

the wells, and they also know the names which the hills and watering-places have borne for centuries back. They reckon it 150 farsakh to their pastures in Luristan, and accomplish the journey in twenty-five days. They are, then, strictly speaking, nomads, and have no permanent home in Alem. If the life-giving rain does not come, the whole village packs its belongings on camels and sets off on its long wanderings, feeding the camels at suitable places on the way. The village is left silent and deserted, and not a single cock which now struts among the hens in the yard lets his voice be heard, but only the sand-laden wind of the desert howls mournfully round the sunburnt cupolas. But later, when another winter approaches, the nomads are glad to return, sweep the driftsand from their huts, clean out the well, and rest at peace after their long journey.

Haji Hassan had been often down to the margin of the Kevir, and was accustomed to cross the salt desert on his migrations to Sebsevar. He warned us against venturing out on to the Kevir at this time, as the season was by no means favourable. If rain or snow happens to fall when the traveller is in the midst of the desert, *gel* or mud is formed, the briny loam becomes as slippery as ice, and camels cannot take ten steps without falling down. It had often happened, he said, that caravans had in such circumstances been unable to move forwards or backwards, and both men and camels had been lost. If the weather is good and dry there is no danger at all, that is, with camels; with asses, horses, or mules it is different, for there is no drinking-water in the Kevir. If one wishes to cross the desert one should stay ready on its margin and start when the weather is clear and seems settled, and at first hurry on without stopping, so as to be as near as possible to the other side if it should begin to rain. And if rain does come, one must increase the pace to get over the ground before the surface becomes soaked and slippery. From all he said it was easy to perceive that it was no trifling undertaking to travel right through the Kevir.

At the end of February the wind usually blows hard from the *keble* or west-south-west, but easterly winds are