

Takla-makan. No roads or paths cross this belt, which is not to be found marked on any map of Persia.

On our route, where the sand soon becomes level, appears thin, dried-up saxaul. The southern end of the lake Ab-i-kevir is visible to the west-south-west from this elevated point of view, but, on the other hand, the Naibend hill becomes less distinct, and at length disappears altogether when we turn southwards towards small hills.

The Seid, our guide, turns straight to the south, and leads the caravan up a very boldly-cut drainage channel, 16 feet broad and 3 feet deep, with a sandy bottom, which shows that no stream passed down it after the last rain. But the sides of the furrow are moist and interlaced with roots, and therefore are able to form vertical walls 10 to 16 feet high. Our pace slackens in the short and sudden bends of the furrow, and sometimes we cross over projections, sometimes pass along the edge of steep walls of sand, where the loose material might anywhere slip down with the whole caravan.

Higher up, the furrow expands to a breadth of 65 feet, and its banks are only 6 to 10 feet high. The bottom is composed of hard, alluvial clay, wrinkled by running water. There must evidently be a heavy fall of rain before the stream can reach down to the point where we first came in contact with this furrow, which shows that the fall of the land is towards the kevir depression. Among the dunes on either side grow saxauls 13 feet high, large as trees. Indeed, one of them was quite 20 feet high, and I had no need to bend my head as I sat on my camel, but we passed clear underneath the topmost boughs of the saxauls.

The furrow, which is called Kal-torosho, expands still more and becomes flat and shallow. The bank consists of pebbles, clay, and sand alternately.

The rest of the day's march led us through very peculiar country, the like of which we had never seen in Persia. The huge accumulations of sand come to an end after remaining for a long distance on the western side of the dale, and in place of it appears solid rock, forming quite a pavement, even on the very bottom of the Torosho