

the east. These legends, which I have heard at many places on the confines of the desert, not only speak of a great sea, but also mention ships, islands, ports, and lighthouses."

During my journey through Khorasan in the year 1890 I made two small excursions to the edge of the kevir basins, which lie isolated to the north of the great Kevir. According to Napier's map, which I had with me, Damgan appeared to be the best starting-point, but when I learned in Gushe that it was 6 farsakh thence to the edge of the salt desert, but 9 from Damgan, I decided to commence the excursion from Gushe. I had only one attendant and two horses, and we rode at a quick trot in an east-southeasterly direction. To the left were the mighty crests of Elburz, while to the right a low hilly ridge was seen protruding into the salt desert.

A marked road runs through dreary steppe, where small heaps of sand lie in the lee of the shrubs. Beyond the villages Khasemabad and Amrevah, after an hour's ride, the white strip comes in sight which indicates the salt desert, now clearly illuminated by the red disc of the setting sun. Then follow the villages Abdullabad and Ghamabad, and then the direction becomes due east through still more dismal country, where scattered ruins mark the sites of deserted villages. From Sulabad we took a *bellad* or guide, who led us through the villages Frat and Taghiabad. A little beyond a very small belt of dunes, with hills of perfectly sterile driftsand barely 16 feet high, is passed. The steep lee sides of the dunes face the south, northerly winds prevailing at this season. Otherwise there is no sand as far as the eye can see.

After 6 farsakh all vegetation suddenly ceases, a stretch of clay soil follows, and then we are at the sharply marked edge of the salt desert. After a ride of a mile and a quarter more we are surrounded on all sides by a pure white crust of salt, which becomes firmer and thicker the farther we advance. Here we meet a small caravan laden with blocks of pure salt 4 inches thick, to be sold in the towns.

We now walk for more than a mile to spare our horses,