

these salt flats in thick weather, when it is impossible to steer by some distant hill, or at night. There is, of course, no path, and even if there were, it could not be seen through the water. A man, therefore, runs a risk of missing the way, going astray in the Kevir, and perishing at last from thirst and exhaustion.

Both Gulam Hussein and the guide affirmed that travellers who find themselves in the Kevir have no control over their senses; they are bewitched in some strange fashion. If the weather is good and all keep together there is no danger; they have only to follow the camels, which never lose their bump of locality, and which try for their own sake to cross the desert with all speed and along the shortest line. But if a caravan halts and rests an hour or two in the night, and a man sleeps and is left behind, and awakens to find the caravan disappeared, and gets up in a hurry to overtake his party, he always goes astray. He has totally lost his bump of locality. It is too dark to see the trail on the hard soil. He hears the guiding sound of bells becoming fainter in the distance, but thinks that it comes from the opposite direction. But when the clang of the bells dies away and is totally hushed, and he also notices that the air is quite still, he understands that he has been going in a wrong direction and turns back. Not till the sun has risen does he understand the situation, and in an exhausted condition comes up to his comrades.

Both my men had experienced such adventures. Once Gulam Hussein had overslept himself, and on awaking had made off in a wrong direction. He had walked a farsakh before it occurred to him to examine the trail and he found out his mistake. But when he laid his ear to the ground and heard the ring of the bells very faintly, he then perceived plainly that it came from the opposite direction, whither the trail pointed. He was then so tired that he became stupid, and could not make up his mind whether to go north or south, and so sat down and waited. At last, when it dawned and he saw the trail clearly, he could decide on the right way. How vividly this story reminds one of Marco Polo's description of the Lop desert!