

pins into a cushion. Those behind make a hasty right-about turn, while the load of the unlucky animal is carried ashore. There is no time for thinking, for the camel, bellowing piteously, is slowly falling deeper into the mud. His legs are dugged out with spades, and at last he makes a violent jump out of the mud-hole, but only to fall more hopelessly into another. Then all we have in the way of sacks and strips of felt are hurriedly brought, and dry stems of saxaul are broken off on the shore; and with this material a temporary bridge is constructed over the dangerous spot and the camel is rescued. After this experience we do not venture on any more short cuts for the rest of the day.

A small blue gap among the clouds in the zenith mocked our hopes of fine weather. I never saw such masses of clouds, and we could not help looking at them, they were so artistic and picturesquely formed, and presented a much finer sight than the surface of the land.

Some distance from the shore a small sandy islet held together by vegetation rises out of the Kevir, the only one we have seen in the salt desert. At this point our route joins the cross route over the great Kevir, the other western terminus of which we saw the day before yesterday. A peninsula of sand, called Pa-i-tagh, juts out into the desert, and at its base rise two considerable dune ridges, running as usual north and south. Here we turn to the east and leave the shore of the Kevir. The sand-belt we have had to do with during the latter days continues north-eastwards to Halvan and Dest-gerdun, and is said to stretch southwards for a distance of 12 farsakh more.

The road then becomes excellent, and is more distinct because it forms a bare channel between steppe shrubs and grass. But sandhills still continue, though much lower than before, and all drawn out from south to north. We leave on the right the sweet-water well Cha-naini at the foot of the nearest hill. And then something dark comes into sight in front of us,—the ruins of a small tower, with a *rabat* or rest-house with arched windows beside it, but no living inmate. Here is the well Cha-meji, where we pitch our tents. Height 2671 feet.