

villagers, and regard with evident astonishment our slowly moving train, wondering why in the world we take this road, and how we can conceive the mad idea of marching straight into the jaws of the desert instead of following the great splendid road through Meshed or the caravan route through Yezd and Kerman, which also leads to Seistan. May Allah and Ali defend us from the desert, the abode of evil spirits—such is evidently their thought.

We are now out again in the wilderness, and the village disappears behind us. The way is excellent, almost quite level, slight flat swellings in the ground are but seldom noticeable, and the fall south-eastwards is so gentle that it is imperceptible to the naked eye. One might drive all the way. Here we are in a region where water must be conducted along subterranean channels, called *kanat*, to protect it from evaporation; they may be detected by a row of small hills of earth, each one marking a vertical hole going down to the tunnel of the canal; by these apertures men can descend into the underground passages to clean them out. Sometimes we pass kanats which are evidently abandoned, for all the vertical apertures have fallen in.

After a march of 2 farsakh we reach the village Hassar Hassan Bek, and Abbas proposes that we encamp here for the night; but no, we are getting on so well, the ground is so dry, and we may have rain, and then this yellow clay will be as slippery as ice for the camels' pads—let us travel another farsakh; and so the bells clang on again farther on the way to the margin of the desert sea. There is a small open canal in the village with running water, but Abbas does not perceive that he is thirsty until we are a good distance away from it, and then he lies down on his stomach to drink out of a very uninviting ditch. The other men laugh at his greediness, and think that he might have had patience till we come to Kala-no ("the new village"), in the group of trees visible as a slight swell on the horizon, this side of the faint contour of Siah-kuh. But we draw very slowly nearer, our caravan is heavily laden, and moves slowly and haltingly like a goods train towards its destination. The first camel, which carries