

way from Seistan?" I asked my men, though I was not ignorant of their plans, as I could not help hearing their conversation in the tent and during the long marches.

"We intend to travel to Meshed in thirty days, and then in twenty-five to Teheran," answered Abbas Kuli Bek for himself and the others.

"Will no one go with me to Nushki?" I asked.

"If the Sa'ab orders us, we will go with him; but we are afraid of the heat and the plague, and also wish to keep together."

No one seemed to wish to go back from Bendan, though I could very well have found other men for the two days' journey to Nasretabad. Their fear of the plague was therefore not great, and they were not cowards. The Cossacks had orders to turn back at Seistan at all events, and even if the other men had been willing to accompany me to Nushki, I should not have kept them. I was approaching another country, and I preferred new men who were acquainted with the locality.

We left the camels, and retired to our tents, while the jackals howled more mournfully than ever. The night was quiet and warm, not under 59°. Insects were heard buzzing in the air, and it was pleasant to hear the ripple of the brook. To the east the Hamun awaited me with its waterlogged swamp; there were burning heat, gadflies, scorpions, and tarantulas; there prowled the black death, going about and seeking its victims among the children of men. Here in Bendan our camp was pitched for the last time with the sold camels, and the complaining and mocking howl of the jackals broke the silence of night. We could not, therefore, feel in a jovial mood in Bendan, this beautiful little oasis with its royal date palms and purling brooks.

I was awakened by such an unbearable heat in the tent that I threw everything off me and called for cold water, stripped myself entirely, and put on thinner clothing. At noon the weather changed suddenly, a strong, south-westerly storm arose, clouds of soil and dust swept along the ground and into the tent, and even the palms which stood so near were lost to sight.