

sandy ground, and pass again a succession of spits. At a point where the road forks we halt for a consultation. A distinct path runs east-north-east right across the Kevir, cutting off the southernmost part of the large bay. The other path continues along the sandspits towards the south-east. One of our guides believes that the direct road will bear and will save us at least a farsakh, and Gulam Hussein says that it will save us a good hour. But as the caravan we met yesterday had closely followed the coast, I consider it more advisable to take the longer way, whereby also I shall be able to complete the map of the bay's contour.

The ground of the Kevir now becomes lumpy and black, but it is so mixed with sand that it bears in all parts. A thin sheet of salt covers the south-eastern side of every hillock, and a little way out from the coast to the north-west the surface looks white, while to the south-east it is dark. It is as though hoar-frost or drifted snow were beginning to collect in the lee of the obstacles.

Along the shore saxaul grows freely, though in smaller bushes than on yesterday's journey. At length we come to the southern part of the great bay and turn east, thereby cutting off a considerable point of the bay. We gain a little by it, but we have seen before a number of other such ways leaving the coast to cross the Kevir. It depends on the time of year and the weather which of them may be used. The most advantageous is the most northerly, which we saw yesterday, and which shortens the distance to Tebbes by 6 farsakh. But in such weather as we have now we should have a feeling of uneasiness in leaving the shore to march out into a bay, which might not bear in the middle—it would be like leaving a sheltered coast under close-reefed sails with danger in sight.

Before a sandspit stood a sheet of water which might be drunk in case of necessity, and was good enough for the camels. But then the ground became so soaked and muddy that we preferred to skirt the edge of the sand, where a herd of camels was grazing and excited the tall dark camel at the head of the caravan. He gurgled softly and sadly, and longed in vain for his "lady of the camellias."