

into the men. Our hapless 'Yol-begi' ('road-master'), as the Shahyar people euphemistically styled him, Khalil's weak-kneed son, who ever since the previous vain search for water had kept bewailing 'Atam, atam' ('Father, father'), as if he were a mere boy instead of a man of forty-five, now revived like a half-withered sprig put into water.

When we had descended from the Dawan there was, indeed, good cause for rejoicing. Amidst low dunes and tamarisk cones we came upon a regular grove of fine old Toghraks, some living, some dead. Here camp was pitched; and before dusk had settled, Hassan Akhun, whom I had told off to search what unmistakably was an old river bed marked by eroded clay banks, came back with hysterical shouts of elation. At a point some eleven feet below the level of the nearest bank, the surface of the sand was in truth hard frozen, and when this had been hewn through with some trouble it needed only digging to a depth of scarcely more than four feet to give us water. It tasted delightfully fresh, but once again it gathered but slowly.

However, we had a whole night to fill kettles and buckets. Contentment was great that evening throughout the camp. It seemed as if our main troubles were now ended. I had a huge dead tree turned into a bonfire to guide Ibrahim Beg, and warmed myself by its blaze until I could retire to my little tent. The night promised to be cold, under a sky at last perfectly clear of clouds, and, in fact, I registered next morning a minimum of thirty-seven degrees of frost. My chief treat that cheerful evening was a 'wash,' such as I had been sadly obliged to forgo for days. From the men's camp fire came sounds of a 'Rabab' they had brought along from Shahyar to console themselves with in the wilderness (Fig. 278). Under the stress of the last week's marches its merry strings had remained silent.