

northern latitudes. Only in the west, in a small space left free by the clouds, the fire of the sun burns as in a gigantic smelting furnace, casting faint reddish-yellow reflexions over the desert, and colouring the camels brick red. How wonderfully sharp they stand out against the dark sky in the north! Fiery-red camels! They might be bewitched by the spirits of the Kevir. But their step is measured, their gait as stately as ever, and they sometimes turn their heads horizontally to look westwards and take farewell of the departing day, and then a reflexion of the sun makes their eyes glow like burning coals. And over this scene sweeps with undiminished velocity the *bad-i-Khorasan*, or wind from the land of the sun. We have come far, and have many a weary mile behind us, but shall we get out of the grip of the desert before the rain comes and, together with the impenetrable darkness, thwarts our plans and prolongs our long-suffering?

I walk and keep in step with the Seid and another man from Yezd. We talk to beguile the time. They tell me some of their own affairs. Every member of this caravan is a *shuturdar* or camel-owner. Agha Muhamed owns most, the others having only two each. They receive $9\frac{1}{2}$ tuman as hire for each camel between Yezd and Shahrud, and also 2 tuman each as wages for their services. But the road is trying to the animals, which must also be fed, and the profits are not large. And, besides, there is the risk of rain. In the worst case they may lose their camels or be hindered by yielding ground. In Shahrud they remain till they are hired again, and have other goods to carry back to Yezd. They seldom manage to travel backwards and forwards between the two towns more than three times in the year. The interest, then, on the capital value of the camels is not large, and for those who own only two camels life is not a bed of roses.

In return I told them that the night before, as I sat awake between the humps of my bearer, I saw a camel and two men pass by me like shadows, going south. All the rest were asleep, the caravan moved on by its own momentum, and the strangers went by without speaking