

off, and when the leader thought that we had gone far enough after $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours' march, he changed his direction and turned in towards the shore, crossing a belt of slippery mud. We set up our tents at the foot of a dune, quite 130 feet high, where saxaul as tall as trees grew. The locality is called Chemgert. The height was 2539 feet.

The first thing I do is to go up the dune, from the top of which I can command the whole horizon. I have an expert with me who tells me the names of all the hills in sight, and points out in which direction the various roads run. Then I descend to inspect the camels, who haughtily and indifferently sniff at the chopped straw before it is mixed with cottonseed, but afterwards eat it with the keener appetite. I make sure that the dogs and fowls get their meal—we have bought a cock and some hens in Khur, which run about picking and cackling between the tents, and give the camp a homely and rural air. I stand a while at the men's fire where two wanderers with an ass from Khur are entertained. Like ourselves, they are on the way to Tebbes, and they ask if they may be allowed to accompany us, as they are so afraid of robbers. Certainly, with pleasure. The Cossacks sit and clean their rifles and keep their ammunition handy, and propose that a night-watch should be kept at the camp. For my part, I have no belief in robbers. Twenty years ago I travelled backwards and forwards all through Persia without a single retainer, and was never molested.

The morning of February 20 promised nothing good, and before noon its promise was fulfilled. When I went out before seven o'clock the sky was covered with a dense uniform mass of clouds, and there was a fine drizzle. The minimum thermometer marked 37° ; at seven o'clock the temperature was 42.4° , at one o'clock 43° , and at nine o'clock 37.8° . While I was walking briskly on foot in advance the rain increased, and at nine A.M. it was so thick that I mounted my tall camel, took my ulster, and wrapped a couple of rugs round me. It felt quite cool in the searching northerly blast, which increased as the day advanced.

As yesterday, we follow the coast on hard, excellent