

tail of the caravan is still on firm ground it can be seen that the head is out on the Kevir, for the pace becomes at once slower. My camel had not floundered on many steps before she came down; she was the first to fall, but she managed so well that she came down on all four knees and I kept my seat in the saddle. "Now it begins," said Ali Murat. The height at Hauz-i-Haji-Ramazan was 2556 feet, and now we had come down to 2487 feet.

The ground consists of yellow loam, the finest-powdered material that can be imagined. It is knobbly, and strikingly reminds one of a rusk with numerous holes, but with the difference that it is all as slippery as soap on polished wood. The ridges and holes are so far an advantage that the latter afford a hold for the camel's foot when it slips over a knob, and so may save a fall, which would be certain if the ground were quite flat.

The bells ring unevenly and in jerks, and their sound shows that their bearers are stumbling; now here, now there, an unusually loud clap is heard. We make terribly slow progress. The leader goes on foot, feeling his way. I follow his example, for on the camel I sit expecting to be pitched off. This is no ordinary road, where I can look round and make my notes. Here I must carefully see where and how to plant each foot. I make for the holes and avoid the knobs. Nothing is to be seen of a path; it has been wiped out by the rain in the soft, yet viscous material.

The surface is in parts almost black, and between greyish yellow; in the former there is still a deal of moisture, while on the latter there is a dry layer not thicker than apple peel, but even here it is as easy to stumble, for under the dry surface layer the clay is just as smooth and soft. Of course the way between Jandak and Husseinan, the main artery through the Kevir, has chosen the part where the desert is narrowest; and it may be taken for granted that the Kevir widens out east and west of this contracted part. Most certainly also the dark sodden expanses widen out in the same way. Where our route crosses it the Kevir dries more quickly than elsewhere. In the eastern and western depressions the