

but it does not usually bring precipitation with it, like the east wind or *bad-i-khorasan*. The wind was favourable to us, for if it continued long and remained dry, it would accelerate the drying of the surface of the desert, and if the sun, which now so obstinately concealed itself, would peep out the drying would proceed still more quickly.

Winter raves and howls outside; it rushes whistling through the holes of the ruin, and the smoke is beaten down from the humming ventilator. We sit wrapped up in our outer clothes round the fire in doubt as to the course we ought to take. We have two alternatives to choose from: either to remain where we are till the desert is dry, or return to Jandak and then proceed to Khur in order to cross the Kevir with better luck to Turut, and lastly travel by the great eastern route round by Tun to Tebbes. It is quite evident that the day is lost. We can go without the least difficulty only 2 farsakh, or so far as the ground is sandy and slopes towards the shore, but then follow 4 farsakh of kevir, the most difficult part of the way, for the salt ground-water stands here so near the surface that it requires longer than elsewhere to dry up. North of the hard salt belt, *nemek*, the Kevir is more favourable and dries more quickly. If any of the Jandak caravans went in front and trod down a path we could follow in its track without danger. After the rain in the night the mud cannot be so very deep, and after a train of camels has ploughed up a furrow the ground usually dries more quickly in the ditch and is less slippery.

At our camp we were in a flat depression surrounded on all sides by low hillocks, and as this is the last place suitable for collecting water, five cisterns have been constructed at various times, of which two are built of burnt bricks, the others of sun-dried clay, and therefore fallen to pieces and out of use. They are fed exclusively by surface water and only after heavy rain, and have no connection with springs or subsoil water; the latter seems to stand at a depth of 8 fathoms and to be salt.

The newest cistern was erected four years before, and the money for the work was bequeathed by a man in Anarek. Over the *hauz* or rectangular basin, a brick vault has been