

The day passed slowly; the boys talked but little, and when they did so their conversation turned entirely upon their lost shipmates, for that subject occupied their thoughts far more than their present situation. Before night the water had so far sunk that only some glistening pools appeared where a broad sheet of water had before spread. Arthur was suffering much from thirst and would have started at once, but Jack persuaded him to wait until the next morning.

"We may tumble into deep holes full of mud," he said, "and should get on very slowly. Let us have a good night's sleep and start with the first gleam of daylight. We shall be able to get along fast then."

They found, however, that it was not very fast work; for the country had been cultivated and the soil was now converted into a soft mud, in which they sank up to their knees. Here and there as they went on they saw piles of mud and sunburnt bricks, with timbers projecting, and knew that these marked the site where villages or houses had stood. Among the elumps of fallen trees they saw bits of colour, and knew that these were the bodies of some of the natives. Here and there, too, they saw the carcass of a bullock. At last they found the ground under their feet much firmer.