

Habibullah rushes off in advance; sometimes we see him take a look round from a height and immediately after disappear, and continue his eager search for water, which is now the object of us all. We follow slowly in his footsteps, and he still follows the track, which is now much more distinctly worn in the ground than below. Here we are forced by the form of the valley to tread in the same track, whereas down on the steppe we could go anywhere and always find good footing. Sooner than we expect we come to a small pass in the Busurgi chain, a flat and easy threshold between hillocks, and then descend to the north-east. To the north is unfolded an extensive view over the Kevir sea, and to the north-east are seen the low elevations which doubtless mark the position of the firm land, which juts out like a peninsula in the neighbourhood of Jandak, and on the east bounds the large bay of the Kevir we have already mentioned.

The hillocks round the pass consisted of quartz porphyrite, and the height was 4088 feet.

What was the best thing to do? We had enough straw only for the evening, but cottonseed for three evenings. Of flour we had sufficient for two days, but the water would only afford a cup of tea per man. We had depended on Ashin; for even if we did not find all we wanted there, we could send to fetch it from Anarek, 3 farsakh farther on. We had no guide, and none of my men knew the positions of the wells, and it might be dangerous to get lost without water in this desert country, where the distances are so long between the wells, and where they are so cunningly hidden in the ground. We therefore decided to give up all thoughts of Ashin and to hasten on and make Jandak our next object. Gulam Hussein had been there, and if we only did not miss the track we should come upon some well before we arrived there.

The caravan jingled down through the narrow winding valley, while I, who was engaged in collecting rock specimens, came strolling after. But when no well appeared and twilight was coming on, I ordered a halt in the narrow valley, after a tramp of 19 miles.

As soon as the camp was arranged I sent out Gulam