

than 30 feet high, which bounded the Kevir depression in terraces, and which we found almost as tiring because of the innumerable small gullies we had to cross. We therefore descended again to follow closely the shore line, where we also lost time and patience; for small offshoots, capes, and promontories pointed like fingers out to the level surface of the Kevir, and we had to go round all the projections and creeks.

I walked for two hours, and found the journey very tiring, for though the shore was quite dry it was so soft that I sank in at every step. It was therefore pleasant to sit up again on my sturdy camel and jog on through this singular and strange land of a desert type I had never before seen. At first we turned about to almost all points of the compass, but gradually the route improved, and the shore line became less irregular. Here and there a thin covering of pure white salt lay on the yellow under layer. Ravines and gullies that break through the hills descend to the shore of the desert, where they come to a sudden termination, like drainage-channels debouching into a lake. Before the larger of them a small extension of solid ground juts out, thinly covered with pebbles, overgrown with shrubs, and traversed by a radiating system of tiny delta channels. We have here the sketch of a hydrographic system, a landscape which has certainly been moulded by water, of which not a drop is now to be seen except in camels' footprints a little distance out from the shore. Nay, it is only necessary to stamp one's heel into the treacherous ground to see the water filter in from all sides; and, in general, the dark desert belt is covered with a very thin crust, so slight and brittle that it gives way even under the paws of the dog.

The Kevir is, then, a kind of masked subterranean lake, concealed and filled up by the loose material carried into it by the watercourses; it is a lake which contains more mud than water; a lake with a bottom which, paradoxical as it may sound, lies higher than the water surface, for we should have to dig down some 8 inches into the solid matter before coming to the water. The Kevir appears to the eye as we glance over it a dried-up lake,