

passage for the camels among the dunes, but I was soon overtaken by Habibullah, who told me in a patronizing tone that it was not well to go alone and unarmed in this *biaban*, where robbers might surely be lying in ambush behind the shrubs. He did not remember that he himself was unarmed, and would be fearfully scared if a band of robbers popped up among the dunes. After a while he was relieved by Abbas Kuli Bek, who carried his rifle over his shoulder. The Persians are steady and agreeable, but they are not heroes, and their imagination runs wild when they scent danger.

So we march on among knobbly dunes, thickly overgrown, often with actual thickets, and out on the desert large sheets of water shimmer after the rain of the night. A singular, very irregular creek of the Kevir protrudes into the sand-belt and is filled with shallow water. Outside the great Kevir is interminable with its north-western horizon as level as a sea, and yonder Kuh-i-gumbei still raises its clearly marked profile. Then we follow, as yesterday, the edge of the sand-belt at a distance of only a couple of yards from the shore of the Kevir, where long pools of water lie so near that I suspect that the weight of sand exercises a decided pressure on the less stable substratum.

The trail of two barefooted men and a camel excites my men's suspicions, and they march in close order, with their hearts in their mouths and their guns on their shoulders, expecting an attack at any moment. But this time it is only two innocent herdsmen, who are watching sixty camels from Anarek in the sand-belt. When the sand afterwards becomes flatter, a succession of small points and teeth of the adjacent range comes into view, and at its foot Chashirin, or the "sweet well," is sunk in the ground.

The ground is level, and we are very cautious not to leave the sand-strewn tract, but even this is not always to be trusted after the late rain. Then we have to cross a long Kevir creek, little more than a hundred yards broad, and strewn all over with sand and with a path where the caravan of yesterday passed. The first camel sinks in at once to its belly, and its legs bore into the soft ground like