

The conversation turned to the fate of my camels, and as I now had the most important men of the place around me, I asked them for advice.

"Yes," was the answer, "if you wish to get your camels through Seistan at this time of year, you must not be too rash, or they will be eaten up by gadflies; there are some here in Bendan already, but in Seistan they are worse."

"Then it is too late in the year to lead them through Seistan?"

"If you go quickly through the country without stopping at Nasretabad, you can get them safely through to the frontier at Kuh-i-Malek-i-Siah; but if you stay only two days in Nasretabad, they will be quite ruined by gadflies."

"The worst is," cried another, "that your camels are from the north, and they cannot endure the heat of Seistan; you will at any rate be obliged to sell them before you commence your journey through Baluchistan."

"How do you intend to take your camels over the Hamun?" asked the doctor. "There is no possibility of getting them across the water without long détours."

Now the Kafilé-bashi raised his voice and said, "If you like, I will see after the sale of your twelve camels. You must sell them in any case, and Bendan is the last place where it can be done."

"Is there any one in Bendan who is willing and can afford to buy them?" I asked.

"I will take them," he answered.

"How much do you offer?"

"I can go up to 450 tuman for the whole caravan."

Should I really consent to such a wretched bargain? I called out at a venture, "Six hundred tuman!"—it was really not the money that mattered, the trouble was to part from the animals. But after the account of the gadflies I had no choice—I had known these infernal brutes at Lop-nor. The only service I could render my faithful camels was to save them from Seistan and a heat which they had never experienced. They were accustomed to work only at night and in colder districts, and not one of them had been even as far south as Bushir. It would have been