

The day passes and we get the better of the desert bit by bit. We can ride over the hard crust, for it is not at all slippery. The sun has passed its meridian, and the shadows extend on the starboard side. At one o'clock the temperature is  $52.9^{\circ}$ ; a slight draught of air from the north-west is perceptible, and large parts of the sky are overcast. We shall see if we escape rain. We have quite the feeling of being out at sea and longing for a coast.

There is no longer water on the surface, but the underground water appears in every hole. From one of these we took a specimen of salt, loose and porous, as well as a specimen of the underlying mud. To the north-west a reddish-yellow hill comes in sight, which is called *Kuh-i-cha-i-shirin*, or the "hill of the sweet well," over which runs the road from Mahallaman to Semnan.

At length we are across this belt of hard salt, and again there is wet kevir before us. At this point, between the two, we find that we are on the right course, for at this new *ser-i-nemek* there are abundant signs that caravans have rested. Here also the Yezd caravan halts, the men take the loads off the camels and take straw out of the sacks. We have no objection to follow their example; we are hungry after a cup of tea and a piece of bread in the morning and nine hours of continuous march. I ask the men how long they intend to rest, and they answer, as long as the camels need to eat their fill. They set out again immediately only when the weather is threatening, but now there is at present no danger, for the clouds are quite light. The height is 2369 feet.

So the tripod is set up, and the burkha shades me and shelters me from the draught. Gulam Hussein makes haste to put on the water for tea, and before it boils he has looked out a cold chicken and some hard-boiled eggs. I would sleep a while, but I have no time, for my notes must be entered in my diary.

Here we lie at anchor with our ships in the midst of the desert, and are surrounded by the most perfect peace and quietness. Nothing is heard but the jaws of the camels as they grind the straw between their teeth. The