

however shallow they may be, they still act as temporary water-reservoirs to supply moisture and sap to the belt of saxaul. For this luxuriant strip of vegetation continues, henceforth, to the left of our route, and very seldom do we pass a bush or two on our right.

On the southern side of the Nigu hill, which is turned to us, there is said to be no well; the strata dip northwards, and the ridge of the crest is even in contrast to that of the Cheft hill, which is jagged and irregular. When we are half-way, another elevation crops up with abundance of snow on it; it is called Kuh-i-Hijer and Kuh-i-Basio, after the villages Hijer and Basio at its foot, which are 8 and 9 farsakh distant respectively. Immediately below, and to the left of it, stand two smaller heights, Kuh-i-kabudan and Kuh-i-heftemun, also named after villages.

The path now turns aside somewhat from the great continuous belt of sand and the girdle of saxaul, but a projection or offshoot from it forces us to diverge to the south-east. But we cut across a point of it where it is narrow, leaving on the right a peninsula of sand with dunes 30 to 40 feet high, and almost perfectly sterile. This nearly isolated clump of dunes is very peculiar; the individual dunes have a small cornice on their ridges falling steeply to the east, but otherwise are arranged in no distinct order, evidently the sport of the changing caprices of the winds. It seems singular that the sand should collect and rise higher just at this spot, whereas we have travelled so far along its edge without passing any outstanding points. But the reason must be that a ramification from the southern hills runs out here in close proximity to the sandy promontory, and this, no doubt, produces an eddy which causes the driftsand to settle down. This collection of dunes is connected by two isthmuses or necks with the great sands to the north; the first neck is 200 yards broad, and consists of small separated dunes sharply defined and standing like moulds or blocks on the hard foundation. The other neck is similar, but smaller. Between the two lies a sort of lagoon of bare ground, surrounded on all sides by dunes. Why the ground is bare precisely at this spot