

flat strips of still exposed land. The worst was that the bottom was marshy and soft, so that the animals sank in deeply at every step, and I was much concerned for my boxes, which contained the valuable results of the journey, notes, maps, sketches and photographs. But the villagers were like fish in the water. One of them went in front on foot and examined the way, and the others steadied the boxes on either side of the mules, being particularly careful when the animals trod unusually deeply into the mire.

Then came a stretch of dry ground running in the direction of the road in a long, narrow peninsula, at the point of which a canvas boat from the Consulate lay awaiting me. But the watermen said that it was not wanted, so it was left behind, and I followed the caravan over a large flooded area, where the depth was at most 3 feet, and the bottom usually firm and hard. To the right was a long, narrow strip of land, here and there broken through by small passages. These are the western delta arms of the Hilmend, coming down from Bend-i-Seistan. This great, open water also streams visibly to the west and north-west. All got over a deep, treacherous hollow safely, except Abbas Kuli Bek, whose mule fell, so that the rider got a thorough ducking.

Then follows firm, dry land of fine grey clay, scored by wind furrows running north and south, of just the same kind as in the Lop desert. Next we ride between green tilled fields, and the last bit of ground is barren. In front of us appears the capital of Seistan, and we approach this plague haunt with a certain feeling of awe. To the left stands Nasretabad, within its wall, and to the right the sister town Husseinabad, where the flag of the Russian Consulate waves on its lofty pole. A broad, open street or market-place leads up to the portal of the court of the English Consulate. In the midst of the large quadrangular court, where it is vain to try to make anything grow, stands the Consulate, a long stone building, in a simple, practical, Oriental style, with a verandah or a colonnade on stone pillars around it. At the principal entrance the Consul, Captain Macpherson, comes out to bid me welcome, and in a few minutes I am installed in my fine apartments,