

this case the wish might easily be father to the thought, but, as I gazed more intently, the vapour partially dispersed, and I was certain that the appearance of smoke was no illusion. The distance, however, was several miles, and, as I was weak through fatigue and hunger, I had frequently to halt. The tall column, rising vertically from the camp-fire through the peaceful morning air, was full of interest, suggesting food and rest and every comfort. As I plodded on, my eyes were fixed upon it, and so absorbed was I in its contemplation that it was almost a surprise when, about half-past eight, I saw Pike and one of the caravan men on mules close beside me. They had brought, among other supplies, the favourite restorative, a mixture of rum and water. This proved highly beneficial and I remarked that, for one in my weakened condition, the proportion of spirit was judicious, and did not err on the side of too much, to which Pike laughingly retorted that even in my weakened condition I liked my liquor strong, for the bottle had contained more rum than water. Having had a hearty breakfast of cold meat and biscuits, I climbed the mule that Pike had ridden and, with feelings of relief and general goodwill, rode back towards camp. About eleven o'clock we approached the caravan, where most of the men were seated round the fire. They came streaming out, salaaming to me and expressing their hopes that I had not suffered much from spending a night in the open air. Towards them, however, my gratitude was not overflowing; I replied that my absence seemed to have caused them no anxiety, and that they evidently cared nothing for their sahib so long as they were supplied with food and other comforts.

I at once agreed to Pike's suggestion that we should halt for the day, and soon I was sound asleep on Nature's couch, the ground. The bare ground, if fairly dry and moderately free from stones, provides an admirable