

the men when we reached Altmish Bulak on the seventh noon. The camels had suffered from hunger more than from thirst. In spite of seven days without water, they would not drink till they had filled their stomachs with reeds and prickly camel-thorn. For ourselves, the greatest difficulty had been lack of fuel. The night temperature had averaged nine degrees below zero Fahrenheit, with a minimum of seventeen below. Two or three sticks, fed slowly together, had not made a very satisfactory fire, but we dared not use more for fear of some delaying accident. Some nights I had to write with a pencil, because my fountain pen froze in my hand, though I held it as close to the fire as possible. One night I actually had to eat dinner with my plate in the fire to keep the food from freezing. Yet, thanks to vigorous exercise, none of us suffered from cold, except when the wind blew.

At Altmish Bulak we rested a day, chopping new ice, cutting fagots, and getting ready for a start the next morning toward the ruins of Lulan, thirty miles to the southwest. When Handum Bai went to bring in the camels, he could not find them, though he and the others searched till dark. Only one remained, the little foot-sore animal, which we had kept at home that afternoon to have its shoes patched. During the next twenty-four hours we watched and tended that camel like a sick child. The chances were that we should never find the others. If we threw away everything except food, furs, and instruments, and abandoned all hope of further exploration, the weary little animal might be able to help us to Tikkenlik, the nearest settlement, a hundred and fifty miles away. If it became exhausted, as there was every chance of its doing, or if it succeeded in its vigorous attempts