

to Achbar, who composedly interpreted to us: "Now the sahibs see that we must all die if we go on; and shall we go there, or there, or there? It is all the same. Last night the ponies were nearly all dead in the snow. All of us were very cold. You see it is worse around us. But it is not too late, I think, if we go back!"

Just then, at the psychological moment, the snow began falling around us, and even Anginieur, who sympathised less with Lasso's views than I, felt that our lives were now hung on a slender thread, which pulled us backward. Lasso was all wrong about Lanak Pass, but he was all right in respect to the wisdom of sticking closer than a brother to a good descending stream. And now we could hold out but a few days longer, for our grain supply was just two bushels. We had been travelling for more than twenty days without seeing a human being and had no idea where to find them, and we were simply lost. So down we went. There remained much to suffer, but that decision saved us eventually. I remember just a little regret at leaving so splendid, so savage a view. And, as we knew later, the spot was geographically of unique interest. The ridge which stretched its forlorn length to right and left of us separates the Hindustan plains from the central desert. It is the true ridge-pole of the Asiatic continental mass. The snowflakes that fell around us might be divided even as they melted, part going to the hungry sands of the cold northern wastes, part to be warmed in the glistening bosom of the Indian Ocean. Here is such a frontier as Titans would declare for fending wide apart their jealous empires.