

out meat, for our *pièce de resistance*. Then we gripped our belts and had doubts as to Russian civilisation. The men were stolid and uncomplaining, though Mir Mullah's resigned assertion that Allah had surely chosen this spot, as his burial-ground did not tend to make the two younger ones light-hearted. And the old man's voice was distressingly broken and womanish when lifted up in long prayers which every day became more plaintive. There was a note of dissolution in it, of incorporeality, which shivered one's nerves. Was it ugly of me to have Achbar tell him to pray like a man, not like a weeping child?

When we had been in Camp Purgatory a week three crows began to visit us, our only friends. Achbar said these birds would eat nothing but men and horses, and that they knew three days in advance when God meant to give them a feast. We laughed at him and flung stones at the crows. Then we discovered some fish insultingly curling under the ice of a near-by pond. Here was occupation and food, if we were successful. Fish-hooks were found and let down through ice-holes. The cunning beasts viewed our stratagem and sailed away. Several hours of several days were patiently dedicated to such wiles, but each night closed up our silly breaches in their walls, glazing over an undiminished number of these water foxes.

The tenth night was a blue one, for we had laid great stress, when instructing our messengers, upon the importance of sending some word on that day, in case help had been found, even if our men could not themselves return. However, nothing remained