

ascent becomes steeper and our progress slower. The old camel, which has shown signs of exhaustion for several days, is now worn out, is not loaded, and at last has to be led in the rear by Habibullah. We struggle higher towards the top of the scree at the foot of the hills, and again the ground is fissured by troublesome trenches which have to be crossed. At last we double the point and turn almost due south. Before us appears a gap between this hill and the next, which is called Kuh-i-busurgi. On a bank of pebbles and sand stand several shelters with stone walls in front and roofed with twigs and steppe shrubs, where the flocks are driven for the night; now they stay in a valley up in the hills, as a herdsman we found in one of the folds told us.

The ground is now heavy for laden camels, the steep declivities are bestrewn with sharp-edged pebbles, and a furrow we cross below a yawning valley mouth is 20 yards broad by 30 deep; it descends from an opening in the hill, and spreads in delta form over the slope of the scree. Several other smaller trenches have to be crossed before we at last see the yellow grass around the briny spring of Dom, where we encamp at a height of 2999 feet.

Cheshme-i-dom, or "end spring," the farthest spring, "the spring at the end of the hill," reminds us of the one at Mulkabad, and comes up out of soft ground; in its drainage channel a series of small basins, 3 to 10 feet in diameter, have been excavated to make it easier for sheep and camels to drink. Relics of their visits lie around, and there is a smell of animals all about. The water is so salt that men can only make up their minds to drink it in case of sheer necessity, but our camels, who have not drunk for four days, put up with it and stand a long time sucking it up and looking about. Then they are driven down to their straw, of which there is a supply sufficient for only four days.

My first care after the camp has been set in order is to send for any men that can be found in the neighbourhood, to give an account of all they know of the geography and climate of the country, of the great salt desert and of the routes to adjacent districts. It is, however, not