

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE DATE PALMS OF TEBBES

TEBBES lies in great isolation, and is cut off from the outer world, the nearest town being fully 80 miles distant. At the entertainments to which I was invited all, without exception, were inhabitants of Tebbes. Strangers seldom come hither, and then only those who have some particular reason—merchants and caravan-owners, for instance. The boundless desert extends in all directions, and a journey to a neighbouring town—Tun, Birjan, Yezd, or one of the towns of Khorasan—is quite an expedition. The small town leads its own life closely shut in by its walls, and, unaffected by influences from without, which follow the great highways and the caravans, it has retained its primitive character and peculiarities fairly unadulterated. Tebbes, then, gives the impression of a genuine native town; but the inhabitants complain bitterly of their isolated position, and say that if only one large caravan road passed through the place their prosperity and well-being would increase.

Yet the town is not completely closed. We have ourselves made acquaintance with the road from Khur, and others lead to Khorasan, Yezd, and Naibend. Tebbes has even regular postal connection with the great world. The post road to Meshed passes through Tun and Turbet-i-Haidari, and is divided into fourteen stages. The distance is reckoned at 93 farsakh, and men and horses are changed twelve times. A letter is forwarded in four or five days. This is indeed not the shortest way to Meshed, its longer distance being due to Tun and