

## CHAPTER XXXV

### ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THE SANDY DESERT AND THE KEVIR

JUST as we were setting out on February 19 a small caravan arrived from Khur on its way to Cha-meji. Its leader warned us most emphatically not to cross the great Kevir bay, which would certainly be under water in some parts, and where in any case we should quite ruin our camels. Ah, well, we thought, we shall see when we come nearer, and we marched on in good but cold weather ( $38.8^{\circ}$  at seven o'clock) and under a sky streaked and mottled by small white clouds in quite the same regular arrangement as the small ridges and lines in the sand of a shallow lake. Small dwindling rain-furrows ran towards the east-north-east, and on the right we left a small longish pool formed by rain-water. Beyond the eastern point of the range of hills on our right now appeared another higher range with snow on its crest, called Kuh-i-pusht-i-badam, while to the south-east the country was quite flat and open, and to the east-south-east was seen a hill called Kuh-i-rabat-i-khan.

Our march brought us to a bay, 300 yards broad, of the isolated kevir which surrounded the small pool. It would have taken us only a few minutes longer to go round this little bay, but Habibullah, who walked in front, marched fearlessly forward and the caravan followed. But the farther we proceeded from the shore the softer the ground became. The camels tramped down quite a trench of mud and slime and soon sank in up to their knees. And they sank still deeper at every step. A camel fell in the first detachment, but got up again without help. Then the next