

ground passes into the level, one has quite the feeling of standing on a shore; to the north the desert stretches out of sight like a sea. The small ponds of water left in the path are sweet right up to the shore, but out on the level Kevir the water is salt. There the puddles are very rapidly soaked up into the ground, turning it into mud.

In the short distance we walked we saw several skeletons of camels which, after having travelled right through the desert and so nearly reached safety, had not been able to reach Jandak. Ali Murat said that the camels which are abandoned in the desert all die in their usual lying posture, that is, resting on all four knees. They only stretch out their heads and necks, and have a decided objection to lie on their sides, probably because they know that they will not be able to raise themselves again on to an even keel when once they are stuck fast in the viscous mud. And he declared that when men coming from the north have fortunately crossed the desert and emerge on to sandy ground at Ser-i-do-farsakh, and see the domes of the water cisterns in the distance, they are indescribably relieved and delighted, and think that they have reached *bihesht*, or paradise.

No islands of sand or solid rock rise from the level surface of the Kevir along the two routes we intended to try. There is not the least point of support of solid ground whither one may resort for refuge. In every direction, as far as the eye can see, the even, treacherous sea extends, and on its surface one experiences a kind of giddiness, or rather a longing for the shore. One has no rest till one comes to land. As little time as possible is spared for resting and feeding the camels, and men hurry and scurry along to get out of the desert before they are overtaken by rain. How different from the Takla-makan! There one looks round with eagerness for a sign of a rain-cloud, and welcomes a shower as a boon from heaven. Here in the Kevir men fear it, and try to escape it as an evil spirit.

I had myself gone not more than half a farsakh to the north, but when I came back to our den I sent off Gulam Hussein to Ser-i-do-farsakh to see the state of the