

the desert known as Aksai Chin—White Desert. This region had not been anywhere traversed by Europeans, but the compilers of the maps had, as is customary, put in certain features as vaguely reported by natives. These were erroneous, but we, not then knowing definitely our position, were misled by giving some faith to the representations. Finding the mountain system very different from that indicated for what was our actual latitude, and very similar to that indicated for a lower latitude, we were thus confirmed in an error which at the end came near costing us "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

On each day we were sternly asked, by each of the four elements, certain embarrassing questions, and the witness *must answer*. The Fire Spirit said: "How shall you find me, that you may have hot water for your tea and for the warming of your tinned foods?" And we answered: "With the happy trove of yak dung, or the grass-roots, or, these failing, with splinters of our two wooden packing-cases; and these being sacrificed, with this straw torn from pack-saddles, whose bearers are stretched stiff there a mile behind us." Thus, O Fire Spirit, we shall seek you and conjure you to the end that we may have tea, and we shall not ask then your direct comforting of our bones." And the Air Spirit spoke, saying: "How shall you protect your pulpy bodies from me, relentless, cold, as I seek to steal away from them the heat which is their life?" And we answered: "With the sheep's wool, and his hide; and these protections against your sharp tooth we shall not at any time put aside. And at night the