

the ground there is a layer of hard salt, and this is true of all the road through the desert; very astonishing information, which seems to indicate that the southern Lut is an entirely isolated basin, for the salt sheet of the Nemek-sar lies at a much lower level.

Two resting-places were passed in the desert, Shur-gez and Gurg, with wells 5 feet deep, yielding saline water. At Gurg also the salt stream Rud-i-mahi runs towards the north-west. The road crosses for the most part slightly undulating stony desert, without a sign of life; here and there is a belt of dunes. Two minarets are passed, the first of which is called Mil-i-Nadiri, and is 55 feet high, and the other is in ruins. From these, and the ruins of a fort and caravanserai at Ribat, the travellers concluded that the road was formerly much frequented. The cold was severe in January, but the summer is said to be so hot that a horseman must wind rags round the stirrups that his steed may not be scorched! They heard also of a direct road from Nasretabad to Bam, which could be traversed in twenty-four hours with swift-footed *jambas-dromedaries*.

Next in order comes General Sir C. M. M'Gregor, who, in 1875, crossed the southern bay of the great Kevir between Khur and Tebbes. Among other things he says:¹

"It is rather difficult to suggest anything that will give an English reader an idea of what this 'Kuveer' is. It is not sand, nor is it in the least like the desolate plains of India, which, burnt up as they may be, are luxuriant in their vegetation compared with Kuveer. It has, speaking quite literally, not one blade of grass, not one leaf of any kind, not a living thing of any sort. It is composed of dark soil, which looks as if it had been turned up by the plough a year before, but which is covered with a thick salt efflorescence, which glitters painfully to the eyes. All round, as far as the eye can reach, there is nothing to be seen but this glare of white. . . . The surface of the Kuveer is not smooth, but is so honeycombed with small holes, about nine inches deep, and the size of a man's head, that it is very difficult walking for animals. . . . Of course,

¹ *Narrative of a Journey through the Province of Khorassan*, vol. i. p. 101.