

in the row, the large dark stallion, which was carrying four sacks of straw weighing 100 batman, came down. But he fought bravely and composedly with the treacherous mud, was urged on with cries and blows, and splashed and tramped on with long active steps, till all at once he sank in to the belly, and lay as though stuck fast in a mould.

General commotion! All hands hurry up. The camel's load must be taken off and carried ashore by the men, and then by the united strength of the men and not less by his own intelligence and energy the animal is raised from the horrible mud-bath, which might have cost him his life. He is then led quietly and steadily by a roundabout way to firm land with the mire hanging and dropping from his belly and legs. He is summarily scraped clean and loaded again, while the other camels are brought along a surer path over this treacherous ground. Not once in the great Kevir had we passed such a slough as this, but I had another illustration of the peculiarities of the kind of ground Persians call kevir. The small arm we are now crossing has been softened and disturbed by the recent heavy rain, and has also a large admixture of sand. After a week of sunny weather the surface would become hard and unyielding, forming a tough crust over the slough. Under such conditions as these, it is easy to understand that a caravan which goes out into the Kevir in good weather and is caught in heavy rain in the middle of it, is exposed to the greatest danger. In ground such as we have just tested, even the strongest camel, though relieved of its load, is sucked under in a few hundred yards.

We had at any rate learned a useful lesson, and saw that we must travel round the large Kevir bay, from which we were now separated only by a sandspit. It was better to keep to dry ground rather than run such great risks to save a trifle of 6 farsakh.

We cross in a south-easterly direction the spit of firm ground, which is covered with coarse sand and small dunes with or without saxaul and shrubs, and come to the western edge of the great Kevir bay, and see the outlines of the hills standing on its eastern side in light but distinct tones.