

an exceedingly shallow and flat depression, is an enormous recipient for all the rain-water that falls in the surrounding hills; it collects from all four points of the compass as into a lake. The Persian desert is only one link of the chain of deserts which extends from Manchuria through the Gobi, Takla-makan, Turkestan, Iran, Arabia, Libya, and the Sahara to the west coast of Africa—a gigantic belt of deserts which Peschel aptly compares to a dried-up river-bed. Here the climate is dry, and the precipitation which falls within the hydrographical limits of the Kevir is insufficient to produce a lake in its basin. And yet the Kevir still acts like a lake, and, as we shall see later, gives in many respects the impression of a lake.

Our route crosses a broad and open longitudinal valley which runs into the Kevir westwards, and continues eastwards to where the horizon is blocked by another hill, steep on the south side and dipping to the north, and showing that the dip and strike of the rocks are the same all over this region. The view over the sandy belt on the left becomes more extensive, and farther to the west the dunes are seen to rise to a height of 130 feet or, perhaps, more. It is an undisturbed island of sand, carefully avoided by all the routes; the lower road to Jandak also passes round this expanse of sand, and crosses only points or offshoots which lose themselves in the Kevir.

We mount over a series of small furrows to a little threshold of no importance except as a boundary between the longitudinal valley already mentioned and the next, which we keep along all the way to the camp of the evening. Here the "hill of the thousand valleys" is quite near on the left as we march towards N. 30° W. The ground is sandy and very sterile. There are no place-names here, according to my guide, because there are neither springs nor wells in the valley. A small sand belt, half a mile broad, consists of small isolated dunes, at most 10 feet high, among which our path winds. Afterwards pebbles predominate, and no more dunes are seen, but steppe plants grow more closely. It is strange that the conditions in two longitudinal valleys, almost parallel and so near together, can be so different. Why has the