

load weighing between four and five hundred pounds. Four galvanized iron tanks full of water, also soon frozen hard, were to serve as a safe reserve. In addition we had some thirty donkeys laden with smaller bags of ice. They were to march on for two days beyond the last point where drinkable water or else ice was available and leave their loads there as a sort of half-way depot. Of course, they themselves would need water; but with a two days' thirst on them, and relieved of loads, they could be trusted to return quickly to the Tarim.

As to the camels, they were given a thoroughly long drink, six to seven big bucketsful each, and that would have to last them, for all that we knew, for some weeks. In the bitter cold of the winter they would feel the need of water far less than of grazing. No grazing could be expected for them, once the last living vegetation was left behind us, until they reached the reed-beds of some salt springs to the north of the ruined site. But Hassan Akhun, my excellent head camelman on all my journeys, had duly provided in our equipment a few skins full of rape-seed oil in order to administer from time to time half a pint of this evil-smelling luxury to each of our own camels. It was the 'camels' tea', so my camel factotum declared, in the cold of the winter, and it did indeed prove of great nutritive value when they had to go so long without any grazing.

After another day's march across a dreary salt-encrusted steppe, two more of my men were left behind at a pool near the Chainut-köl marsh where the water was just drinkable for animals and covered with thin ice. This was to form a kind of advance base with spare rations for the labourers. The route we now struck from this point to the north-