

than the central desert." Vaughan does not believe that the Darya-i-nemek drains into the Kevir unless its basin is filled with water to a certain level, when a small shallow stream only a few feet broad flows on eastwards. Where Vaughan, with C. E. Biddulph, crossed the Darya-i-nemek its breadth amounted to 25 miles. On its southern side lies a belt of driftsand, which extends to the neighbourhood of Kashan, and eastwards to Kuh-Yak-ab.

In conclusion, Vaughan sums up his observations of the Dasht-i-Kavir, the name which he considers is in most common use among the Persians. He gives as its limits 51° and 57° E. long., and $33^{\circ} 30'$ and $35^{\circ} 30'$ N. lat. Its greatest length from west to east is, according to him, about 360 miles, and its greatest breadth 150 miles. Its western part is divided by a range containing the hills Siah-kuh, Kuh-i-talhe, and Kuh-i-sefid-ab.

The desert itself is a depression to which all the rivers from the surrounding country drain, and either lose themselves, or form lakes and swamps. He fixes the lowest level at 2000 feet.¹ The larger part of the desert consists of kevir or sandy soil, strongly impregnated with salt, and has been formed by the evaporation of the water which once covered the depression. The mud is converted by heavy rain into a swamp, which is very dangerous to cross. The salt crust breaks up in the dry season into ridges 2 feet high. In other places immense deposits of salt rock exist of such extent that nothing can break or dissolve them, even when 2 feet of water lie on them after rain. Of such a nature is the Darya-i-nemek, which is said to be passable even when it is under water.

Vaughan cites theories and legends about the former sea which covered the Persian deserts, and mentions that he found oyster shells at a height of 200 feet above the present Kevir bed. The old historians do not mention any lake, but Sir F. Goldsmid assumes that the volume of water in the Persian rivers is now much less than it was formerly. The water is now insufficient to fill the depression. Lakes are formed in certain parts of the Kevir only during the rainy season, which, with a few exceptions, disappear during

¹ I found its elevation to be 2247 feet.