

and south, which have evidently fixed their roots in some subterranean rivulet. Before us to the right a long dark line lies along the ground, which presently resolves itself into specks coming towards us obliquely; they grow larger, and turn out to be unladen camels. They are like ships on the sea, which cross our course among the rocky islands and sandbanks in a scattered archipelago. They reach the point of intersection before us, and go on towards the belt of saxaul at the border of the sand-dunes. Eight men wait for us, simply herdsmen, as we might suppose, from Anarek, on their way to the camel pastures of the sandy desert.

Now we pass the first section of Kuh-i-cheft, and leave on the right the two wells Cha-i-chugu and Cha-i-cheft, and on the farther side of this dark ridge Moshajeri is situated. To the north the sands are piled up into still higher dunes, round swelling banks of a light red colour, and perhaps 65 to 80 feet high. And at their margin the saxaul belt runs unbroken as if it were a hedge planted as a protection against the encroachment of the sand. A more advantageous caravan route cannot be conceived. It runs straight as a dart east-north-eastwards without an inequality or a bend.

Evening is drawing on, the sun is behind us, the camels' shadows lengthen out and run along before us like antennæ. Habibullah, who leads the first camel, cannot resist the attraction of the saxaul belt, where there is inexhaustible material for camp fires, but Kerbelai Madali comes forward at once and warns him not to diverge from the direct course. The other men vote for encamping, but the guide, who has solemnly promised to take us to Jandak in four days, says quite calmly that the ground is not far off. At length he turns off to the north-east, and directs his steps to a part of the saxaul belt where the bushes, light yellow, almost white, attain a height of quite 10 feet, and where they grow especially close. A grand sight! We might have come upon an oasis in the desert and pitched our tents under spreading trees, and the Persians call such a belt of vegetation *yangal* or wood, just as in Eastern Turkestan, or on the way to the Karakorum