

they said that the word *rig* denotes sand or sand-dune, so that the name means the "sandy desert of spirits."

I have walked for more than two hours, and am glad as usual to occupy my safe place of observation perched between the humps of my favourite camel. Just at this point are growing several hundred wild melons, not larger than apples, fine to look at, fresh and pleasant to the touch—they feel like tomatoes, and, warm with walking, I long to take a bite. But they are as bitter as quinine, and one of the camels which tries one of these yellow juicy fruits makes haste to spit it out again, pulls the most horrible grimaces, shakes his head and slabbers. However, they answer well for a snowball fight, and my men commence pelting one another furiously with the delusive fruits. Abbas Kuli Bek plants a projectile right in the eye of Habibullah, so that it swells badly and makes a small contusion, and the latter, after collecting a score of melons in the skirt of his coat, pursues the nimble Cossack, but without success. The Persians call these fruits *hende-vane-i-seherai*, that is, "Sahara melons."

Lately it was burning hot, but now, with the sun at our backs and a cool north-westerly breeze right in our faces, it feels fresh and pleasant, and the temperature at one o'clock is up to 49.6° . The "hill of the thousand valleys" is now seen foreshortened to the south-east; its strata are broken off short on the southern side where the fall is therefore very steep, while their surface dips slowly and evenly to the north.

We soon leave Kuh-i-seruman behind us; at its northern foot is a spring of sweet water called Seruman, where a stone hut is built, and Habibullah goes off thither with a sheepskin to fetch water. To the left we have dunes 60 to 100 feet high, and the sea of sand stretches out towards the west-north-west; the outline of its sand-dunes is very distinct, and has an illusive resemblance to several of the hills around, especially as they are coloured in the same reddish shades. Between the northern edge of the sand-belt and the southern foot of Hesar-dere the ground is free of sand, and here several furrows make their way westwards to the Kevir. For the Kevir, though