

a dirty-brown undecided tinge, though white streaks are still seen farther out. In Khur the men said plainly that the Kevir is a lake, a lake concealed beneath a mantle of salt, dirt, and clay. They declared that if a hole were broken through the salt, which in some places goes down to a depth of 5 feet, the crowbar would sink to the bottom of the Kevir, and how deep that was no one knew.

The path we follow, the highway to Tebbes, is less worn than one would expect, and we do not meet a living soul all day, but caravans from Tebbes to Khur, on their way to Shahrud, mostly travel in spring and early summer; and they also travel always by night, and that is why the road is marked by a series of cairns. There seems to be no local traffic of any consequence, for each of the two oases is self-sufficing. The straight through route which runs across the Kevir from Khur-i-gez to Tebbes, and which consequently cuts off the great southern bay of the desert, is never used in winter. Even in spring and summer, when no danger from rain threatens, it is considered very inconvenient, because it is lumpy and uneven, with salt and clumps of hard clay something like slag and lava.

Our road, hitherto east-south-east, now turns towards the south-east and approaches the foot of the hills. With a temperature of 57.9° at one o'clock, it feels quite warm, and gentle cooling breezes from Khorasan would be welcome. Hauz-i-teshtab is full of sweet muddy rain-water, where the camels drink their fill, and then we encamp among pebbly hillocks at the well which bears the same name (3015 feet); its water is briny, but we have cisterns in the neighbourhood, and have also a calfskin of water with us. Flies, gnats, spiders, and ants now begin to move about, and in the evening the tent must be left open that it may not be too much heated by the brazier. My working day is long; I am at work for sixteen hours with only a deduction of two and a half hours for breakfast and dinner, packing up, and encamping; but the day's journey, map observations, drawings and notes take up quite thirteen hours. Therefore rest is eagerly expected when the friendly silence of night arrives.