

CHAPTER XXXIII

SOUTHWARDS THROUGH THE KEVIR

WE have to be smart in the desert, and have no time to lose, so we go to rest as quickly as possible. The moon peeps into my tiny tent here and there. When I wake, a little after midnight, the interior of the tent seems singularly dark, and I throw back a flap of the burkha to find the sky covered with densely packed clouds, and the hostile wind, the bad-i-Khorasan, moaning and whistling from the north-east. Shall we be caught in rain now in the midst of the desert, and be compelled, like so many others, to abandon our camels, and with failing strength endeavour to escape to the nearest coast?

We got up at five o'clock, breakfasted, and began our march an hour later, when the temperature was 27.9° , and the wind blew gently from the north-east. The sun rose brightly, but it had scarcely cleared the horizon before it disappeared in a heap of dark clouds. Now the desert looked dark to the east and light to the west. The day was cool and gloomy, but the path was dry and good, and I walked on in advance. As far as we could see before us to the south, the ground seemed to be unchanged, and if only the weather held up we should manage to reach land safely.

Far to the south are seen the light blue outlines of Kuh-i-Aruzun and Kuh-i-Khur-i-gez—we hope that they will rise ever higher and become more distinct before we encamp at night. The southern horizon lies as sharp as a knife-edge, and a tendency to dune formation is seldom