

**CHARLES NOTSON WRITES**

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that night, none of us slept much. Fortunately, we had some bug powder which we dusted freely about, but in spite of that all of us, especially the children carried hundreds of reminders of the night. I counted twenty fleas in the bedding the next morning, and I think I folded up as many more in the blankets, for we did not get rid of all of them for several days. The only difference between sleeping on a native bed, and on the floor, is that you are on a different level, and in cold weather a fire under the bed heats the beaten earth of its surface. Simon's Beauty Rest mattresses would be nice to put on top of such a bed, or even a good old straw tick like we use here at home on our rope beds.

But what is a small thing like a flea or two? The day was to bring to us the thrill of ascending unto the plateau of the grazing lands of the Tibetans. As our small cavalcade wound up the valley crossing and recrossing the stream, it seemed we never would reach the top. Once the hired animal carrying our two boxes of clothing to wear at conference fell down in the midst of the stream giving our watertight (?) boxes a good dip. But we soon forgot that incident when far up the road ahead we caught a glimpse of a man on horseback, with a gun strapped on his back. Friend or foe? We were near enough the grass lands that it might be either. He did not see us until he rounded another bend, and then we were in plain view. Immediately he leaped from the saddle and unslung his rifle. Ruth said, "Is that a robber?" Then he began waving his hat excitedly over his head, and I return-

ed the salute. He was one of three Tibetan men whom Mr. Griebenow had armed with his own guns and sent over to meet us at the head of the valley, and escort us across the robber infested grass lands to Labrang. He bore a letter from Mr. Griebenow, which he presented together with the ceremonial silk scarf across his wrists, a picturesque Tibetan token of friendliness and respect.

We were glad for the shelter of the tent the escort had pitched at the head of the valley, for the last half hour we had been in a down-pour of rain. In the tent Ruth mixed milk for the children's dinner, and we drank buttered tea, in the residue of which we threw parched barley flour, mixing it with our hands—a regular Tibetan quick lunch. About that time the rain abated and I stepped outside to see how on earth the men, huddling about the tea kettle in their felt rain coats, had managed to keep the fire going. A Lhama priest had just borrowed the "bellows" and was blowing the cow manure fire into a blaze for his own tea. If you ever saw a bagpipe player, you can appreciate the technique used to run a Tibetan bellows. An iron nozzle nine or ten inches long is held against the coals firmly by the toes and the feet. The operator is seated. He opens the mouth of the sheep hide bag, then suddenly snaps it shut by pulling its extremities in opposite directions with his hands. Already his right elbow is pressing the inflated stomach of the skin against his hip, and lo! the smoking coals have leaped into a fire. Of course, the inflating and deflating operation must be continued for some time on an old fire.

The clouds had broken, and while I gazed out over the vast emptiness of the grass plateau, the men struck camp. I mounted, took Mary in my arms, and taking one last look at our first camp fire, saw a vulture sweep down for a mouthful of barley flour the priest had left on the coals as a thank offering to the gods for a pleasant stop and tea.

The rain was not over, however, and after proceeding until about five, the men asked if we wished to pitch camp. The foreign tent had a canvas floor, and we had oiled sheets along to spread down, but we questioned the advisability of pitching the tent in the rain, and sleeping on the wet grass with so little under us. Even if we and the children were OK, there were the men without shelter. They assured us they would be all right wrapped in their felts, keeping watch. The promise of a shelter at the government breeding station caused us to decide against camping in the open. We reached there long after dark, having traveled about 40 miles, and having seen one band of robbers who hid out and ran when they saw our escort's guns. It was a big day. The new but dilapidated building offered protection against the cutting night wind, and the damp, and we had board beds to spread our quilts and blankets on. What luxury! This Government project that once had Clydesdale horses and Holstein cows in its barns is at a standstill due to hostilities.

It would weary you if I were to tell of each day of the trip in detail. Suffice it to say that the fifteen remaining miles to Labrang were made safely. Our escort kept flanking us on the mounds and knolls of the prairie-like country, and claim to have sighted three robber bands that AM. One of the men shot a marmot (very similar to our prairie dogs) in which that country, judging by their burrows, abounds.

As I had an examination in Chinese to take while in Labrang, I did not have time to look around that colorful trading post with its famous monastery as much as I should like to have. The Griebenows live in a two-story Tibetan-like house. It is a bit boxy looking on the outside, but has plenty of space inside to fix it quite cozy and homelike. The presence of the radio with broadcasts of news from Manila, London, and Chungking, helped add to the homelike atmosphere. Just yesterday (this is now Oct. 15) I received the Shanghai Evening Post of Aug. 14, containing the news we heard briefly in Labrang.

Continuing the journey with the Griebenows, we had some interesting experiences, among which was the stop in a half-Tibetan, half-Moslem place, where, as Mr. Griebenow put it, "The horses had to sleep in our laps, or rather we had to sleep with the horses in our laps." There were only two brick beds available, and they were just a few feet from the horses' tails. But a night or two later we had one worse than that. It was a de-luxe inn with separate rooms for the two families, but the doorway to our room opened on the passage from the stable to street, and when the street door was shut, the only ventilation for the stable, which was on a lower level, was through our window. I woke up about midnight, nearly suffocated, but found that putting my head way out the window would still not avail to bring me in contact with fresh air. The rush of warm exhalation from the lungs of warm ex-cows and sheep, together with the exudation from their bodies, sweeping along with it the pungent smell of—well, why go into detail? I managed to get an oil sheet to cover the doorway fairly well, and then enjoyed an occasional breath of fresh pure air from the street. If you had seen the street you might question the last, but remember, air-conditioning has not become popular out here yet...

Do you know what we would like? If some of you would bring some old Gazette Times to the meeting and ask the secretary to wrap them up and mail them to us. We never get any Heppner news since the family moved away. Dad used to mail us a G.-T. once in a while. Mother does tell us what she hears, but that is not as much as when she lived there.

Did you see that one in the Reader's Digest about the New York couple who adopted a "home town" out in Ohio. It made me feel pretty bad to think that I have a real home town in Eastern Oregon that I don't know as much about now as that couple know about the one they adopted. The last G.-T. I saw had something in it about the passing of

a street paving bond. Jeff Jones was active in the project. Mary Monahan being a stewardess on the Pres. Jefferson, was a reminder that if one kept in touch it might be possible to make contact with Heppner people in a good many parts of the world. Margaret seems to meet them in New York. Any explorers

gone out from Heppner recently?

The stamp on the envelope may be of interest to some young collector. There is only a small issue. I bought out the entire supply sent to this office. The inscription reads, "In commemoration of America's becoming a nation, one hundred fifty years ago..."



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