

afford a support to their slipping and sliding feet. When we come to the track of the caravan which was recently out to fetch the baggage it had left behind we made easier progress, for the clay was drier in the track. This incident reminded Ali Murat that fragments of the finest faience are sometimes found at a certain place in the interior of the Kevir. Most of it, however, had already been carried to Ispahan to be sold to Europeans. The fact is that a large caravan loaded with faience travelled many years ago through the desert and was attacked and plundered by a band of Turkmans, who left the loads but took the camels, and led away their owners to sell them as slaves in the markets of Merv and Bukhara.

The desert is certainly not in a favourable condition, but we march on as fast as we can. Some belts are very slippery and the camels swing their legs as if they were practising skating. In a hollow that is fortunately quite narrow we are nearly drowned in the mire, viscous, sticky and heavy, and clinging to our boot-soles in large flakes. Far away to the east another hill crops up from the level ground, Kuh-i-Halvan, with the large village Halvan situated on its western side. Ali Murat calls a place on the road Chil-i-gur-i-Khur, or the "place of the wild ass from Khur"; it seems that a wild ass from the south once died at this spot.

It is quite a relief to march a little later over quite dry ground. In two places are seen remains of straw and camel dung where caravans have rested. To the east the desert looks yellow, to the west dark, but it would be a mistake to suppose that the country is drier towards the east. The difference of colour is produced solely by the declining sun. To the west the ground is darkened by the shadows of small knolls and inequalities in the clay.

The sun descends in rosy splendour and draws the daylight down with it like an enormous magnet, and an hour later the moon rises, equally red but with a duller light. The lantern of night is, however, as welcome as the sun, and lights up the dismal desert with its pale brilliance. The sky is almost quite clear, and therefore