

all the names are connected with springs and hills, as, for example, Chesme-gul or Chuk-ab ("flower-spring" and "dropping water"), the latter, because the water trickles and drops from a small valley. Nerekher-kuh and Baba Hamet are hills in our immediate neighbourhood.

The snow-covering on my tent increases the warmth within, and I sit with the tent flap wide open and watch the large feathery flakes fall. The men who lie outside are already buried in snow, but they sleep well, trying who can snore the loudest. Otherwise the night is still, only the snow swishing gently; the sheet on the tent increases in thickness, melts underneath from the warmth of the fire in the mangal, and freezes again till the tent cloth becomes as hard and brittle as a biscuit. Our new travelling companion, the yellow dog, is still very reserved and bad-tempered, but he seems to have resolved to take life philosophically.

When I awoke in the morning it felt bitterly cold after a temperature down to 7° , and a thick mist lay over the dreary steppe. But it had already thinned at nine o'clock, and only a wisp as small as a sword-blade floated to the east. After a cold night the day broke brilliantly clear, and the sunshine fell on the facets of the thousands of snow crystals, producing a dazzling reflexion from the white ground. Without dark glasses the excessive light would have been unbearable. Not a breath of air could be felt; the smoke rose straight up from the camp-fires. The camels stood out exceedingly sharply against the pure white background. The snow covered all the country in a thick layer, and patches hung on all the shrubs like tufts of cotton-wool on a Christmas tree. The whole country was wintry and frozen, and the cold of night still lingered on the ground.

Our water sacks were frozen hard as stone, and so the leaky ones were thoroughly closed up, but this natural method of sealing up is risky, for cracks may easily be caused by the shaking on the camels' backs. My tent was frozen so hard that it could easily have stood by itself without pole or stay, and the cloth crackled when the Cossacks rolled it up for packing. The men who slept