

CHAPTER LIII

TO THE SHORE OF THE HAMUN

THE minimum temperature at night was not below 61.3° , but when the thermometer on the morning of April 5 marked 67.1° it felt nice and fresh in consequence of the steady north-westerly wind from the hills which blew straight into my tent. The jackals had been out, and had played the mischief with a quantity of roghan, which stood outside by the quarantine house, and belonged to a caravan from Seistan. Thirty prisoners lay there awaiting their release—they were in *garanti*, as the Persians pronounced the word quarantine.

I had telegraphed the day before to the English Consul-General, Captain Macpherson, and received a very kind answer, bidding me welcome and stating that orders had been sent to the shore of the Hamun with regard to our passage over the water. The Hindu doctor received a fee for consultation on the plague question, and then we marched out of the trumpet-shaped valley mouth like a bay in the sea with diverging hills on either side. Far in the south and south-east were seen solitary rocky islets, which we had left behind us before evening, and we seemed really to be approaching an open sea.

We follow the bed of the river. It is sharply cut, and is as much as 10 feet deep. Before us, along the road, is seen a long row of telegraph-posts, and in the clear air I can clearly discern 29 of them; but farther on they run together into a thin line pointed like a needle in the distance. It is quite calm and burning hot, and a couple of light white clouds float only in the south-east.