

the wind, that Kasim's advance party had always dug their wells for us to camp at. The water, scanty enough for so large a party, was very bitter at the first two camps and scarcely fit for human consumption. Curiously enough as we moved farther away from the river it became comparatively fresh.

The winter of the desert had now set in with full rigour. Fortunately in daytime while on the march there was little to complain of. Though the temperature in the shade never rose above freezing-point, yet there was no wind, so that I could enjoy without discomfort the delightfully pure air of the desert. As always when I moved on true desert ground in the winter and the atmosphere kept calm, I felt thoroughly refreshed by its absolute repose, which nothing living disturbs, and by its cleanness.

But at night, when the thermometer would go down to minimum temperatures from zero to ten degrees below zero Fahrenheit, my little tent, notwithstanding its extra serge lining, was a terribly cold abode. When the temperature, in spite of the embers kept in a little 'Arctic stove', had gone down to about six degrees below freezing-point, writing became impossible. Then I had to retire among the heavy blankets and rugs of my camp bed. There 'Yolchi Beg' ('Sir Traveller'), as 'Dash', my little fox terrier, was known by his Turki incognito name, had long before sought a refuge, though he too was provided with a good fur coat.

On the evening of the fourth day after entering the desert, two of the men sent ahead returned to report that Kasim's party had failed to trace the ruins. It was now the turn of old Turdi, my 'treasure-seeking' guide, to prove his superior knowledge of this dreary region, though he had only once