

CHAPTER XXVIII

PREPARATIONS FOR A JOURNEY THROUGH THE KEVIR

ON our arrival at Jandak I was still doubtful which route I ought to take. Should I really expose myself to all the toil and hardship which was in all probability connected with a ride of 250 miles on camel-back through the Kevir and back, instead of taking the direct way to Tebbes and Seistan? But I wished to obtain a near view of the salt desert, and before the tents were pitched I had conquered my irresolution, and summoned some experienced men, with whom we at once commenced our negotiations.

"Yes, certainly," answered one of them, "you can hire camels, and we can procure you *jambas* or running dromedaries. With the latter one can cross the worst of the salt desert in a day and night, but perhaps the sa'ab is not accustomed to scamper along at such a rapid pace; perhaps you will be tired of riding *chapari* (courier's ride)."

"If you can endure riding *chapari*, I can probably hold out too."

"We generally so arrange the journey that we ride till we are tired of the jolting; then we walk or run a bit, and then mount again. Through the Kevir we hurry the pace, and go in one stage from south to north, only stopping once or twice for half an hour to let the camels eat of the fodder we carry with us. On firm ground we travel only at night."

"I am willing to go with you," called out suddenly a fellow in the crowd. "I have been many times in the Kevir; but I must get good pay. And I can let you have three prime *jambas* on hire; they are now grazing