

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE OASIS OF TEBBES

A CARAVAN from Tebbes came up jingling in the morning, completing its mensil just as we were beginning ours. The morning was fine and clear after a slight frost in the night, but the westerly wind still blew piercingly cold. However, it ceased after an hour of march, and when we had the sun right in our faces and the main furrow we followed sloped to the basin in the lowlands, we had a premonition that we were really approaching a *germsir* or warm country. We travelled eastwards among small spurs and mounds, the road was excellent, and the camels marched with ease. In one place there seemed to be a tendency to the formation of kevir, where the ground was now dry, but deep holes and the marks of the slipping foot-pads of camels showed that here, too, the ground was smooth and treacherous after rain. A large pond still stood in a hollow where the camels drank. In a broad defile between low hills the main bed has cut out a channel in solid rock to a depth of 6 feet and 65 to 100 feet broad. At Chil-i-Shah-Abbas, a votive-cairn, the road runs for a time down in the furrow, the bottom of which is full of pebbles and coarse sand. At Moghu, where a solitary palm has gone astray, the country flattens out in earnest, and all the furrows become more indefinite and shallower. At the right stand the western spurs of the hills and small projections, such as terraces, vanishing away towards the low land. The rock was compact limestone, sometimes dark brown and sometimes light red or greyish, and in one place I found a fine fossil shell.