

one; it probably leads to some expanse of steppe, and the cairns are erected to guide herdsmen to a spring in foggy weather. I have now had enough of the great solitude; the sky is clear and bright, but the days are short, and if I do not wish to sleep under a ridge of limestone it is time that I find my men.

While I am considering the situation I am roused from my meditations by a gun-shot, which comes from the north-north-west where the bare red cliffs of the Tallhe ridge stand dry and scorched after basking in the sun for thousands of years. Soon the echo dies away after the shot, but I have taken note of the direction whence it comes. It has the effect on me of an electric shock, and gives the answers to all the questions I have propounded to myself. The men have evidently taken another way, and this Kuh-i-nakshir we have so often heard about during the last days is only a part of the Tallhe group; but the signal sounds faint and the distance must be great.

Now I hurried off in the given direction, but I had to make a long round towards the south-east to descend the hill, and then I walked at a rapid pace. It was, however, easier said than done to make my way through this troublesome ground. I had to cross hundreds of deep dry erosion furrows and constantly go up and down; scarcely was I over one when another yawned before me; they were not many feet deep, but they had steep sides down which I stumbled in the loose porous clay only to have to clamber up the other side, and the time flew and the sun sank. Before me rose an outlying elevation, and I did not know whether I ought to pass it on the left or right, but thought that the former course was the shorter, judging by the direction of the shot.

Now the ground became worse, a tangle of hills and ravines and erosion furrows. Sometimes I thought I heard curious sounds and stood still, but all was quiet. How often I was deceived by a shadow on the slope like a camel, but it did not move and that settled the question. I mounted up towards the hill, and the higher I ascended the more disintegrated and eroded was the waste, and it was heavy work to get up, for I was not accustomed