

wards the south-south-east. This is separated from the third basin, the Tuvadake-köl, by the Bakini-boltasi. At the south end of this basin there is a large bay, with ragged shores, called Taschtan Kullune-kakmasi. From the shore of this extreme outlier we saw in the direction S. 40° W. low, flat sand with two or three small beds of kamisch, and beyond that again at some distance high dunes, pointing to the presence of a bajir. On the whole the sand in this locality does not seem to be as high as beside the other desert lakes. In the bay at the south end of the third basin there are a few islets overgrown with reeds, and the reeds grow also, thinly, on the lake-shore. On our way back we made first for the east side of the Tuvadake-köl, then crossed that basin to its west side, where, with the view of saving time, we dragged our canoes over a tongue of low sand, at the narrowest part of a peninsula. In the middle of the isthmus there was a deep pool, filling the bottom of a hollow in the sand. Then we launched on the basin of Tais-köl, quite a large sheet of water, which again has a bay at its south end. Passing on the left the deep bay of Avul Nias Bekni-kakmasi, we landed on the blunt-ended peninsula, planted with tamarisks, which forms its eastern border. This »four-winged« lake is in general poorer in vegetation than the other lakes we visited: the poplars are few in number, so too are the tamarisks, and where reeds occur they are scanty and ill-thriven. On the other hand the Begelik-köl is well-stocked with fish; we saw antelopes, roe-deer, and hares, and twenty-six years before my guide, Kirghuj Pavan, had shot here a wild camel, as it was wandering along the shore; by its track, it seemed to have come from the south-west. Whether and to what extent the wild camel frequents that desert the native inhabitants were unable to tell me, but they thought it did not come there. At all events the fauna was richer and the flora poorer than beside the other lakes, both circumstances probably the result of the lake's great distance from the river. Whereas the vegetation has been less successful in establishing itself there, the wild animals are less disturbed owing to the distance from human habitations; besides the people prefer fishing in the Talei Kullune-köli and the Jäkänlik-köl. From the top of the dune on the peninsula we obtained a commanding view of the bay of Nias Bek, and of the detached lagoons which lie amongst the sand to the north of it. To the west, on the far side of the next sandy isthmus, lies the Baschtage-köl, its northern parts smothered in vegetation, while to the south-west it is bare of such, and divides into two bays in the same way as the Begelik-köl. Beyond yet another sandy ridge we saw the Talaschti-köl, which is said to be quite as long as the Begelik-köl, but on the other hand is exceedingly narrow (*tar jilgha* = »narrow valley«).

The day was oppressively hot: the water in the middle of the lake had a temperature of 22.° C., and the sand was painfully hot, even through thick-soled boots. In fact I was amazed that the natives, who went barefoot, did not burn their feet. All the morning and until past noon it was perfectly still, but in the afternoon a gentle breeze sprang up from the south-west. And later on in the day I had another opportunity of witnessing one of those characteristic and violent storms which are the most powerful factor in altering the distribution of both sand and water in that part of the world. Up above the dune-summits in the east rose black trumpet-shaped columns. With amazing swiftness they increased both in size and in number.