

Fig. 258. PANORAMIC VIEW OF A BAJIR.

their outer margins, that is as near to the sand as possible, for the sand does impart a certain degree of hardness to the surface. On the longer south-east side of the bajir the dune generally plunges down towards the bottom at as steep an angle as it possibly can, namely  $33^\circ$ , whereas on the north-west it has a long and gradual slope. The outline of the bajirs is not perfectly regular, but is broken here and there by short, low spurs of sand, jutting out from the dunes towards the middle of the depression. But in general the conformations of the desert are characterised by an astonishing degree of regularity. The sand-free depressions lie end to end in a long string, and as you advance, you know precisely what the landscape will be like behind each successive threshold you come to. The picture which presents itself from the top of each of these ridges is an exact facsimile of that upon which you are turning your back. Of life there is not the slightest trace; neither leaf nor footprint can be detected anywhere. You are surrounded on every side by the silent and desolate desert. It would defy the boldest imagination to conceive a more dreary or more lifeless scene. That night we encamped amongst the dunes of the threshold which terminated the fourth bajir. Climbing to the top of a high dune near our camp, I perceived to the south-east some small bajirs belonging to another desert-trough than that which we were following, but, like it, equally surrounded by sand.

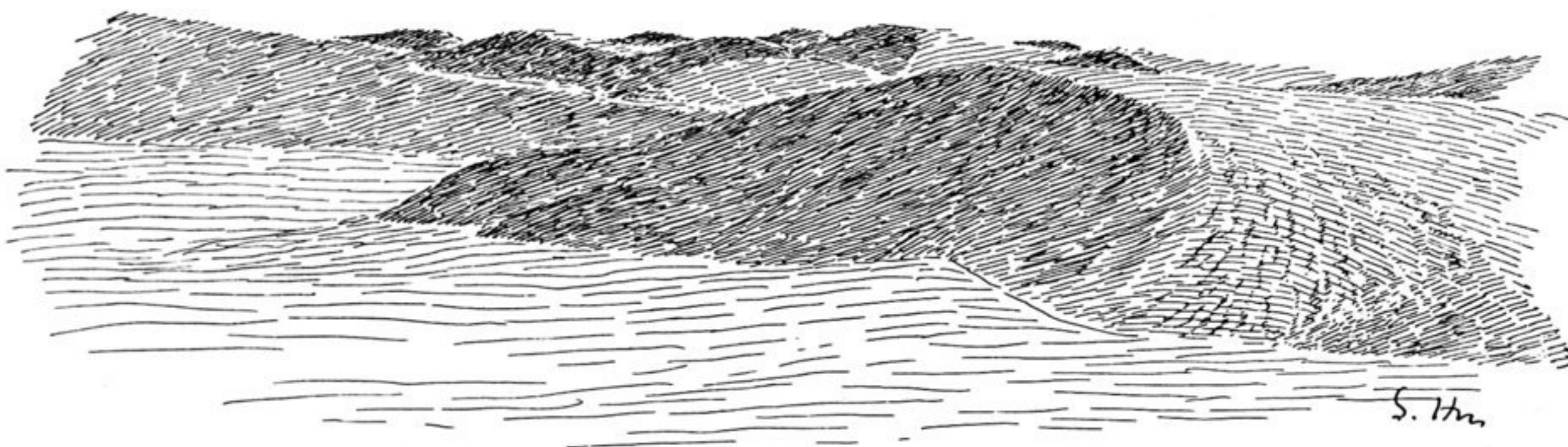


Fig. 259. INDIVIDUAL DUNES ON A SMALL THRESHOLD.

On the 22nd December, the greater part of the day's march, like that of the day preceding, led along the level bajirs, except for a very small patch of sand. In consequence of these bare depressions, the sand seemed to be arranged like a net, the bajirs answering to the loops. At first I fancied that the two systems of dunes which intersected each other were caused by prevailing winds blowing from two