

for small bodies of men, for messengers, for whom adequate arrangements can be made for water, the Kuveer need not be more than an extremely disagreeable feature in a hideously desolate route; but it should never be attempted except with camels."

"When the Kuveer ceased, we came again to sand. . . ." M'Gregor has drawn a number of routes through the Kevir on the accompanying map. Between Tebbes and Sebsevar there is a direct desert road, but none from Khur to Sebsevar nor from Khur to Nishapur. Only two circuitous routes connect these towns. Nor is there any road from Khur north north-east to Biarjarmand(?) The map also shows a direct road from Khur to Semnan, passing through Huseni (Husseinan?); but I have shown above that if such a one formerly existed it is now no longer used. At any rate it never started from Khur, but from Jandak. M'Gregor also visited Tebbes.

In the year 1880, Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Stewart travelled from Trebizond to Teheran by almost the same route as myself, and on from Ispahan through Tebbes to the land of the Turkmans. Only the part of his journey between Ardekan and Tebbes interests us here.¹ Of the great desert he expresses the opinion that it was once the bed of a shallow sea. He refers to the Persian legends, one of which makes King Solomon, with the help of two demons, Ard and Bil, excavate an outlet for this enclosed sea to the Caspian. Another tradition makes the Kevir sea disappear on the day when Mohammed was born.

When the upheaval occurred which drained this sea, this desert still remained considerably below the level of the neighbouring highlands, and the rivers continued to drain into it and formed marshes. Salt was carried into it, and the marsh dried up in summer, but was filled again in winter. In the course of time the ground became encrusted with salt.

He distinguishes between several different forms of kevir, depending on the composition of the soil and the quantities of salt. One type abounds in ridges, as if the ground had been ploughed up. In other tracts horses

¹ *Proceedings of the Roy. Geogr. Soc.* vol. iii. (1881), pp. 515 *et seq.*