

caravans and not obliterated by the recent rain; now it consists of a score of tracks side by side. Agha Muhamed is the most important man in our party. He sits on his ass and takes the command, but before very long the ground will be of such a nature that he must spare his beast. At present the ground is dry and trustworthy. We have not yet traversed the 2 farsakh which separate us from the shore.

Now the ground is quite level, like a frozen lake except for small inequalities. The slight elevation of the caravan above the plane of the horizon remains constant. Certain bits of the road are as even as an asphalted street, and in my extemporized saddle I sit as in an armchair, but my camel has also a very easy gait—a mare has usually an easier action than a stallion. Sometimes a white film of salt lies on the surface, a hint of the salt desert. And over this lifeless ground, lifeless as the moon, the road runs straight as a dart, and I see the caravan in front of me in the greatest possible foreshortening. Sometimes, at a slight bend, the whole procession unrolls itself to right or left, and I see all the camels like the carriages of a train passing round a curve.

We have a Seid in our party. When I asked him yesterday to let me draw him, he refused, saying that it was incompatible with his religious dignity. When the sun rose to-day he stopped to say his prayers. He is the only one of the Yezd men who rides a camel; all the others go on foot, each leading his *katar*, and two look after the equilibrium of the loads. Every small stoppage at the head of the caravan is felt by us who bring up the rear. Agha Muhamed has only to pull up a moment to light his pipe, and all the camels, one after another to the last, must halt a moment; it is like a vibration propagated through a long line.

The low hills of Jandak grow fainter and fainter, but the northern hills appear clearly though dimly. We are at the critical point Chil-i-do-farsakh, "the 2-farsakh mark." Here the Kevir begins, and the passage from the dry land, which yields a sufficient foothold, to the smooth viscous treacherous clay is very sudden and sharp. While the