

quarter of an hour, and then at as much of the country as he could see in the dark. After a time he would turn the camel off the track a little, and sure enough we would find ourselves at a well. The extraordinary manner in which he kept the way surpasses anything I know of. As a rule no track at all could be seen, especially in the sandy districts; but he used to lead us somehow or other, generally by the droppings of the camels of previous caravans, and often by tracks which they had made, which were so faint that I could not distinguish them myself even when pointed out to me. A camel does not leave much of an impression upon gravel, like a beaten-down path in a garden; but the guide, from indications here and there, managed to make out their tracks even in the dark. Another curious thing about him was the way he used to go to sleep walking. His natural mode of progression was by bending right forward, and this seemed to keep him in motion without any trouble to himself, and he might be seen mooning along fast asleep. He had, however, one failing—he was a confirmed opium-smoker; directly camp was pitched he would have out his opium pipe, and he used to smoke off and on till we started again. I was obliged occasionally to differ in opinion from this gentleman, as will be seen further on; but, on the whole, we got on well together, and my feelings towards him at parting were more of sorrow than of anger, for he had a hard life of it going backwards and forwards up and down across the desert almost continuously for twenty years; and his inveterate habit of opium-smoking had used up all the savings he ought to have accumulated after his hard life.

The Mongol assistant, whose name was Ma-te-la, was a careless, good-natured fellow, always whistling or singing, and bursting out into roars of laughter at the slightest thing, especially at any little mishap. He used to think it the best possible joke if a camel deposited one of my boxes on to the ground and knocked the lid off. He never ceased wondering at all my