

so far, one loses one's footgear and becomes deadly tired, and if one goes slowly one sinks in so deep that one can hardly pull the feet out of the viscous, tenacious mire. He says that the Kevir is like a sea, and that it is a serious undertaking to venture over it.

He says that the three caravans we left at Jandak when we started will, if it continues to rain over tomorrow, leave their goods and return to Yezd with the camels laden with charcoal. This is manufactured here from a tree called *badam-i-talkh*, or wild almond, which grows in the valleys of Kuh-i-Jandak. If a trade caravan is caught by a downpour of rain in the desert the camels are hastily unloaded, the loads are piled together as well as can be done and are left behind, and there they may remain a month or two. They do not sink in the mud, but if the loads consist of wheat the grains sprout so that the sacks are clothed in vernal green when they are fetched away. After the camels have been relieved of their loads, their drivers try to get them as quickly as possible safely to the nearest "shore." But if the rain promises to be of short duration they stay where they are, waiting till the surface of the ground becomes so dry that the camels do not slip. It may happen, however, that other showers fall, and the men wait, only to be deceived again. At length the store of water they have carried with them comes to an end, and they have to think of their lives. They hurry towards the land, struggling through the slough. The camels behind avoid the footprints of their predecessors, which have left dark, yawning holes. They have not gone far before the first victim, which cannot get along any farther, has to be abandoned; and then one after another is lost in the mud. When the last is left to die the men have only themselves to look after. They often grasp one another's hands in pairs to keep their footing better. They have long parted with their footgear, and soon their trousers also are left in the mud. They are eager to reach the tracts of the desert which consist of salt as hard as rock. They are, indeed, under water, but walking there is a rest after the mud. But it is exceedingly dangerous to approach