

desert merges into hazy sky. We cross a track, the road between Khabis and Birjan. It seems to be little frequented; the travellers are few who go through Naibend. Somewhat to the right, and beyond Kuh-i-murghab is seen another hill of a duller tone, Kuh-i-derbend, which is considerably higher.

The country rises gently eastwards, and becomes more open and level to the south. In this direction nothing interrupts its fall. We march along the edge of a huge basin, exceedingly flat and shallow, and we have a conception of immense distance, where *jambas*-dromedaries have plenty of room for their rapid course.

The sky is covered with light clouds, long white parallel streaks, airy and thin as feathers and down. They seem to arrange themselves in certain lines in obedience to the wind, while others are round and spiral-shaped, floating in the air like dancers' skirts and elves' veils of thin transparent gauze, and falling into folds and twists with the movements of the wearer. The whole sky is draped with this airy gossamer, which is much too thin to shade the sun.

We rested for the night at a well which is called Gelle-cha, and has briny water. We had again ascended considerably, and were at a height of 3924 feet. A number of camels from the village Bermench were grazing in the neighbourhood. Pointing southwards, towards the interior of the Lut desert, the herdsmen spoke of the Shahr-i-Lut, or "desert-town," the ruins of which are said to extend over an area of 20 farsakh. In the distance they look like a faint wavy line, but on a nearer approach they turn out to be nothing but bare mounds of earth. How many such mythical towns are to be found in the interior of Asia!

The herdsmen lived in a hole, a hollow in the ground with a roof of saxaul twigs and branches. A fairly deep trench cuts through the ground on its way to Kuh-i-murghab. Smaller or large furrows run almost all the day's march to the south and south-west; and we seldom pass over ten yards where there is no drainage channel. The depression of the Lut desert is, like the Kevir, a huge reservoir into which the water collects from all sides.