

Siah-kuh proper, as a faint, scarcely perceptible outline—we have still a long distance to traverse before we reach it. Our path branches out like a fork, and we follow the right prong which trends south-south-east. Here the ground is lumpy with knotted roots of steppe shrubs, and on the lee side some blown sand has collected after the gale of yesterday. It is the finest yellow sand which occurs in such small quantities that it is unable to lay a foundation for a dune; it will continue its wanderings if it does not here and there come upon small obstacles. Sometimes there is a meagre tuft of tamarisk on a larger lump just as in the outskirts of the sandy deserts of Eastern Turkestan.

Meanwhile we are approaching the very last hamlet of all, its huts, roofed with clay cupolas, grow ever more distinct, its yellowish-grey walls come in sight and a score of willows. The village was formerly called Kerim Khan after a man who died there a long time ago, but now it is generally known as Abbasabad; its owner is said to be Akbal-el-Dovleh in Teheran. A farsakh away to the south-west are seen the village and mound of Doasde-imam or the twelve Imams, and at a still nearer distance Mobarekiye. Yechabad is a village at the foot of a hill to the north.

Kerim Khan consists of 15 houses and has 40 inhabitants, and is the last outpost on the margin of the desert. It has 60 camels and 100 sheep, and the richest man is also the village elder or *ketkhoda*. In good years it produces 100 *kharvar* of wheat and barley, only a third as much as Kala-no, but this year the yield has only amounted to 20 *kharvar*. Of other produce only melons and green vegetables are grown. The water for irrigation is obtained from a *kanat* which starts from the village Hassar-guli.

The system of irrigation is very remarkable; and when one travels all day through a country which so nearly resembles a desert, one is astonished to find here and there villages with running water. The point where the head of the canal is situated, in this case Hassar-guli, of course lies a few feet at least higher than the fields of Kerim Khan (2644 feet); the *kanat* or underground tunnel or