

to get our things under cover and revive the dying fire. And there we sat, the three of us, and stared into the flames, and mutely confessed that our plan of starting off at three o'clock in the morning had vanished in smoke. Nevengk, who had followed me unbidden, lay outside and howled, disgusted at being wet through and yet unable to quench his thirst. Persians do not allow dogs indoors, so Nevengk had to keep company with the camels.

Nine o'clock; it is 9° above freezing-point, the wind has fallen, the rain pours down, and the noise of the tremendous deluge penetrates into our den, as though laughing us to scorn. I go out to read the instruments and feel that the ground has become soft; I sink in the mire, which spurts up under my feet. Wet and dripping, I creep back into the cabin, a dirty, ill-smelling hole full of smarting smoke.

"How long will the desert take to dry up if it continues to rain all night?" I ask.

"Three or four days."

"And if it still rains to-morrow also?"

"Ten days."

"We shall see what it is like in the morning, but we will not wait in this hole for ten days, exactly the time required to cross the desert twice."

"It is already impossible to go out into the desert, sa'ab; at any rate, we may sleep till morning."

To pass the time the men begin to relate their experiences and adventures in the Kevir. How many caravans have been lost in this frightful desert! Gulam Hussein was two years ago with a caravan which lost five of its camels in consequence of a very violent and heavy snow-storm. The snow melted at once on the salt ground, which became so wet and smooth that the caravan had to encamp in the middle of the Kevir. And as it also blew hard from the north the camels died of cold, and one man lost his feet and became a cripple for the rest of his life. The guide says that it is impossible to conceive anything more exhausting and wearisome than to walk through the mud. One sinks in up to the knee at every step. If one goes quickly in order not to sink in