

On 23rd Dec. we had a tempest from the north-north-east and it filled the air so full of dust-haze that we were unable to see anything of our surroundings except the summits of the nearest dunes. It is this wind which moulds the relief features of the thresholds, sweeping through the long, narrow troughs or hollows of the desert »ocean» without check or hindrance as through a piece of piping. At the thresholds however its velocity is rather accelerated than retarded, for as a general rule the long dune-trough is there somewhat contracted and narrow, so that the wind becomes compressed as in a defile. It now looked as though the great advantages which had hitherto been afforded us by the configuration of the ground were soon about to cease. The next threshold was very broad and very high, and bajir No. 9 was one of the smallest depressions we had hitherto crossed. Its surface was free from sand at its northern end only; in the middle and towards the south it was ribbed with small, low dunes, arranged as parallel ridges, running from north-east to south-west, and consequently not exactly parallel to the major axis of the bajir, which stretched from north-north-east to south-south-west. In height these ridges or swellings seldom exceeded one meter, and as a rule their outlines presented no sharp angles, but wore rounded forms. They appeared to have been shaped and built up by the east wind, and to have been altered by winds from other quarters. Bajir No. 10 had approximately the same area as its predecessor, and, like it, was grooved with small sand-ridges, especially in the middle, though not in the east. These miniature sand-dunes proved but little hindrance to our advance; not only were they quite hard, it was also quite easy to avoid them. If these two bajirs, No. 9 and No. 10, were to be filled with water, they would form a lake which in the details of its conformation would resemble the Karaunelik-köl — the same elliptical basins, the southern one a little the larger, the same narrow *bolta* connecting the two, the same deep trench along the east side, and the same shallow reaches along the west. The resemblance would also extend to the girdle of dunes which shuts them in. And, on the other hand, if the Karaunelik-köl were to dry up, and its narrow belt of vegetation to disappear, its basin would resemble precisely this couple of bajirs, Nos. 9 and 10. Thus the types of formation which prevail close to the river continue also for a long distance into the desert, and the water has nothing whatever to do with the origin and formation of the depressions; its presence in them is purely accidental.

A comparison between the threshold which parts bajir No. 8 from No. 9 and that which parts bajir No. 9 from No. 10 throws a good deal of light upon the matter, and supports the correctness of my view as to the origination of these sand-partings or saddles. The fact is, the second of these two thresholds did not completely separate No. 9 from No. 10; but there was a »sound», a species of *bolta*, about 100 m. across, situated quite close to the base of the steep leeward

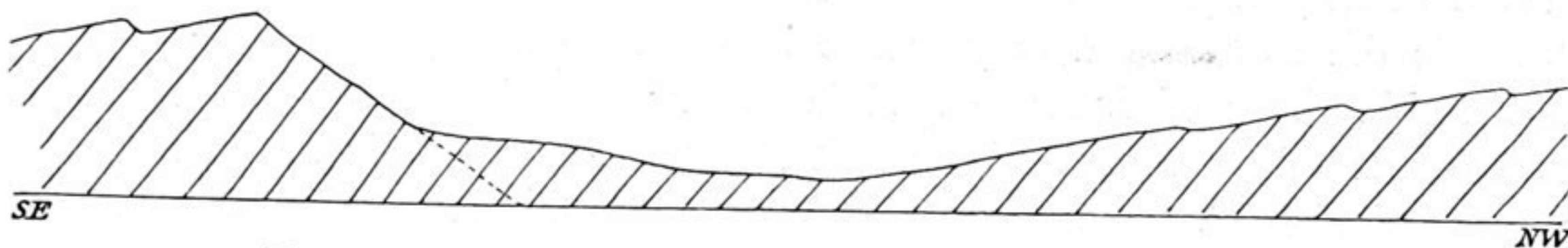


Fig. 263. VERTICAL SECTION OF A COMPLETED THRESHOLD.