

as Shah Abbas's capital, Ispahan, is called. The road seems to be no longer used.

A thin sheet of snow also remains in a deeply cut erosion furrow running N. 70° E. We are now come into more diversified country, but often interspersed with flat steppe. To the right stand the last outposts of Siah-kuh, some low mounds. The track crosses a whole series of shallow broad channels, and in their muddy bottoms still remain tiny runnels made by streaming water, as though a considerable flood had swept over this district after very heavy rain.

Now the mist thins and the curtain rises upon the panorama around us. Only the lofty mountains in the north are still hidden, and above us float heavy masses of cloud, just as though a curtain had been rolled up and folded together above our heads. The dreary track we follow divides, one branch leading us south-eastwards to Tallhe, the other continuing eastwards to Sar-i-cha-i-mishmess, Sar-i-cha-i-ghargara, Kuh-utek, and Cheshmedosun, where fresh water occurs. It is said to be three *mensil* or days' journey to Kuh-utek, a small isolated hill which is now faintly seen above the horizon due east.

Our road runs along a broad flat furrow with an imperceptible rise, past a red irregular ridge called Takta-arus-paru. The hills in this country are composed entirely of clay and sand, soft material, and their form indicates erosion by wind and water; they are, therefore, to a great extent secondary formations. In a last broad and open furrow grow bushes of saxaul as high as 6 feet. The Persians call it *tagh*, and as it yields an excellent fuel we halt among it in a place for which our old guide knows no name; he calls the place simply *mian-shur* or "among salt wastes," and on the map I mark it as Camp 5, counting from Veramin. The height is only 2477 feet.

As we came to a halt the afternoon sun flooded the dreary steppe with a purple light, and while the other men put the camp in order the ketkhoda gave an account of all he knew. He pointed first S. 38° E., where the highest point of Tallhe was visible, the goal of our next day's march. Talkhau, properly Talkh-ab, is a hill to the