

falls towards its greatest depression, lying farther to the east. At the sides of this trench the ground is somewhat uneven. We must, then, be on the edge of the Kevir.

A little farther on the bell-ringing ceases and the caravan stops. I hear shouts and voices; the sleepers wake up, and go to the front. I am on foot with my two men, for during the last part of the way the camels began to slip and slide in the mire. It seems that we are at Kal-i-sheitan, or the Devil's ditch, a name which implies that the erosion furrow which here crosses the country can at certain times be anything but pleasant. Even now it contains so much nearly stagnant salt water that all the men have to mount, and when all is ready the train moves on slowly towards east-north-east. It is pitch dark, and we have no notion what the ground is like, but warning cries and short stops show now and then that something is wrong.

Suddenly comes the turn of the rearguard. The plash of water is heard more plainly. Ali Murat's camel goes before me gliding down a steep smooth bank of clay, and mine follows after with slipping and slithering legs. They splash and swish through the water. The bottom is fortunately hard, but so slippery that we may at any moment expect a ducking. We get over safely, however, and mount the terrace on the left bank. The rain falls without ceasing, thickly and steadily; the night is spoiled; the ground becomes more and more soaked and slippery. At the left bank of the furrow, which comes from Kotel-i-Husseinan, grow some meagre tamarisks, the farthest outposts of vegetation towards the Kevir.

Here we dismount, for we have a nice bit of road before us. Kal-i-sheitan is sunk 40 or 50 feet into the level Kevir. To get up again on to level ground we have to follow a side furrow with a bottom which is entirely a bed of slippery and treacherous mud. The long train winds up like a snail. The camels carefully hold themselves together that they may not fall. A heavy dull thud is heard or a clap as a camel comes to grief. If he falls on his side with all four legs stretched out, he cannot rise without help. The men shriek and rush up to help him. Then we take a few steps till the next fall brings the