

multitudes of the Pharaoh's rat, on which the people live all the summer time. Indeed they have plenty of all sorts of wild creatures, for the country they inhabit is very wild and trackless.<sup>2</sup>

And you must know that this King possesses one tract of country which is quite impassable for horses, for it abounds greatly in lakes and springs, and hence there is so much ice as well as mud and mire, that horses cannot travel over it. This difficult country is 13 days in extent, and at the end of every day's journey there is a post for the lodgment of the couriers who have to cross this tract. At each of these post-houses they keep some 40 dogs of great size, in fact not much smaller than donkeys, and these dogs draw the couriers over the day's journey from post-house to post-house, and I will tell you how. You see the ice and mire are so prevalent, that over this tract, which lies for those 13 days' journey in a great valley between two mountains, no horses (as I told you) can travel, nor can any wheeled carriage either. Wherefore they make sledges, which are carriages without wheels, and made so that they can run over the ice, and also over mire and mud without sinking too deep in it. Of these sledges indeed there are many in our own country, for 'tis just such that are used in winter for carrying hay and straw when there have been heavy rains and the country is deep in mire. On such a sledge then they lay a bear-skin on which the courier sits, and the sledge is drawn by six of those big dogs that I spoke of. The dogs have no driver, but go straight for the next post-house, drawing the sledge famously over ice and mire. The keeper of the post-house however also gets on a sledge drawn by dogs, and guides the party by the best and shortest way. And when they arrive at the next station they find a new relay of dogs and sledges ready to take them on, whilst the old relay