

After we had crossed a small area of Toghraks here all dead, the dunes rose once more to over thirty feet, but tamarisks grew plentifully between them. So when we halted in the evening by the side of a big tamarisk-covered cone we had fuel in plenty.

The well I had dug led through hard-frozen damp sand to water at a depth of only three and a half feet, and the water was now perfectly sweet. So there was contentment throughout the camp. There was nothing to eat for the camels, except bits from some huge cakes of bread I got baked for them. This emergency treat was repeated subsequently whenever we got water enough for the purpose. It was amusing to watch how fond my burly camels grew of their bread. By giving them the pieces with my own hand I made a rapid advance in their friendship. Willingly they would now let me stroke them instead of meeting my friendly attentions, as so often before, with surly grunts and unmannerly spitting.

Our march on February 4th seemed easy; for the dunes soon sank to a modest height, eight to ten feet, and only two Dawans were encountered on the fourteen miles' march to the south. Even over them there was good going. Up to the middle of the march moist depressions showed here and there amidst the dunes, and wells could have been dug with ease. Dead Kumush showing on bare patches of ground close to living tamarisks also seemed a hopeful sign. But as we marched on, the number of dead trees and bushes increased, while living Toghraks were now rarely within view. The ground, where clear of dunes, had changed to hard clay, and I was not surprised when at the place where the dusk obliged us to halt, our attempt to reach water by digging proved fruitless. The well was sunk at the most likely spot, in a hollow below a big Toghrak still living; but after a shaft had been sunk to a depth of fully fifteen feet the sand still felt so dry that the work had to be abandoned. Evidently the subsoil water from which the roots of this veteran drew their nourishment was still far below this level. So the Shahyar men once more grew despondent.

Next morning by daybreak I marched off ahead of the