

the bajir is perhaps buried under æolian dust, to become exposed. Thus the cause is the same as that which occasions the greatest depth of the desert lakes to be at their southern end, and near their eastern shore.

On this day again the wind blew hard from the north-north-east, and the atmosphere was laden to an almost incredible extent with dust, blotting out every feature of the landscape. Owing to this we got astray and penetrated amongst the high sand; though we were not long before we discovered that we had left the usual threshold on our right, and had climbed up to the top of the gigantic accumulation of sand which towered above it on the east, to the height of 65 to 75 m. Seen from that vantage-point, bajir No. 16 looked like a deep dark chasm, ugly and repellent, its outlines fading away in part into the haze. It was however tolerably small. Except for a chain of low, yellow dunes stretching from its northern end in towards its centre, its level floor consisted of black saliferous ooze, moist up to the very surface, with a ribbon of dry, white salt all round it. We reached the bottom by making the camels glissade down the steep (32°) dune-slope, but did not venture to advance across the treacherous looking ground until we had reconnoitred it well. As the result of this we preferred to keep to the loose sand which lay along the outside edge of the bajir, for we should have been infallibly lost in the ooze. We did not indeed actually see water anywhere; but, judging from the excessive moisture, the ground-water cannot have been very far down; at any rate it must have been nearer the surface than in bajir No. 8, where we struck it at a depth of 1.20 m., and where the ground was nothing like so moist as it was here in bajir No. 16.

December 25th. Bajirs No. 17, 18, and 19 were all small; they extended north and south, and were separated from one another by low, convenient thresholds, though these did not everywhere consist of continuous sand, but had gaps between the individual dunes. These occasioned us but little inconvenience, and for ten kilometers our march led over perfectly level country; though on both sides we were still shut in by »mountain-ranges» of sand. The only fragment of actual rock that we discovered throughout the entire journey was a fragment of a hard, fine-grained variety, weighing about 10 kg., which we picked up in bajir No. 18. We also discovered proofs that this desolate region is sometimes visited by organic life in the skeleton of a small bird, a couple of recently dead aquatic fowl, and a day-fly, which had been blown astray by the wind. Bajir No. 20 was of moderate size; its floor entirely free from sand, and in appearance as level as the surface of a lake when crumpled by a gentle breeze; the ground, of a dark brown colour, was slightly granulated, somewhat moist, and rather soft. In places we perceived the light downy seed of the kamisch, brought by the wind, and there arrested either by the moisture or by minor irregularities of the ground.

For several days there had not been any appreciable change in the landscape. On the left, for as far as ever we could see, stretched that sheer interminable wall of sand, sometimes jutting out in rounded promontories, sometimes receding in festooning arcs. When, in tolerably clear weather, we gazed eastwards, our eyes were met by series after series of similar steep sandy faces, until finally they died away to a hair-line on the horizon. Each of these bordered a trough or chain of bajirs, all of them parallel to the chain of depressions we were traversing. No matter where we