

CHAPTER XVIII

KERIM KHAN, THE LAST VILLAGE ON THE EDGE OF THE DESERT

THE gale ceased suddenly at seven o'clock on the morning of January 6, and when I awoke the interior of the tent presented a sorry sight. Everything in it was covered with such a thick layer of dust that no colour but greyish yellow was to be seen; compass, watch, instruments, maps, and books, boots and clothes, were all concealed by an even sheet of the fine particles which all night long had been permeating in through the tent cloth. When I moved a cloud of dust rose from the blankets, and my eyes were almost plastered up with it. Before my usual morning ablutions could be performed the tent had to be dusted and all articles shaken. Mirza rummaged out my things one by one, but they were so saturated with dust that only a long airing could cleanse them. Even now, four years later, fine sand lies between the pages of the diary I was writing at the time of the storm.

When the gale sprang up the day before, the veil of cloud was drawn out into long streamers like knife-blades; but now there were only a couple of light white flakes in the zenith, which, too, soon vanished, leaving the sky clear. The minimum temperature had been 24.1° , and the air felt quite cool at seven o'clock with 26.4° . Demavend made a fine and imposing sight to N. $13\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E., and the whole of the Elburz range was sharply and clearly defined, though much fainter than when seen from Teheran. So much the more distinct were the small heights in the vicinity, with their weird details and fissures, their dry