

With the panorama of the southern hills to the right, and the Kevir at some distance on the left, we proceed east-south-east in the pleasant morning weather. Between the two stretches an extremely flat belt of steppe, with fine gravel and scattered shrubs and shallow erosion furrows running north-east. We follow a path which seems to be seldom used, at least it is torn up by furrows in which water has not flowed for long. It is a good day's journey to the southern hills, and the visual angles to their summits therefore change very slowly. Here also the Kevir has a sharp boundary, and along the whole day's route there runs a real shore line between the barren surface and the steppe. We follow it closely all day, and have a boundless and monotonous view over the salt desert,—a lake never rippled by the wind, and where no melodious billows beat against the strand.

Steppe shrubs grow very freely, and among them camel tracks cross one another in every direction. As in the Lop desert, we often find traces of lime mixed with sand, which is deposited round the stems and stalks of certain plants, and falls to pieces when touched. On the stones are often seen etched markings, and as at the foot of the hills the twin ridges produced by deflation. From the strand margin, where we march, the steppe rises slowly to the southern hills, and is intersected by a number of small shallow trenches, which are rather to be conceived as divided delta arms of a more concentrated drainage-channel higher up. One of these, larger than the rest, evidently comes down from the lowest part of the southern hills, which seem to be cut through by a valley.

Hour after hour we advance along the shore exactly as yesterday, but under more favourable conditions; for the ground is hard and level, and the strand line is less irregular. Far to the north, on the other side of the Kevir, is seen a faint outline of the hills there running out in points, and I am grieved that I have had no opportunity of laying down the sharp boundary of the Kevir at their foot also; but I console myself with the reflexion that I cannot do everything. On the southern hills still remain fields and streaks of snow, less exposed to melting as they