

sustenance in it, and as they wandered about in search of something edible had at least the benefit of exercise in the frosty night. It would have been easy to bring chopped straw from Dia had I known the true state of matters, but now it was too late to send for it; expostulation with the guide was useless, and I had simply to submit to the habitual practice of falsehood on the part of those to whom I looked for information. Snow fell during the night and overspread the fine clay with which the track in many places was covered. When we started in the morning I went on ahead as usual to examine the track, but before I had gone far was recalled by the shouting, which told me that one of the animals had fallen. The fresh snow, mixed with the underlying clay, had balled in the feet of the ponies and donkeys, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the animals could walk or even stand. To this cause of trouble the caravan men had paid not the slightest attention, and one of the donkeys, moving along a comparatively excellent track nearly eight inches wide, had slipped and fallen down the declivity. The donkey was killed by the fall, but his load sustained little damage, only one tin of Bovril having been destroyed. The temperature was very low, and the clay-snow mixture froze so hard that the hacking of it out of the hoofs with knives on the narrow track was both difficult and dangerous. Though the famished animals became restive and resented the operation, the task was accomplished, and by sending the yaks ahead we had the path trodden and cleared of snow, so that this source of trouble disappeared almost entirely.

Having climbed a steep but not very difficult ascent of 300 or 400 feet, we came to a very vile piece of ground. The narrow track was steep, rather a drop than merely a descent, beset with protruding rocks and strewn with loose stones, large and small. We worked with picks,