

four small villages: Kelat-i-kemal, Kelat-i-hadi, Peh, and Peshover, in the first two of which date-palms are cultivated.

At half-past three the rain poured down with quite tropical violence, but it troubled us no more, for we were already as wet as we could be after five hours of continuous rain. All the ground was full of shallow puddles in which the rain pelted and pattered, and the water splashed and spurted up after the camels. The ground was transformed into a slough, but it was fortunately sandy, and the camels did not stumble. Here and there pieces of black slaggy lava were scattered about. Not a spot of light was to be seen in the sky, and not a cloud was distinguishable; all was of a dark uniform grey, and only the nearest hills appeared as rather darker patches.

At last a dark green line came in sight before us, the date palms of Abbasabad, and above them lay the village with its beehive cupolas (2815 feet). Under one of these we came into a smoky room open to the courtyard, made up a roaring fire at which we tried to dry our effects, clothes, and rugs, though it was scarcely possible. They could not have been wetter if they had been dipped right into water. An inner pitch-dark den was cleaned out for my use, and here it dropped delightfully through the cupola roof, so that there seemed to be danger that the whole vault would be softened and fall in with its own weight. Outside, the storm raged, whistled in the corners and beat down the rain, and water trickled and dropped everywhere. Gulam Hussein and Ali Murat hung up our clothes by the fire on poles and ropes, and it was pitiable to see them dripping from all points.

But we might be glad that we had come out of the desert before this deluge made the Kevir impassable for quite twenty days. We were told that the desert, after such continuous rain, would be converted into a *darya* or a sea, and that the salt crusts we crossed would lie under a foot of water collected from the surrounding tracts. All traffic would be suspended, and the caravans that chanced to be lying waiting at Jandak, Husseinan, Peyestan, or Turut, might just as well return home, for after such a