

pressure, and hence it is reckoned 2 farsakh more to the end of the Kevir. They are, however, toilsome; the rain-water has collected in puddles, but fortunately the clay is not soft, and its unevenness saves the camels from falling. Shur-ab, or "salt water," is a furrow, 12 yards broad by 3 feet deep, filled with stagnant water. Another similar furrow is called Shur-ab-i-yek-farsakh, because from it there is only a farsakh more; it is 16 yards broad and 10 feet deep, and the bottom is hard and covered with salt. There is a smell of sea-shore here after the rain and in the fresh breeze.

The last farsakh of our long desert march was accomplished slowly and cautiously in pitch darkness. Ali Murat piloted us, leading the first camel, while I rode on the last, led by Gulam Hussein. It was half-past seven o'clock when the smooth ground of the Kevir came to a sudden end, and we had the pleasure of riding over sandy ground where scanty shrubs grew. Here, then, the limit of the Kevir is also sharply marked.

Ali Murat had been in a melancholy mood during the three days and nights of loneliness in the desert, and had not said an unnecessary word; but immediately he perceived the coast again and distinguished the gently rising detritus fan he became another man, and began to joke and talk incessantly. And he was still more delighted when we had firm ground under our feet. Then he began to talk of the Kevir with the greatest contempt, as of a rogue that had tried to trick us but had not succeeded. He spoke of the salt desert much as one speaks of a dog, for which one has the greatest respect but keeps tied up. He reminded me of those sea heroes who quite lose their courage when the ship is rolling on the open sea, but are very boastful and grandiloquent when they come ashore. But I also shared his satisfaction, and was heartily glad to have this dreadful desert behind me, and I was quite sure that I had had more than enough of its salt and its infinite dreariness. It was delightful to sleep on firm ground at a place called Ser-i-do-rah, or the "commencement of the two roads," that is, the roads which lead to Khur-i-gez and Aruzun. Here the ground was covered with coarse sand, which