

Followed by beggars, we proceeded on our way past mills and forts, with their decayed mud walls and swampy moats filled with water. Two small villages, some surface canals with water, and extensive fields of growing wheat were soon behind us, and we were out in the wilderness again. To the left stood an isolated hill, the Kuh-i-Shah-Dost, and beyond ran the small range Kuh-i-germ. To west-south-west was seen a sandhill field called Rig-i-Neh, which apparently consisted of quite high barren dunes. We came at a sharp angle to the range Kuh-i-esten, and passed Khuneh, a squalid and desolate village, with the ever-present yellowish-grey walls and fields, the ruins of a fort, and eleven mills built together. An old woman sat meditating in a courtyard, and a ragged boy followed us for a while, but there was no other living thing. And then we were out in the silent wilderness again.

The day gave promise of being warm, and at one o'clock the temperature was 74.3° , but the clouds gather together again into a close canopy, and there is a strong wind from the south-east, from the plague-smitten land. I sit dreaming on my tall camel, and we draw near to Seistan with a certain uneasiness, my servants being much disturbed by the news we have received. They are engaged as far as Seistan, whence they are to turn back; but now they ask me whether it is dangerous for them to go there, and I answer them that they may be quite tranquil. How singular that the black death can find its way hither, to this silent, peaceful wilderness! It is so sparsely peopled that one would think that the angel of death would pass by it. And yet he finds his victims—the peasant in the fields, the woman who vainly covers her face, the labourer who is stricken during his heavy work. We involuntarily feel solemn on approaching a country ravaged by the plague. Every telegraph-post we leave behind, every beat of the caravan bells, takes us a step nearer to the answer to the questions which disturb us all.

Our road leads us among fragmentary hills, and we cross two small saddles. The rocks are dark-green porphyrite, close dolomite-like limestone of a light-red colour, and reddish-grey, fine-grained sandstone. The first pass has a