

they have not to go without water. I have already gained confidence in my riding camel; he is a large, strong, light brown beast, long-haired and shaggy now in winter time; he has a capital appetite, and when on the march he passes the most innocent little steppe shrub he tries to get a bite of it as he goes by. His guide, Gulam Hussein, leads him quietly and patiently, and never hurries so that the rope tightens round the muzzle. His action is very easy, and he sways much less than the other camels, as though he would, for my sake, endeavour to reduce as far as possible the swinging motion of his stride. I therefore enjoy the ride, and even if, during the first days, I am a little sore in the small of the back and the neck, that is of no consequence and soon passes off. One thing is very satisfactory, namely, that the Persians do not tie the leading rope to a pin thrust through the cartilage of the nose as the Turks do in Central Asia, but instead fasten it round the soft muzzle. The camels are, therefore, not tortured unnecessarily, and one is spared the sight of bleeding nostrils so common in Turkestan.

The *ketkhoda*, or elder of Kerim Khan, met us with the greatest civility, as indeed, was only to be expected, since I was accompanied by Cossacks of the Shah and also had written firmans to his subjects. He was an elderly man, and had a good knowledge of the country for some days' journey eastwards, so we at once called him to a consultation. There were four ways for us to choose from, and whichever way we took we should come, after four days, to a well with brackish water, named Tallhe. The first road passes through Baba Hamet, Cheshme-shah, Rafesh, Summek, and Tallhe. At Cheshme-shah is the best spring water in all the district, but the way is longer than the others. One of them runs for the most part through hills, past Eine-Reshid, Cheshme-zur, Ab-gulé, Cheshme-gur, and Tallhe, and is 22 farsakh long; this road winds in all directions, up and down and out and in, but it has one great advantage, namely, that water can be obtained at every camping-ground, certainly brackish but still drinkable. Yet another way leads through Baba Hamet, Gudar-taghi, Keilege, Shekker-ab, and Tallhe;