

them was; they knew, indeed, that we were going to Seistan, but not that I intended to force my way through the most difficult parts of the desert. I therefore prepared them for what lay before them, but quieted them also with an assurance that there was not the slightest danger to life, for we should never be far from an oasis, and that we could always reach one on foot even without provisions. A man in Veramin, however, reported that, four years before, a caravan from Kum had gone astray and perished on the way to the neighbourhood of Siah-kuh. About 10 farsakh from the mountain it had fallen in with a *khor-ab*, or salt-water swamp, where all the camels were irretrievably lost with their loads; they sank into the soft ground. Two of their drivers had been frozen to death, and the other three had made for the nearest villages to seek help, but when they returned to the scene of the disaster all attempts at rescue were vain. The same man was of the opinion that our situation would be very critical if we chanced to have heavy rain in the midst of the great Kevir, which would soak the ground all round us and render it impossible to travel in any direction.

But we were still in *abad* or inhabited country, and all day long were heard the tinkling bells of the small caravans which wandered to and from Teheran. Another night descended on our camp. It was indescribably silent around, in the neighbourhood of the great overpowering desert. Only the bark of a dog in the distance was audible.