

## CHAPTER XLVI

### TRAVELS IN THE KEVIR

MARCO POLO neither crossed nor even touched the great Kevir, but he passed smaller kevir basins in the northern Lut, or the desert which lies to the south-west of Tebbes. We have to pass over nearly six centuries from his time before we come to the next European who gives us some information of the great salt desert, and this time it is an explorer who describes the desert accurately and fully, namely, the Russian Dr. Buhse, who travelled right through the Kevir in the spring of 1849. Lord Curzon refers to St. John's statement that Buhse was the only European who had ever done this.<sup>1</sup>

In Tomaschek's excellent work we find a general summary of Buhse's journey through the desert.<sup>2</sup> The Arabian geographer Makdisi in the eleventh century has left a very cursory account of the Kevir between Damgan and Jandak, from which we can perceive that the desert was as difficult of access 900 years ago as it is now. Tomaschek uses the characteristic term "daryâ-i-Kawir," or Kevir Sea. He relates that Buhse found to the south-east of Damgan a basin with a small salt-lake in its midst, and that Alexander the Great, on his last day's march from Hekatompylos to Shahrud, touched on its northern edge. From the western margin of the salt basin a road runs southwards to Frat. Farther south succeeds an expanse of drifts and dunes. The road then

<sup>1</sup> *Persia*, vol. ii. p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> *Zur historischen Topographie von Persien*, vol. ii. ; *Die Wege durch die persische Wüste*, pp. 70 et seq.