

unique and fantastic scene. Along the line of continuation of the Jangi-köl we perceived three big depressions, stretching towards the south-south-west. Even thus early I was convinced of the striking parallelism which characterises the morphology of these depressions. Each of the three I am speaking about was separated from its neighbours by a low ridge or threshold of sand. Towards the north-east extremity of the bajir that lay next to the Jangi-köl there was a little starved vegetation. On the west side of the Jangi-köl there were yet three other bajirs, while to the south there was reason to suspect the existence of a whole series of similar depressions; such at least was the implication suggested by the steep faces of the dunes rising on the east side of the bajirs.

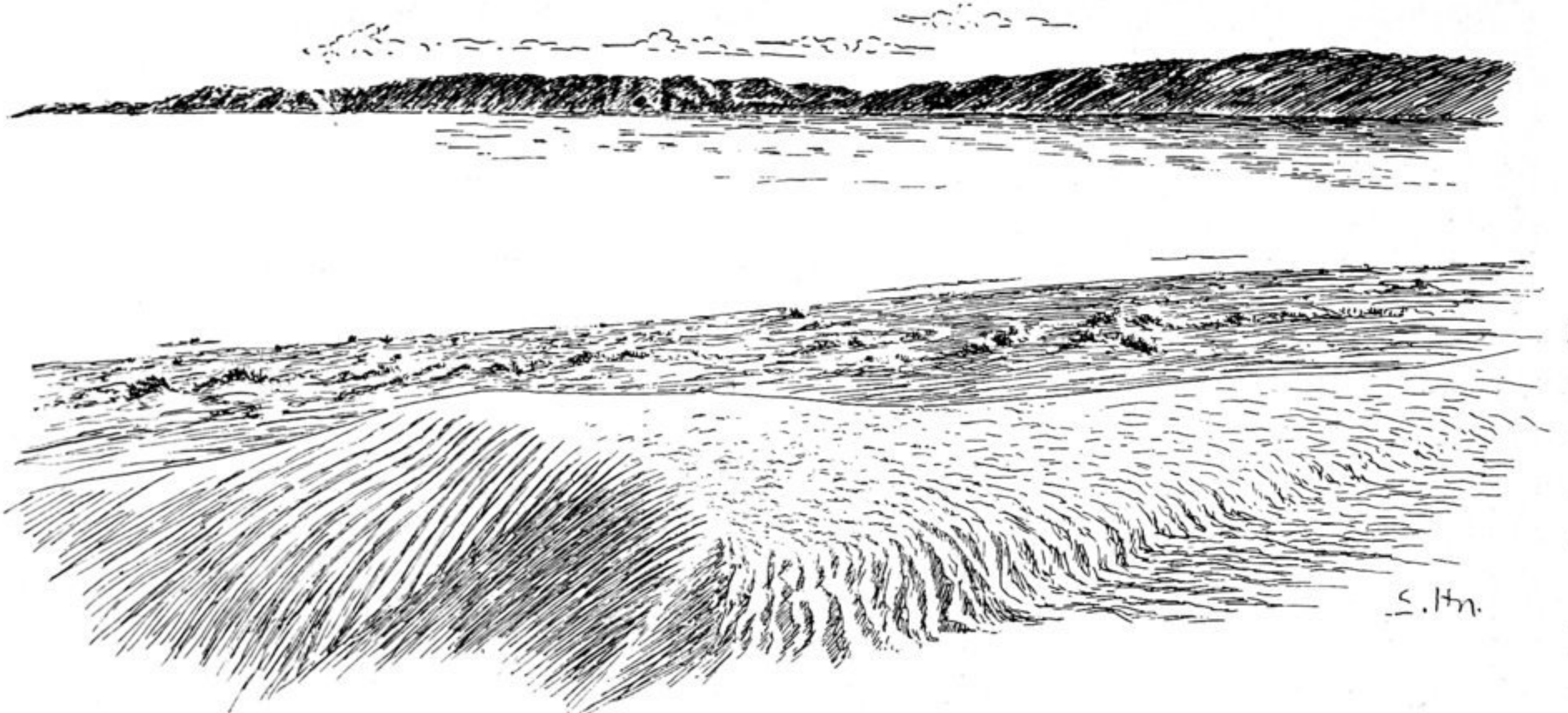


Fig. 203. SOUTHERN PART OF JANGI-KÖL LOOKING NE. FROM LOWEST PART OF ITS THRESHOLD.

From the top of the dune, we directed our steps towards the first bajir of the Jangi-köl, which was rectangular in shape, lying far down below at our feet. The floor of this depression consisted, curiously enough, of a series of concentric zones of varying breadth. On the outside, next the sand, came first dry dusty soil, so loose that the camels dropped into it to 1 dm., whilst the dust whirled up in clouds of the finest and lightest powder. Every now and again through this pulverulent soil there projected pieces of cemented saliferous sand or schor as hard as a stone. The next concentric layer on the inner side of this consisted of soft, moist mud, in which the camels would have been engulfed, had we let them venture upon it. Then came a ring of snow-white salt, encircling a pool of open salt water, dotted round with several smaller pools — the deepest part of the bajir. On the northern margin of this salt pool there grew a patch of thick kamisch, 2 to 3 m. high, and about 100 m. across, and through it ran the fresh tracks of wild boar. That is to say, the only place in these bajirs in which vegetation exists is the part adjacent to the nearest lake. Upon reaching the southern foot of the saddle which parts the Jangi-köl from its first bajir, we had at once ocular demonstration of the way in which the salt pools in the latter originate. For we perceived springs of fresh water bubbling out of the sand and running off in tiny rivulets towards the pool, where the water, in consequence of the incessant evaporation, becomes exceedingly salt. It is therefore fair