

our great black camel stallion, which also carried a pair of small sacks. He was to-day in a vile temper, and so obstinate that the men could hardly manage him; he was so bad that he spat out a mess of saliva and half-chewed straw over Habibullah, who held him while the other men loaded him. The other two sacks were put on another camel, and as a precaution we decided to fill six more sheepskins with water from the canal of Kerim Khan, which was certainly brackish and nauseous, and would not be improved by being churned up in the skin for some days, but we might be glad of it some time. These sacks, which were carried by two of the hired camels, were filled at the moment of starting.

We were ready at last, and the caravan now looked imposing, as it contained twenty-four camels, which left the buff-coloured courtyards and poor inhabitants of Kerim Khan and directed their course towards the sharply outlined ridge and ruddy detritus cone of Doasde-imam. Demavend also was plainly visible in spite of the clouds.

Several of the hired camels are females, and make our powerful stallions excited; they gurgle softly and sadly, the froth hangs round their lips and drops in flakes of white foam; they grind their teeth, and their eyes glitter with passion at the thought of the female company with them.

The small brackish canal of the village soon comes to an end, and the last of its water spreads over the farthest fields and seeps into the dry earth uselessly. At one place the canal has poured over into a small pool, which forces us a little out of the way. But then we are again in desert land, scantily begrown with a steppe plant called *eshnan*. Here and there the ground consists of quite level expanses of clay broken into slightly concave flakes; these are due to the rain which fell two months ago, and washed the fine clay together into depressions imperceptible to the eye.

A little later a raw cold south-easterly wind springs up, and I prefer to walk a while to keep myself warm. I keep by the side of the great black stallion, and watch the water dropping from his sacks, and his saddle-cloth