

## CHAPTER XLIV

### FROM NAIBEND TO SER-I-CHA

THE Seid from Tebbes, who accompanied us with six hired camels and two at his own charges, agreed to go on with us to Neh; he had been so well paid, and camels could not be hired in Naibend at any price. The caravan, then, consisted of eight men and twenty-one camels, and we had bought provisions for five days' journey. The morning of March 20 at six o'clock felt quite cool, with the thermometer at  $58.3^{\circ}$ , as we, accompanied by a dense crowd of spectators and beggars, left Naibend and retraced our steps for half an hour, and then directed our course east-north-east on the road to Birjan. But the crowd gradually thinned, and before we came to the small saddle Gudar-i-khur, with a stone cairn erected on its summit, our last attendant had turned back to his cot on the hill above the palms.

To the east appears the hill where our camping-ground for the evening is situated, Shand-Ali-Riza-Khan, and the distance to it is reckoned only 3 farsakh, though it looks much longer. But the Seid asserts that the farsakh in this country is almost twice as long as at Tebbes, and, even if he exaggerated, there was certainly a decided difference.

The air is not clear, being sultry and heavy, with vapour rising from the wet ground in the rapidly increasing heat. The ground slopes slowly from Gudar-i-khur, and we make our way towards a chaos with its farther boundary vanishing in mysterious mist. Poor shrubs stand in strips among the pebbles, struggling patiently for life between