

shade. The snow on the ground is still crisp and dry, and the camels' feet do not slip.

It is eleven o'clock, the mist thins, and it becomes as hot as on the pass Kotel-i-dukhter in Southern Persia when I crossed it many years ago on May Day. The bells clang monotonously; I have one of them close in front of me all day long. Now and then it is silent for a moment when some irregularity in the camel's gait neutralizes the swing of the clapper. The men are stupid and silent, but now and then a pipe is lighted, and goes the round. The snow lies cold and white as a winding-sheet, and becomes thinner as the hours go by. Meagre bushes grow all along the route, called *bote* and *terkh*, the latter hard as wood and a capital fuel. The steppe stretches out in all directions uniform and level as a floor, and when we pass an insignificant undulation running from NNE. to SSW. we notice it as an unusual interruption, though it is not higher than the smallest ripple on the sea.

The mist comes and goes, and performs the most singular manœuvres over the ground. To the south and south-east it rolls itself up into a bolster, if possible whiter than the snow, and over its remarkably clearly defined upper edge rises the summit of Siah-kuh like an iceberg in a frozen sea. To the north the fog seems to turn into bluish violet, cloud-like pillows and mattresses spread over the earth, and above it are seen parts of the snowy crest of Elburz.

At mid-day we leave Kole-hauz on the right and have Kuh-khar on the north and Telle-bur on the south. As the day passes and the farther we march south-east, the more forcibly has the sun accomplished its work of denudation, and the more frequently occur patches of fine detritus on the bare ground. At the edges the snow melts perceptibly and forms small pools from which the men drink. I, too, enjoy a drink of ice-cold water from the clay jug which is tied by a string through its narrow ear to the camel's flank. A small herd of gazelles is feeding in front of us. Hussein Ali stalks them carefully with his gun ready, but the shy animals scent danger and fly off like the wind.

Now half the ground is bare, and only shallow hollows