

have had serious alarms respecting the fate of their soldiers compelled to penetrate into the Desert, and surprised on their march by this terrible wind.

The impalpable dust which drifts through the air in dense clouds penetrates into the nostrils, the eyes, the mouth, and the lungs, and induces asphyxia. When this fatal result is happily avoided, the rapid evaporation which takes place on the surface of the body dries up the skin, inflames the throat, quickens the breathing, and causes a burning thirst. The terrible breath of the simoun dries up, in its course, the sap of the trees, and, by the rapid evaporation which it produces, the water-bags of the camel-drivers. The caravan then becomes the prey of an inextinguishable thirst which fires the blood. It is thus that more than one caravan, since the expedition of Cambyses, has perished in these same dreary solitudes. Hence the routes customarily travelled by the caravans are marked by the skeletons of men and animals, whitened by time and the sun; these are the ominous landmarks of the fatal highway!

Nevertheless, we must include among popular scientific fables the stories of pestiferous winds, whose very contact will cause death. The fatal effects of the simoun are easily explicable by the excessive heat which accompanies it, and by the fine powdery dust with which it loads the air. The traveller Burckhardt was the first to furnish us with positive details in relation to the winds of the desert; and he proved the falsehood of the fantastic narratives which the Bedouins love to impose upon credulous travellers to secure a larger recompense for their services.

"In June 1813," says Mr. Burckhardt, "I was surprised by the simoun on my route from Siout to Esneh. When the wind rose I was alone, mounted on a dromedary, far from every tree and every habitation. I hastened to protect my face by wrapping it in a handkerchief. Meanwhile, the dromedary, into whose eyes the wind forced the dust, became restless, begun to gallop, and made me lose the reins. I remained seated on the ground, never stirring from my place, for I could not see more than thirty feet beyond me, and wrapped myself in my clothes until the wind abated. Then I went in search of my dromedary, which I found at a considerable distance off, lying under a bush, which protected his head from the sand carried by the wind."

Other travellers who have traversed the Persian and African deserts agree with Burckhardt on this point; namely, that the simoun is only fatal through a concurrence of unfortunate circumstances.

Sometimes, too, one sees the sand-spouts rise, revolving upon their axis, moving forward at unequal rates of speed, and overthrowing every obstacle which lies in