

CHAPTER LVIII

AN EXCURSION INTO AFGHAN TERRITORY

Now we go along at a different pace from before. We do not scurry, we do not let our jambas trot as they can do, but take things quietly, for I must see the country and take notes, but still it is something different from the usual caravan saunter. The road leads between ridges of boulders and mounds of red conglomerate; the country becomes flatter, and falls towards the north, whither run all the small dells and ravines, and to the right rises the dark, jagged crest of the hill. We ride on the detritus fan from this hill, and follow its foot south-eastwards. The road is taken care of, all the stones being removed to the sides in two rows, leaving an interval of 15 feet, and it can be seen stretching far into the distance through this dreary, monotonous Baluchistan. The telegraph wires run close beside us on their grey-painted iron posts. They can be seen in a straight line as far as the eye can reach, and where the road vanishes on the horizon in a point as sharp as a needle. We made 24 miles on this day's journey, but it was still a long way to Nushki.

To the left are seen some marks on the Afghan boundary, and to the north extends a dismal desert, gently falling to the basin of the Shela and God-i-Zirre, and north of it we know that the Hilmend flows between its friendly banks, and with its superfluity of sweet water. The leader of the escort must just have thought of it, for he stopped and handed me an indiarubber bag with water from Robot. It tasted excellent, for now at one o'clock we had 84.6° in the shade, and the height was only 2490 feet.