

on its left a terrace, the sides of which show the marks of a very high water level, indicating an extensive catchment basin. The bed is still moist all over after the last flood, and consists chiefly of sand or yellow mud. The closely packed mud bears in all parts, but the sand is soft, wet, and treacherous, and Abbas' ass is nearly drowned in a deceptive hole, where he sinks in to his hindquarters, and seems as though he were being gradually sucked down and swallowed by a powerful monster. One of the Seid's camels tries a place higher up, and though he flounders and sinks very deep into the sand, he gets across without further adventures, and we follow his track. The river runs south-south-east, and certainly unites with all the other streams, or rather dry channels, we have crossed since Naibend, to flow in a common bed out into the lowest depression of the Lut. This bed, red, salt, and sterile, is a pit of Erebus, an accursed road to the lower regions.

On the other side our path runs east-south-east, between low dark hillocks. We leave on the right a small pure white kevir flat bounded on the south by a deep black ridge, like a dark blotch on a piece of white paper, a lunar landscape, an image of Hades, without a trace of life or colour. The country becomes ever more desolate, more forlorn, the farther we advance eastward in the Persian desert. And it can scarcely be expected to improve still farther south, except in the oases which are scattered about.

Low tamarisks and saxauls, solitary shrubs and steppe plants, parade occasionally in fresh green verdure and fresh shoots, and these vivid splashes of colour are the more refreshing amidst this perpetual grey because they are so rare.

To the left stands the hill of Germ-ab, which will soon remain behind us; to the right the ground falls in gentle undulations to the south, the country becomes more flat and open, and the small black hills have come to an end. Porphyrite still predominates. Far to the south-west we perceive a double hill, a faint bluish-grey shadow; this is Kuh-i-murghab, and beside it the horizon of the