

draining into the lake was salt.<sup>1</sup> From Wells's description and his detailed map we can understand that sandhills cannot possibly be formed on the southern shore of the Niris lake. There is no room for them, for the lake is shut in between well-clothed hills. This is quite different from the environment of the lakes in Eastern Persia. The climate here is more humid than in the east. Urmia, Niris, and Jas-morian lie in one and the same longitudinal valley, and the situation of Niris in relation to the other two makes it quite natural that it should be a mean between them, with more water and more constant than Jas-morian, and with less water and more ephemeral than Urmia. And as to the development of sand, we find that it is really a strikingly characteristic feature of east Persian lakes.

We shall return, in a later chapter, to the question of sand distribution in Persia.

In a country which so much abounds in deserts and desert formations of various kinds in different stages of development, the language must have several different terms to denote these conceptions. And such is the actual case. The usual, general term denoting no especial type is *biaban*, from *bi* = without, *ab* = water, and *an*, the plural termination. So the whole word means without water of any kind. A diminutive of *biaban* is *biabanek* (small desert, or half desert). This word I have not found in colloquial use, but as a geographical name for the region round Khur.

Less common is the Arabic word *sehra*, plural *sehara*, which in the African Sahara denotes plain country in general, and desert in particular. In Persia it signifies, according to Polak, uninhabited land. *Desht* can be most closely translated by waste steppe, or plain. It is certainly a transitional form between steppe and desert, a form, therefore, which does not exclude the occurrence of vegetation. The combination *Desht-i-Kevir* involves a contradiction, for *kevir* excludes all vegetation, which *desht* does not. I have never heard the combination *Desht-i-Lut*, but it is common on the latest maps, and it is quite possible that it is used in certain parts. When, however, the word

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Roy. Geogr. Soc.* vol. v. (1883), p. 138.