

the erosion furrows are still distinct, though water in any quantity can seldom find its way so far down. Here green clumps of tamarisks are quite common, and there is no lack of material for large camp fires. We steer a course south-eastwards, straight to the shore of the Kevir. Avul Kasim believes that it is half a farsakh off, I estimate the distance at two farsakh, and it is evening before we reach it. Distances are deceptive, the varying shadows and belts mislead one in this flat country. The white expanse of the Kevir seems close at hand, and yet we wander for hours without coming perceptibly nearer. To the east-south-east a crooked strip of yellow colour winds northwards in the midst of the dark depression of the Kevir; probably it encloses a mole of dry firm ground, but it tails off into the soft swamp. To the left stands a small isolated group which, like most of the foregoing, seems to lie on the lines of elevation radiating from Kuh-i-nakshir. We have a convenient and comfortable pathway to-day, and sometimes at the bottom of the shallow furrows we follow the ground is as even and hard as an asphalted street, and, besides, the land falls, however slowly, in the direction of our route. We are therefore able to cover nearly 18 miles due south-east.

Saxaul occurs in tall bushes, and like the shrubs is thicker near the furrows, where it has a chance now and then of sucking up water. Before us the white salt field of the Kevir still seems as far off as ever, and now the steppe flattens out, and not the slightest undulation is noticeable beside us. To the eye the fall is only perceptible when the flat contour line of the detritus cones is compared with the absolutely level horizon of the Kevir, which is only broken at a very remote distance to the east by small mysterious hills, perhaps never trodden by the foot of man, and inaccessible both in boats and on foot. They stand up like islands in the saline bath of mud.

Now the Kevir spreads itself out, more and more dominating the landscape with its brown, dark, yellow, and white strips and flats; there seems to be no water, but we take the white to be salt and the dark, mud. The