

just threw our blankets on the ground, and slept there. One morning Bill sang out "there they are," and after some trouble, Ord and I picked up sight of a thin blue line against the sky.

"Them's the Nabadabas," said Bill. "If we can only reach them we shall be all right."

We travelled towards that blue line for days, and it seemed just as thin as ever. Water grew scarcer, and we had to separate to look for some sign of moisture. The heat was something awful; dry, scorching, maddening. Vamp, the dog, was the only one of us who did not seem to feel it, he trotted along by Bill's horse as fresh as when we started. The horses were thin and weak, but they pushed along as if they knew their only hope lay in reaching the ranges.

We came to a stretch of loose sand among which were millions of shells. Ord declared that this part of the plain was the bed of a dried up sea. There was no water there fresh or salt. Luckily, we had brought a good supply with us in our canvas bags, but it was nearly used up, and still we saw no signs of getting-a fresh supply.

"By Heavens!" said Bill, "We must strike water or we shall never reach home again, and we can't reach the ranges."

"How far are we off?" asked Ord.

"Two days at this crawling pace," answered Bill with a groan, and neither horse nor man can do two days in such a place without something to drink."

The horses were like stuffed images in a dusty museum. They moved with the mechanical action of automatons. We tried to eat food, but it tasted like cinders from a furnace. One mad longing was on us—water, water. No thoughts of iced wines or draughts of cool ale. Thirst brought us primitive ideas—water, water. No artificial drink seemed big enough. The biggest wine butt was too small. Water was our desire; the inexhaustible which reaches from earth to heaven.

We rode on in silence for hours. The sun seemed to fill all the sky. Its dazzling white

glare quivered about us: burnt our skins, our eyes. The sand was like the ashes of a wood fire. Behind us, to right and left, stretched the vast plain with its distances hidden in the haze of heat. Before us rose that hard blue wall of hills. "There is water there," said Bill, pointing to the ranges, "water and feed. There's a stream in a deep gully, and the water's cool."

"Damn it! don't mention such a thing," growled Ord. "You might as well go and talk about fruits and flowers to fellows in purgatory."

We marched on through that blazing heat without a sound. Ord's speech had made his lips crack, and he tried in vain to lick them with his stiff and swollen tongue. Of course our only chance was to reach the ranges, or at least so we thought, and none of us would have given much for that chance. I was wondering in a stupid sort of way which of us would give in first. Suddenly, one of our pack horses snorted like a camel, and rushed off to the right like a mad thing. He was a hard old stager, one of our best animals.

"Is he crazed?" asked Ord.

"Crazed, be hanged," shouted Bill. "Come on," and he spurred his hack viciously.

We goaded ours after him, and raised them to a rough shamble. The pack horse dropped out of sight.

"Where did he go?" yelled Bill with a string of oaths.

"I'm hanged if I can tell," answered Ord.

"This confounded glare"—I began, when Bill cut me short.

"There. Follow Vamp."

Vamp also disappeared, and we rode to the spot. There in the level plain was a narrow deep old river bed, and fifty feet sheer below us, Vamp and the pack horse wallowed in molten brass.

"It's water," shouted Bill in triumph, and the next moment he was scrambling down a shingle slide.

We followed him more circumspectly; still the descent was such that neither man nor horse would face it under ordinary circumstances.