

was one to preach restraint to weary and improvident people like our Shahyar men? Some of them quaffed off their water ration almost as soon as it had been poured into their gourds. I felt more pity for the poor dumb ponies which now showed signs of real distress, and was glad when we managed to squeeze out of the frozen Mussucks a glassful of muddy liquid for each of them—all that was left of the water brought away from the last well. For 'Dash,' alert and unconcerned as ever, a saucerful spared from my cup of tea was fortunately quite sufficient, and this faithful companion caused me no special anxiety. But the ponies would soon succumb if water was not reached, and I counted the cartridges in the holster of my revolver to make sure of the means for putting them out of pain if the time came.

It was an anxious night for me. The disposition of the Shahyar men had grown so disquieting that special precautions seemed advisable to prevent a rush upon our ice-supply. The ice-bags had been carefully sewn up and stacked with the iron tanks close to Lal Singh's tent. Twice before midnight I approached to make sure that the precious store was safe, and had the satisfaction of being challenged by the ever watchful and resolute Surveyor. That I had an assistant so energetic and cheerful by my side was a comfort for which I never felt so grateful as during this trying time.

I was awake soon after 3 A.M.; and long before day-break we might have started, had not despair and unreasoning fear driven the Shahyar men into an attempt at ill-disguised mutiny. When the camels ought to have been loaded, they crowded before me and in menacing tones declared their refusal to march with us any farther. Thought of flight northward had been tempting them for days past into what was bound to prove their destruction. This I knew only too well, and explained that they could not possibly find their way back to the Tarim in safety, and threatened to use force against any one attempting such foolish desertion. Amongst other arguments I told them that it was only in their own interest that I refused to discharge them; for otherwise we should profit by their