

river. But the thought that in doing so we were likely to get beyond the line up to which water could be got by digging, induced me on the next day to change our course to the south-east, with a view of reaching the track by which Kasim had previously brought the camels to and from the river. The wind had subsided during the night, and the haze slowly dissolved in the course of the day. The individual sand-dunes we passed were all between 30 and 50 ft. high, but the line of march led also across three great 'Dawans' running from south to north. Their height above the little valleys between the ordinary dunes on either side seemed over 150 ft. It was with a feeling of relief that after having covered about eleven miles in a straight line and reached the ridge of the third Dawan we noticed on the easier ground beyond a few sand cones covered with live tamarisks. Kasim at once declared that water might be found at their foot. His prediction proved correct. After digging to a depth of 6 ft. through ground which for about 2 ft. from the surface was frozen, the men got at water. It was very salt but none the less most welcome. I in particular was glad of the wash which I had to deny myself at the previous camp for the sake of economising the water supply in the tanks. The camels, too, were glad to get a drink again; for heavily laden as they necessarily were now, they had felt the long march over these formidable sand-ranges.

After a cold night, when the thermometer fell to 5° Fahr. below zero, we started early. Everybody was eager to pass out of the region of sand and reach the river. After about two miles' marching Kasim's sharp eyes discovered faint traces of the track which the camels had left in the sand when returning to fetch us from Dandan-Uiliq, and by following this track we soon came upon the well previously dug by Kasim's party. Four Dawans had then to be crossed in succession, each piled up of terrace-like dunes and apparently between 120 and 150 ft. in height. The dunes in the broad valleys between them sank now to about 20-30 ft.; yet there was no other indication that we were approaching the river, until at last from the top of the last huge ridge of