

Sometimes a small cairn is set up in a hollow, to show the way, where the track is nearly washed away.

We still march onwards, and the bells ring and the hours pass; but we are always in the same silent waste, where there is nothing to attract attention but such trifles as some half-burnt steppe plants showing where a camp has been pitched, or hoar-frost falling from the herbs when they become too heavy and shaggy. Reddish-yellow hillocks of clay are beside us, their upper parts concealed by the thick mist hanging over them. The land rises gently towards the south-east, and at last the little Tallhe hill shows through the dense air, an insignificant limited crest, with white strips of snow on its flanks. On the steppe below, some snow also remains in the shelter of shrubs, among which a hundred black sheep are grazing. Habibullah, who is in front, throws the leading rein over the camel's neck, and goes off to speak to the shepherd, but the camels continue to follow the narrow track which takes us right up to the ridge.

When we came to the walled-in well of Tallhe, after a march of $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles, we hesitated whether we should proceed farther to Mulkabad; but at the pressing request of the ketkhoda, and because the camels had not drunk for four days, I ordered a halt quite close to the well, in which the surface of the water stood three feet below the ground. Before the mouth there is a kind of trough cased in stone, for the use of camels, and some smaller basins, roomy enough for flocks of sheep to drink all at once. They have, however, to be filled from the well. A thin crust of ice lay on the small quantity of water that now remained.

The water was not so bad as might have been expected from the description given by the ketkhoda. Drawn direct from the well in a clean vessel, and drunk when icy cold, it tasted quite passable, and the small admixture of salt was scarcely noticeable; at any rate, it was delicious compared with the loathsome fluid which filled our sheepskins and *meshk*. When the stone trough was filled, the camels were driven up and drank in long draughts, relishing the icy-cold water. Forage and fuel were not to be found at