

shoes and the feet of the camels. A white powder of salt particles covers the clay in some parts, which is now dark in the hollows but brownish yellow on the hillocks, a difference depending entirely on the varying degrees of humidity. After an hour's march we are quite worn out, owing to these unbearable soles of mud, which we try again and again to chip off; but it is no use, for they are on again in a minute. The wretched ground seems determined to suck us in and hold us fast. If the sun would come out for a few hours the surface of the desert would become a little better, but it requires ten days to dry after ordinary rain. If we leave the clay on our boots a while after we get on the camels it dries rapidly, but the ground itself seems as if it would never dry, which is not remarkable since the under layer is so sodden.

We have a choice of walking till we drop from weariness, or sitting on the camels, waiting till we are thrown off, and we take these two forms of evil in turn. The farther we travel south the worse the ground becomes. On the Jandak route also the southern half of the desert was the worst. No doubt this is because the rain was heavier in the south than the north. Dense blue-black clouds now sail over the southern country, gradually sweeping out all outlines and details. Evidently the rain is pouring down over yonder, and we wonder if we shall reach land fairly dry-shod.

A change from the tiring mud is afforded us by an interval of salt crust with its surface covered, to a large extent, by shallow puddles of water; at its edge stands a small cairn of slabs of salt. The place is called Dagh-daghu. The thickness of the salt slabs varies from 4 inches to a twelfth of an inch, and in general a crowbar can easily be thrust through the sheet, whereupon water stands in the hole at three-quarters of an inch from the surface. In spring this salt belt is said to lie under a foot of water, which, however, does not cover the adjacent parts of the desert, showing that the sheet of salt is situated in a depression imperceptible to the eye. Such temporary salt lakes are formed in many places in the desert, and this, no doubt, has given rise to rumours of permanent lakes in the Kevir. Here also the salt crust has burst up in