

to feed the fire with some of our saxaul stems, and then we sit down and talk a while. The camels, however, continue their march from habit, and because the leader does not halt. We do not sit long, one man after another hurries after the caravan, and when I am warmed through I follow after the distant clang of bells. Last of all, we also have overtaken the others, and now Gulam Hussein takes out my sheepskin coat and *valenki*, or Russian felt boots, and I can successfully withstand the cold when I mount up again between the humps.

The ground is excellent, and the camels do not stumble at all. We pass Hauz-i-agma, a place where a cistern was formerly situated, showing that here, in the middle of the desert, there is a prospect of collecting sweet water. Last year (1905) the people of Husseinan made an attempt to rebuild this reservoir, but were not successful. To the right of our route appears a black belt, a locality called Kashia. The Kevir is now hard and even as an asphalted street, the pace becomes quicker, the bells ring more frequently, and the men roll in longer, quicker, and more uncomfortable swings. The moon sinks, and the pale blue light fades over its grave. We are in the midst of pitch-dark night. The pole-star has disappeared, taking the whole host of heaven with it. No starlight can penetrate the clouds that gather over our heads. Bad weather is coming on, and a strong north-easterly wind arises, the hostile wind, *bad-i-Khorasan*, the wind that usually brings rain. I cannot see my hand before me, nor the head of my own camel. I have no notion where we are going, and cannot discern the nature of the ground. It is pitch dark all around, and I sway as usual backwards and forwards, listening to the ring of the bells and the flapping and beating of the rugs and cloths on the camels in the wind. No talking is heard, the men being too far apart, but I have a feeling that they are awake and on foot. We must try to get over without rain, so the march is forced and one hour passes slowly after another.

Will this everlasting night never come to an end? I can do very well without sleep for once, but this impenetrable darkness puts my patience to a hard trial.