

proximity is disquieting, especially as the men frequently pay a visit to our den, where they sit scratching themselves and may easily leave one or two of their parasites behind.

The day advances, the clouds are still there, but not a drop of rain falls to the ground; in the night our fate will be decided: if it rains our companions will return to Yezd, if it keeps fine they will go northwards.

At eight o'clock the sky becomes brighter, and also our hopes—mine at any rate. I suspect that Ali Murat wishes for rain and repents of his promise. He talks of "camel weather" when it is gloomy, and looks very suspicious, and the animals shrink from the desert. He maintains that the camels understand that rain is to their advantage, and that fine weather tells against them. The night before last he had sat sleeping on his camel all the way, and had not waked up till he was at Jandak. But to-day he has had to go on foot and drag the rope to make the animals follow him.

The evening drew on, the weather cleared up, and Ali Murat begged me to go to bed, for we were to start two hours before sunrise, and before then the camels must be laden. We packed up our baggage; I had my mapping board, sketch- and note-books at hand in a satchel, and everything else was put away. We were to ride all day till sunset, and then rest a while to feed the camels with straw, and then ride all night to get safely out of the Kevir. There was no prospect of sleep. It was not so hard for the men, who could sit and sleep on the camels, but I should have to make observations and notes all the time, by sunlight or moonlight. Best to make the most of the present before the blow fell, and fall it must—for that I was prepared. There was a lively commotion in the Yezd caravan in the darkness; they were making ready to start; by seven o'clock there was silence in their camp, and then nothing was heard but the gurgle of a camel occasionally or the ring of a bell when the wearer moved. I did not take the trouble of undressing for the short night, but slept well wrapped in a cloak.

I was awakened on the stroke of four, and we were