

The herdsman told me that he and three comrades were watching 200 camels belonging to the ketkhoda or headman of Mehabad; in spring they would be used in transporting goods between Shiraz and Teheran. His geographical knowledge was not extensive, but he had travelled by the road running from here to Semnan through Mulkabad, Tallhe, Cha-mishmess, and Kuh-alafí; the last-named hill is the one indistinctly seen to the north of Kuh-i-nakshir. To Semnan he reckoned it 25 farsakh. He knew the following names in the southern hills, in order from west to east: Cha-shems, Chang-kollah, Cheshme-bolasun, Sheidai, and Meedi south of this day's camp, as well as Lakko (Lak-ab). Cha-shur and Cha-gork are springs to the west-south-west, and Dom is a district in the south-east. To the town Anarek, which belongs to the province of Yezd, he reckoned it only two days' journey.

When I asked if he considered it possible to cross the Kevir from here towards the north he exclaimed, without the slightest hesitation, "No, God forbid; you have only to go no farther from the shore than a shout can be heard and you will sink in the mud and be inevitably lost." No water can be seen, but it stands everywhere near the surface. He had never heard that any one had made the attempt; if any one would cross the Kevir northwards he must follow the old known routes through the desert. Two such routes run from Jandak, one to Husseinan, the other to Turut. Twenty years ago he had seen a European in this neighbourhood who had come from Kerman to make his way through Mulkabad to Teheran, but since then he had heard of no other European travelling from that direction.<sup>1</sup> As it was getting dusk the man went off to his comrades, who were waiting for him at the edge of the desert, but he promised to return next morning to show us the way.

This night the temperature again fell a little below freezing-point ( $30.6^{\circ}$ ), and the morning was dull, windy, and cold. It blew very strongly from the west, showing that the sky could be covered with heavy clouds even with the wind in this direction. Hitherto clear days had been

<sup>1</sup> Probably Lieutenant Vaughan.