

leading him, he thought. He had sense enough to examine all the tracks carefully, and discovered that he had followed his own track made in catching the milder camels. If the spirits had been clever enough to raise a little wind and cover the tracks, it would have been the end of Handum Bai, and, perhaps, of the rest of us. As it was, he chose the right track. Once he tried to ride, but found it too cold. In the late afternoon, he foolishly attempted to make a short cut, thus failing to meet the other two men, and almost getting lost again. Toward sunset, he thought that over the rock-ribbed plain of gravel he saw the reedy plateau of Altmish Bulak, rising ten feet above the surrounding dry flood-plain. After dark, he supposed himself near camp, but hearing no answer to his repeated shouts, was about to pass on and camp near the mountains, perhaps to perish of cold. He was planning, so he said, to make the four camels kneel in a square, and crouch down in the middle out of the wind. Then our fire flared up far to the right, and he was saved.

The two men whom I had sent off with the feeble camel found Handum Bai's track the next day, and returned in the afternoon without incident. Judging by what I later saw of the topography, the man must have traveled twenty-five miles each way in his chase after the camels, — fifty miles in twenty hours without food or water. The experience was to me a revelation of the inexorableness of the desert. It was still more remarkable as an illustration of the intensity and endurance which lifelong contact with the desert in the care of his camels had developed in Handum Bai, a man of the mild Chanto race. None of my other men would have done so hardy a deed — only Handum, who from early child-