

sea is a wondrous thing, and right perilous. And there were none of us who desired to enter on that sea. For it is all of dry sand without the slightest moisture. And it shifteth as the sea doth when in storm, now hither, now thither, and as it shifteth it maketh waves in like manner as the sea doth ; so that countless people travelling thereon have been overwhelmed and drowned and buried in those sands. For when blown about and buffeted by the winds, they are raised into hills, now in this place, now in that, according as the wind chanceth to blow.”<sup>1</sup>

The country north-west of Yezd is very similarly described five and six hundred years after Odorico's time. Thus General A. Gasteiger Khan says : “The station Hymmetabad lies in a sea of driftsand, in the midst of which the ruins of numerous uninhabited villages rise up to heaven. Any one who loses himself in the night awakes in another world. . . . The whole country as far as Yezd consists of nothing but sandhills where travellers sinking up to the knee often lose the track. The outer walls of the villages are in many places covered with sand to the top ; in Askezard I found an old solid castle with ramparts, ditches, colossal bastions, a splendid bath and grand reservoirs all built for eternity and now overwhelmed with sand. The country seems to have been formerly a sea which being dried up by the sun has left this bed of sand.”<sup>2</sup>

The same year, 1881, Yezd was visited by Stack. Like Odorico, he makes no mention of driftsand until the second day's journey north-west of the town, where he says, we “wandered for six miles in a sea of sandhills, losing our way twice. This is the sand which by prophecy shall one day overwhelm Yazd. It has overwhelmed old Askizar. The mosque which marked the centre of the old village stands now half buried in the midst of a waste of hillocks that overlies the roofs of houses. The village has shifted farther eastward. In a high wind, such as often blows at this season, all landmarks are lost, and travellers must camp where they stand till the air clears again.

<sup>1</sup> *Cathay and the Way thither*, by H. Yule, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Von Teheran nach Beludschistan*, p. 40.