

the peculiar form of the moon can be distinctly discerned. A little above the dark level line of the horizon appears a lancet-shaped streak of light which gradually spreads, and even when the moon has risen clear above the horizon it still retains its elongated elliptical form. But the higher it mounts the rounder becomes its disc, and the more its colour passes into yellow and finally into white. The shadows of the camels which lately, in sunlight, lay to leeward now pass over to starboard, but they are very faint, for the moon lies low, and a slight remnant of daylight still trembles in the west. Soon it pales, the moon rises higher, and the shadows grow darker. In silence we wander on steadily towards south-south-east; we are now again in the dangerous desert, and our chief aim is to escape from its grip. At the way-mark, Bend-i-Nadir-Ali, we have travelled 4 farsakh from Hauz-i-ser-i-Kevir.

We had marched continuously for ten hours when Ali Murat halted at a spot where a litter of straw showed that a caravan had rested, and he asked if I objected to stay the night there. The weather, he said, seemed settled; we had nothing to fear, and we might sleep peacefully, gathering up strength for the tough journey on the morrow. No; I had certainly no objection to stop, the camels were unloaded and tethered round their straw heap, the camera-stand and burkha were set up, and while I made my notes Gulam Hussein laid my evening meal. The height was 2352 feet.

Here it is oppressively still and silent, no sign of life, not a sound, not a nocturnal bird is heard shrieking in the distance; even Nevengk, having nothing to bark at, lies quietly curled up beside the camels. This is the home of death with an absolute absence of organic life. We are the centre of this round level dark disc, equally distant on all sides from the horizon. The only sound heard is the ceaseless chewing and munching of the camels and their deep breathing, and now and then the crackling of the fire. The two men are silent, or if at any time they do talk, it is in a subdued tone, as though they feared to disturb the peace of the desert. We listen in vain for the ring of bells; no other travellers are out to-night. And over the silent waste the moon sheds its solemn light.