

CHAPTER LVII

ON THE FRONTIER BETWEEN PERSIA AND AFGHANISTAN

A LITTLE above the point where we leave the bank of the Hilmend (1700 feet) the firm terraces of clay and pebbles reach the river and have an elevation of about 16 feet. Farther inland they become higher. Here stands the first boundary pillar, or rather the last, for they are numbered from south to north. I had promised Captain Macpherson to write him a report on the boundary pillars, for they had not been inspected since they were erected by the Commission. We therefore rode south-south-west from pillar to pillar, with Afghanistan on our left and Persia on our right.

As a rule from one pillar the nearest two can be seen. They are erected on small mounds with ravines and hollows between them. Sometimes the top of the plateau is quite level, sometimes we wander in a labyrinth of clay mounds, cones, and furrows. We pass nine columns before we encamp in a small hollow, where a party of Baluchi nomads have set up their black tents, and their sheep graze on a small sheltered meadow (1722 feet). Here we can get milk, and water we have brought from the Hilmend in four skins. Thanks to the wind, it is pleasantly cool, and we are not at all troubled by insects.

April 20. 47.5° in the night. The path, almost imperceptible, leads us up and down over hills and through ravines, where a scanty growth occasionally finds shelter. Here and there we cross roads; the last yesterday was said to come from Kala-i-no, or the "new fort," and the first to-day runs to Deke-dela, a village on the Hilmend, where there is a *bender* or harbour with *keshti* or boats. My