

Thus far, for a distance of 250 miles from Serakhs on the north to the farther side of the basin of "Nemeksar" on the south, the Afghan depression presents the appearance of an undulating hollow with nearly equal slopes from east and west. Farther south, however, the west side of the hollow becomes short and steep, and there seems to have been faulting as well as warping. Near Meliki, at the southern end of the Nemeksar basin, the western boundary of the depression consists of a long line of mountains running nearly north and south, with a remarkably straight front. They are not dissected by the deep re-entrant valleys filled with gravel which are so characteristic a feature of most of the mountains in the basin of Iran. The spurs between the valleys end abruptly and steepen toward the front as though they were the remnants of the facets of a fault scarp (Davis, *l.*, p. 148-154). Apparently this steep escarpment marks a relatively recent fault with a heave of many hundred feet on the west side. This is borne out by the appearance of the top of the upheaved block. From a study of the map and from the appearance of the escarpment from below one expects to ascend to the top of the ridge and enter a region of ridges and valleys like the ordinary mountain districts of America and Europe. The top of the escarpment fulfills this expectation, for it is a distinct ridge, at an elevation of 5,000 to 7,000 feet.\* Toward the west the ridge descends much less steeply than toward the east, and at a height of about 4,000 feet merges into plains of gravel and silt of the same sort as those on the down-faulted side, except that they stand some 2,000 feet higher and the mountains surrounding them are less deeply buried in gravel. In other words, the country on either side of the fault appears to have been originally of the same type, the ordinary mountain-girt basin type of Eastern Persia. One side was uplifted and exposed to somewhat greater rainfall and erosion; the other was depressed and exposed to diminished rainfall and increased deposition. Hence the upland is a mountainous region containing basins floored with gravel; the lowland is a basin, almost filled with gravel, from which project mountain tops.

Between the hollow of Nemeksar and the much larger hollow of Sistan lies the Dasht-i-Naumad, or Desert of Despair, the central portion of which can not be crossed for lack of water. It does not appear to differ essentially from the lifeless desert wastes of silt and gravel which floor the hollow of Nemeksar. On the edges, at least, it contains the usual complement of buried mountains. Everywhere dreariness and desolation are the rule. The Desert of Despair is a place where men and animals die of hunger and thirst and their companions have no pity. A caravan of Afghans which crossed our track was about to return across the northern edge of the desert with salt from Nemeksar to be sold at Sebzavar in Afghanistan. They reported that on the outward journey they had been delayed and several of their number had died of hunger.

"But had the rest of you no bread?" "Yes, we had enough, but we could not give any to them, for we might have suffered from hunger ourselves."

The desert makes men lose every sentiment except the desire to get safely to the other side.

\*The ridge consists of a cap of limestone lying unconformably on a complex of igneous rocks composed chiefly of dark traps shot through with dykes and masses of light-colored felsite, and occasionally interspersed with bodies of highly metamorphosed slate.