

forming a dumb and desiccated proof of the fall of the land and of the fact that it can rain heavily even here in the desert. And farther on the yellowish-red dunes raise their backs and chains, ridges and belts, here and there separated by grey flats, where the underlying loam crops out—a phenomenon similar to the *bayir* in the sandy deserts of Eastern Turkestan. Near the Nekhlek elevation a singular transverse threshold of sand runs over the valley, and is crossed by the north-going furrows, which all strive to reach the Kevir depression.

After we have passed over a small saddle (3294 feet) between small steep knolls, we go downhill all day. The descending valley is at first skirted by a reddish mountain spur on the left, and on the right the massive of Nekhlek, with its rugged precipitous flanks, makes an imposing appearance now that it is close to us. Then the country opens out and the gradient is less steep; to the right we still have the mountain, a smoking charcoal kiln, a camp, and a well called Maden-i-nekhlek. The steppe has scanty vegetation, and to the north the landscape up to the horizon is occupied by a sea of sand-dunes with huge hills of sand of a reddish-yellow colour. A smaller lower expanse of sand, which we presently go round, is distinguished from the former by its greyish-yellow colour. I go on foot for more than two hours, and after the walk find it pleasant to climb up to the top of my rolling ship of the desert. I am tanned and weather-beaten from sitting up there, especially as I am one day in an icy-cold snowstorm and the next have the blazing sun right in my face.

We have still the same *bellad* or guide, Kerbelai Madali, whom we so luckily found on the steppe the day before yesterday, the man in the blue coat who was paid a tuman to take us to Alem. We could not have a better, for he knows every well, can name every hill we pass, and give all the distances and the places suitable for camping. Haji Hassan had congratulated us on the favour shown by Allah in causing us to meet this man just when we needed him most. Just when we left the hill he vanished with two jugs into a cleft, and came back with the finest and sweetest of water, which tasted delightful in the warm