

Quickly all the men were munching the bits of the ice cake which Turdi distributed with no small satisfaction. There was relief now from all doubts, and shining contentment on the faces of the mutineers of the morning.

The dunes in front of us were so high that we did not realize the full width of the river until we almost dropped down over the last steep sand slope on to its ice. In a glittering sheet of clear ice from one hundred and sixty to two hundred yards broad it stretched away to the north. For the greatest part the ice formed only a thin sheet resting directly on the mud of the bottom. But where the current had cut into our bank the water, a couple of feet deep, flowed in an open channel about twelve feet broad at the rate of about half a yard per second. The men rushed down to the brink, and bending down on hands and knees took time over their drinks as probably never before (Fig. 286).

Moving down the river I soon found a little bay where the dunes had left patches of ground bare, with dead scrub and trees, attesting that here, too, the river had once flowed long before its latest migration. Here my tent was pitched in what I called my dead harbour (Fig. 287). Ponies and camels all seemed full of life in sight of the glorious water, and after having been given a good rest to cool down were allowed to drink *ad libitum*. What a joy it was to watch them as they took their long, long draughts until they swelled visibly! Then the poor hard-trying ponies, which had been thirsting for three days, fell greedily to the dry leaves collected for them from the few live Toghraks around.

For the camels, which had marched so bravely without once tasting water during the last thirteen days and under heavy loads (Fig. 285), there was, alas! but the scantiest fare within reach. The Toghraks were too few to satisfy their hunger with dry foliage, and even of that hardiest of scrubs, the yellow 'Kamghak,' which made its appearance at a sheltered inlet, not enough could be found for even a pretence of grazing. Camels, otherwise so little discriminating, do not ordinarily touch this terribly dry and thorny plant, growing in curious ball-like masses.