

instead of behind us, was enveloped in a dense veil of cloud. Sometimes we were surrounded by the level Kevir on all sides, and we were a prey to a feeling of insecurity and anxiety; perhaps we were on a peninsula which would soon project out into a bed of mud, and perhaps we should be obliged to go all the way back and try the northern route through Cheshme-Kerim.

Kuh-i-nakshir, with its flat slopes and detritus cones, forms a blunt peninsula in the desert sea; its soil is firm and solid to the tread, because it rests on a framework of rock and detritus. With or against our will we have stumbled on this peninsula, and instead of proceeding south-eastwards, have to follow the margin of the solid ground back to the west. Here the Kevir is absolutely sterile, shrubs cease immediately the firm ground comes to an end, and not even stalks washed down by water lie out on its surface. Sometimes we cross a small flat where mud, carried down by rain, has consolidated into a hard compact surface. A shallow trench is half white with salt, half dark with mud, and on this deceptive surface is seen the fine grooving produced by running water. All day we are preceded by two scouts, who feel their way with staves. We often see the foremost of them avoid turning up a creek and try the Kevir instead, but before he has gone far he sinks in, begins to reel, and makes haste to turn round. Owing to the soft and dangerous ground our route is more tedious than usual, and we become more tired than in drift-sand, where at least we have no fear of being drowned.

The south-eastern projection of the southern hills appears again, hovering a good distance above the level ground, owing to mirage, and looks like a cape,—a Cape Finisterre, running out into the sea. It is impossible to estimate the breadth of the belt of desert; to the eye it seems as if it reached up to the foot of the hills.

As we seemed to be marching more and more at random, I set out to reconnoitre myself, went on ahead, and soon found an excellent camel track running south-westwards and gradually turning more and more to the south. The footprints were quite fresh, and the path had been used that very day or the day before. To the right