

these ridges are deeply cut by furrows from the mountain, and at their bottom grows what meagre and dry vegetation exists. But occasionally we come upon very unpleasant spots, where the sandstone slabs are covered with rattling, moving pebbles, and we struggle up the saddles to pass from one trench to another.

The main crest of Kuh-i-Ghasemi, which at the commencement of the day's march we saw foreshortened, gradually lengthens out as we follow its eastern flank southwards. The rock is bedded as in the small saddles, and so we see the outcrops of the strata running eastwards broken across, and coloured in bands of brown, greyish green, and dark purple; the transverse valleys are therefore very short, steep, and encumbered with pebbles and blocks of stone.

Light white clouds scurried over the blue canopy of heaven under full sail, but in the afternoon they closed up a little, and we enjoyed the coolness, all too short, which sprang up when some friendly cloud passed just between us and the sun. The air became thick, and even Kuh-i-Naibend vanished in the mist.

In the morning we had steered our course towards the mouth of a valley in Kuh-i-Ghasemi, and it was just at its entrance that the Seid turned and led us southwards in the direction of a valley lying still farther south. The Seid walked always in front, leading the party through stony furrows and over sharp-edged saddles. At half-past one o'clock he came back with rapid steps, and very coolly declared that it was quite impossible to make our way through the southern valley. From the point where we turned to the south-east we ought to have proceeded to the south-west; that he remembered quite well, for he had travelled that way twice before. He deserved a good thrashing, but as that would not have improved matters, I let the camels rest, while Abbas Kuli Bek went on to examine the southern valley.

After half an hour the Cossack returns with the information that this dell is impracticable, a precipitous fissure in solid rock. So back we have to march on the old trail, over all the saddles and troublesome staircases