, thirty merchants, and twenty servants on their way from Hami to Gashun-nor, but that when they were six days distant from their destination they had been attacked by robbers, who had taken fourteen hundred dollars and all their furs. A hundred dollars had been concealed, but it was already exhausted. The bandits had ignored the merchandise, hides, wool, and dried fruits. But there was a comic side to the tragic fate that had overtaken the caravan. One of the merchants had armed himself with a gun, but, having been told by a monk that people should not carry weapons, he had left the weapon behind in the monastery. It was therefore an easy matter for four robbers to terrorize fifty men and treat them as they pleased.

Our fire was burning yellow, red, and green, and when the wood was completely consumed thousands of little sparks rose into the air. Shortly after ten Siu and Ma returned, hungry as wolves, and devoured their evening meal beside the fire. As a result, the rest of us felt our appetites returning, and we all drank tea and had something to eat. One of the young men leaped over the fire and, executed Russian dances. His enthusiasm was wild and unrestrained. No one could have suspected that a long, strenuous desert journey lay behind us, and that a still longer one lay ahead of us. Here we rested for a night on the island of the Phoenix bird. The fire cast a red glow on the bats that clung to my tent. Even at eleven we found it hard to break up. Red flames arose from the sunken bonfire like eager hands vainly trying to reach the stars, whose glow the blinding firelight obliterated. But when the fire sank and darkness again settled over the island of the Phoenix bird the stars shone on, clearer than before.

RITES AND RITUALS OF MOTHER ASIA¹

BY BERNHARD KELLERMANN

MONKS AND MONASTERIES

THE Spittug monastery was founded about five hundred years ago, by the reformer Zongkapa; or perhaps we should say that the power of that saintly man brought it into existence overnight. It is situated on a rocky peak high above the Indus Valley, and surrounded by shimmering snow-capped mountain peaks. A lama leads me up through a labyrinth of dark passages and narrow, steep stairways to the top story of the monastery. Here he kicks open a door with his foot. 'Would you like to see our *kushok*? He is ready to receive you.'

An excited little Pekingese dog rushes up to me barking. I find the new abbot of the monastery seated alone and in silence in a little bare room.

He is crouched on a stool that is covered with a carpet, and the setting seems appropriate to his extreme holiness. Before him stands a little lacquered desk, a few brass dishes, some faïence porcelain cups, and a tiny vase of flowers. Everything is tastefully and thoughtfully arranged. A picture of Buddha painted on cloth hangs above a little lacquer cabinet on one side of him, and to his left and right are little windows through which you can see the snow-capped mountains and the green light of the Indus Valley. The kushok bows cordially, even humbly, with some embarrassment. He is a handsome fellow with typically

Chinese eyes and delicate, well-cared-for little hands.

The kushok looks like a boy of ten or eleven. Anxious to display his learning, he blushes at every question and clasps his little hands nervously together. For three years he has been the abbot of the famous Spittug monastery, and during this time has but rarely left its precincts. How robust and healthy the little peasant children who take lessons from the lamas appear in comparison with this boy. Nevertheless, he says that the cloister pleases him and that he is happy. Soon he will go to Lassa to pursue his studies further.

He shows me a few photographs in haste and confusion. But presently a number of lamas enter with a few of their students, who crane their necks curiously and begin to laugh and clamor. An old lama hustles them away, but the young abbot does not even smile, in spite of all the noise and laughter.

The little kushok is the reincarnation of the deceased abbot, whose heart is preserved in a silver shrine. A few years before his death this man named his successor. In that year he announced that in such and such a village in such and such a valley he would be born again as the son of a certain woman, and in this way the boy came to occupy his present position.

Usually the successors of the abbots are appointed at Lassa or chosen by members of the monastery. It is said

¹ From *Berliner Tageblatt* (Liberal daily)