



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Three Roads to Urga (circa 1920s)

Extracted on Apr-16-2024 08:57:10

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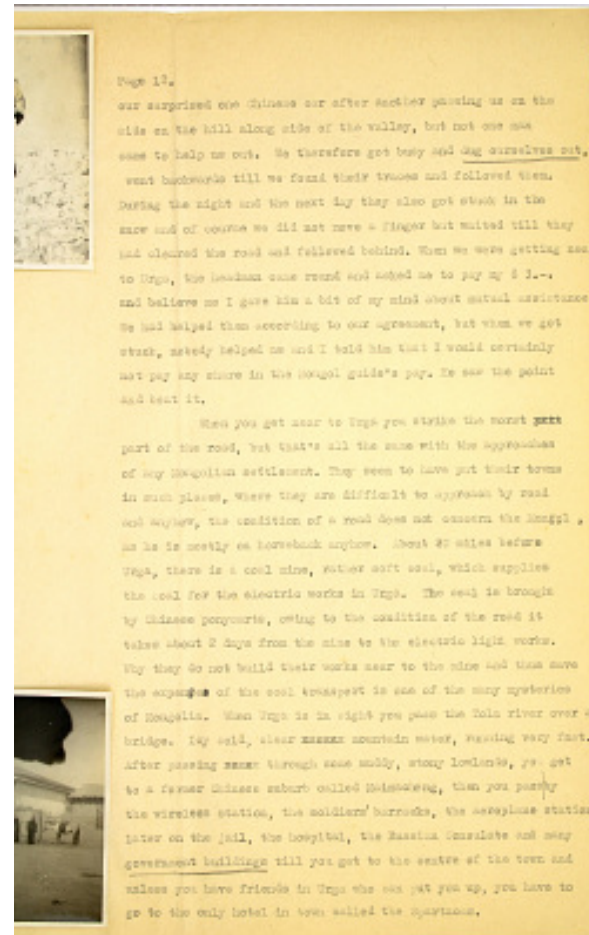
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our surprised one Chinese car after another passing us on the side on the hill along the side of the valley, but not one man came to help us out. We therefore got busy and dug ourselves out, went backwards till we found their traces and followed them. During the night and the next day they also got stuck in the snow and of course we did not move a finger but waited till they had cleared the road and followed behind. When we were getting near to Urga, the headman came round and asked me to pay my \$3.-. and believe me I gave him a bit of my mind about mutual assistance. We had helped them according to our agreement, but when we got stuck, nobody helped us and I told him that I would certainly not pay any share in the Mongol guide's pay. He saw the point and beat it.

When you get near to Urga you strike the worst ~~part~~ part of the road, but that's all the same with the approaches of any Mongolian settlement. They seem to have put their towns in such places, where they are difficult to approach by road and anyhow, the condition of a road does not concern the Mongol, as he is mostly on horseback anyhow. About 20 miles before Urga, there is a coal mine, rather soft coal, which supplies the coal for the electric works in Urga. The coal is brought by Chinese ponycarts, owing to the condition of the road it takes about 2 days from the mine to the electric light works. Why they do not build their works near to the mine and thus save the expense of the transport of the coal is one of the many mysteries of Mongolia. When Urga is in sight you pass the Tola river over a bridge. Icy cold, clear ~~maoun~~ mountain water, running very fast. After passing some ~~maoun~~ through some muddy, stony lowlands, you get to a former Chinese suburb called Maimacheng, then you pass by the wireless station, the soldiers' barracks, the aeroplane station, later on the jail, the hospital, the Russian Consulate and many government buildings till you get to the centre of the town and unless you have friends in Urga who can put you up, you have to go to the only hotel in town called the Spartacus.



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