

## CHAPTER XXI

BY DEVIOUS PATHS

ON January 12 we woke again in this detestable fog, which had now increased in density, so that we could not see what the country was like at a distance of 200 yards, and even the mounds behind us were completely hidden in the thick mist. Morier's Haji Baba would not have complained so bitterly of England and its want of sun if he had ever made a winter journey in the outskirts of this desert, which lay, so to speak, just before the gates of his capital. I should rather have expected clear, fresh, and cool air in winter in the interior of Persia, and I had always supposed that this sterile and desert land must be perfectly dry and inaccessible to all ocean winds. But now it turned out that damp fogs are, on the contrary, very characteristic of this season.

It was hopelessly dark and gloomy; we longed in vain for mild winds to drive away the mist in a moment and let us see the sun again, and let our eyes rove unhindered over the level country, with its scattered islands of small, fragmentary, weathered, and disintegrated hills. Such a land, without human beings, animals, and vegetation, presents no variety in the aspect of the ground, but when one is also shut in on all sides by dense fog there is little besides the route to lay down on the map.

From the mist overhead falls a fine drizzle, which soaks everything and makes it clammy and unpleasant to touch; our hands and clothes are wet, the camels look as though they were out in the rain, the ground becomes sippy but not enough to be slippery. The minimum temperature has