

impossible. East of the capital it is easier, for there the routes lie farther apart. The great salt desert is crossed only by two.

My journey proper began from Teheran, and outside the gates of Teheran begins the desert; and then there is nothing but desert all the way to India. The reader who, nevertheless, has patience to accompany me will see for weeks and months nothing but yellow, brown, or white wastes in all directions. He will see the sun rise up from the distant horizon of the desert, describe an arc through the heavens, and set beyond the wilderness in the west. I can freely forgive him if he grows weary of the perpetual ring of caravan bells, and looks eagerly for an oasis where for a while he may wake from his slumbers. And if he goes with me as far as the Indian frontier he will, perhaps, grumble that, in this age of hurry and excitement, I have written two volumes all about deserts.

I have tried to depict this lifeless country as faithfully as possible, and hence, perhaps, there may be a flatness in the description. Travelling in Persia is as calm and peaceful as on country roads in Sweden, and exciting adventures are exceedingly rare. One day is like another,—only a few more miles being traversed over new tracts of desert.

I paid particular attention to the peculiar form of salt desert called Kevir. In order to illustrate the problem of its formation I have collected, in certain chapters, the results arrived at by other travellers, with extracts from their narratives. In looking up the necessary material I have received invaluable assistance from Dr. Otto Quelle of Gotha, who supplied me with the titles of several works on Eastern Persia, as well as excerpts. The historical part has no claim to completeness. My views regarding Marco Polo's route from Kuhbenan to Tun may meet with opposition, but I cannot change them.