

Those two, which had come all the way from Calcutta, being constructed of strong galvanised iron, had already during their use at Dandan-Uiliq proved equal to the strain caused by the freezing of their contents. In hot Calcutta, I confess, neither the makers (Messrs. Thomson) nor I myself had thought of nights like the last one, when the minimum thermometer showed 12° F. below zero, our lowest temperature yet recorded. The other tanks, notwithstanding the precautions taken, proved to have sprung leaks owing to expansion, when the ice into which their contents had turned was again melted. Luckily the great cold prevailing permitted the transport of additional ice in improvised sacks and nets—a most useful expedient which materially facilitated the regular supply of the indispensable minimum of water while my camp, counting from forty to fifty people, was pitched far out in the desert.

The day was brilliantly clear and the sunshine and the gay colours of the landscape made the march quite enjoyable through the forest land where the river finally loses itself in the sand. About three miles below the Mazar the tiny river-course spreads out in some shallow marshes and then finally disappears, at least in winter-time. During summer the flood water, as shown by the deep-cut 'Yars' or ravines we passed several miles lower down, is carried for some distance further. Near the marsh known as Tulkuch-kol lie the huts and the sheep-pens of Nurullah, the guardian of the flocks which belong to the shrine. These were said to number over four thousand sheep; and Nurullah, who acted as our guide up to the end of the grazing-grounds, plainly showed by his get-up and manners that he was more than a common 'Koi-chi,' or shepherd. He cultivates close to his huts a plot of land which produces wheat and maize sufficient to maintain his family. At this little farm the ponies were to remain during our stay in the desert.

The trees grow so thickly in this amply-watered tract that the camels had often to halt until a path could be cleared for them. Everywhere the traces of deer, hares and other game were to be