

and the other quite narrow, which is of a yellow colour and strictly belongs to the Kevir. It may be supposed that both the colouring and breadth of the different belts change not only with the time of year but also in different years, depending entirely on the precipitation; and the herdsman confirmed this view. Our guide affirmed that if it rains hard and continuously in the Kevir and its environs the whole salt desert becomes thoroughly soaked and softened, and that then water lies exposed over large tracts for one or two weeks. Now, however, open water was a rare occurrence, though it might be found in the deeper depressions. This man, like the herdsmen at Tallhe, called the great Kevir Rig-i-jin, implying thereby that only spirits dwelt in its interior. The word means "The sand desert of evil spirits."

To the east now appear again faintly the low ridges bounding the western Kevir in this direction; they are evidently situated on the protuberance which separates our basin from its next neighbour.

After three hours' march the trenches become rather smaller for a time, and therefore the ground is more favourable for travelling; the steppe shrubs here grow closer together. We leave on the right Lakko, or Lak-ab, a valley with a salt spring at its mouth and a sweet-water spring higher up. We hesitate a while whether we shall go thither, but it lies too far from our course, and the ascent is too steep and would only tire the camels. In the eastern parts of the southern range of hills there are three other sweet-water springs and three in Kuh-i-busurgi.

In this locality the Kevir forms a semicircular bay or extension to the south which forces us to steer south-eastwards and then, after we have passed it, we turn again to the north-east. We must, indeed, go round it, for it is certain that we cannot cross it, though our herdsman had heard of a man who long ago ventured on the attempt with a camel. It is still far to the end of this bay, and it is interesting to follow the hills; in the midst of the Kevir there is nothing to see but briny mud. It is quite possible to avoid this inlet and the circuitous paths