

approached this dreary place two Persians came towards us and prepared us for five days' quarantine, as we came from a plague-stricken country. But the customs officer, who, save the mark, is a shahsadeh, or prince, and is named Muhamed Ali Mirza, had received orders from the Belgian gentlemen in Nasretabad and declared that the way was open to us.

The other officials in the place were an Indian doctor, the superintendent of the telegraph station, and the English Vice-Consul, Muhamed Ashref Khan, an Afghan, who spoke English fluently, and gave me the impression of being a thorough gentleman. He invited me into his comfortable tent, where we sat smoking and drinking soda-water and lemonade—splendid!

After the agreeable Afghan had taken a portrait of me on my dromedary, I took farewell of him and the rest of the frontier guard, and we passed on up the valley. On a little spur to the left rises the important boundary column, where the three kingdoms meet. From this base the whole row of pillars we passed all the way from Bend-i-Seistan is visible, theoretically at least, that is, if one has good enough eyes or field-glasses and if the air is clear. They stand on a line which is drawn straight on the map.

At Siaret-i-Malek-i-Siah-Kuh we made a short halt. It is a pilgrimage resort with stone walls, a landmark, a pole hung with rags as offerings, and a holy dervish who holds in his hand a bunch of twigs by a handle. My servants had to show him due reverence. They went round kissing some upright stones and poles, and pressing their foreheads against them. They laid cakes of bread on two stones, afterwards eating them and sharing them with the dervish. Then they fired a gunshot at a stone on the other side of the valley. The rock is hornblende granite.

The road has now some appearance of a highway, for it has been cleared of stones and pebbles, which are piled in rows at the sides, and for some distance from the sanctuary the road runs straight as a line. It leads up to a small flat saddle, at the top of which we turn off at right angles to the south-east, after having, at length, passed round the annoying wedge of Afghan territory. We have risen consider-