

they said, and there is the Rig-i-jin, or the desert of evil spirits. A man who tried to cross this country turned back after two days.

It was very strange to hear their statements about wild camels, *shutur-i-vash-i-biaban*, in the dreadful desert where human beings never go. Wild camels occur in the deserts of Central Asia, and why may they not exist in the Persian? I very much doubted, however, these romantic statements, for why had I not heard of these animals in other parts, as their existence leaves a deep impression both on the wastes and in the minds of the men who live around? There is not a trace of vegetation in the Kevir, but perhaps belts of sand or relic hills with a vegetable growth might render it possible for wild camels to support themselves as on islands in the midst of the ocean. But the whole story lost much of its credibility when an old man related the following incident, which was supposed to have happened a long time ago.

A haji was on the way to Mecca, and at the edge of the desert left his camels, a servant, and two women, with orders to wait till his return. However, it was several years before he came back, and then he found that the whole party had gone off to the *rig-i-jin*, the heart of the great desert. He looked for them, found their trail, and at last the people themselves, and, enraged at the liberty they had taken, demanded where his camels were. Oh, they had all died, but their young ones were still living and had run away into the desert and could not be caught. The haji, presumably edified by his pilgrimage to Mecca, had made short work of the matter and slain his unfaithful servants. But the camels survived in the desert, and their descendants were living there to this day, though my informant at Sadfe could refer me to no one who had seen the animals with his own eyes or even their spoor. But he had known many men who had acquaintances who had seen them. The report, therefore, was very vague and untrustworthy. He also declared that there was a small hill in the *rig-i-jin* with a *burch* or castle, a mulberry tree, and a spring of fresh water, where the wild camels drink. Surely the whole tale has sprung up because a number of camels