

for camels; but I hoped that we should always find some way out of our difficulties, and at the worst, if it rained and snowed hard, we could pass round the smooth salt deserts.

The sky was brilliantly clear, and to the north rose the light blue background of Elburz, crowned with a riband of snow, and culminating in the stately Demavend (*Div-band*, home of spirits), which I had climbed in 1890 up to the highest point of the edge of the crater ring. The camels stood ready, and, led by Abbas, the first detachment set itself in motion, drawing the rest of the train after it. With Mirza and the gulam of the legation, Rahim, on the box, I set out a while later, after paying the 6 tuman which our camping at Firuzabad had cost us in camel fodder, eggs, chickens, milk, etc. We should soon, perhaps, come to districts where the expenses were less.

For one day more the road is practicable for carriages; it gradually diverges from the small offshoots of Elburz, which we saw yesterday on the left hand. Six miles off, to the south, is seen a small, flat, isolated elevation, which is also visible from Teheran, and in the distance behind it stands another like an island rising from the level ground. In a few minutes we have crossed the cultivated zone of Firuzabad, and are again out in desert land, only here and there interrupted by fields and canals. The land slopes imperceptibly to the south. To the east, at some distance, appears the village Kala-i-no, and far to the west Kerisek. A caravanserai bears the expressive name of Kale-kevir, or "desert fort," and Gherchek, Bagherabad, and Gul-tepe are small villages we pass; the last-mentioned poetical name means "hill of flowers."

On most of the canals in the district lie thin white sheets of ice, suspended fully 4 inches above the actual surface of the water, and indicating a considerable fall, either the consequence of an actual diminution in the flow of water or only the sign of a daily fluctuation.

At mid-day a very strong north-north-westerly wind sprang up, which chased clouds of soil and dust along the road, hiding all the dreary view—a foretaste of what awaited us farther on. The ground consisted of yellowish