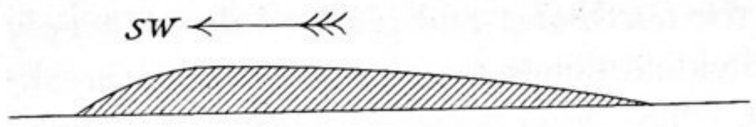

Fig. 271. VERTICAL SECTION OF SAME.

the southern part of the bajir there appeared a number of other steppe plants, especially *tschige* and tamarisks, these last, both living and dead, being particularly plentiful, and growing in some places on pretty lofty mounds. These last indicate that the bushes whose roots ramify through them like a skeleton have attained a certain age, for it is plain, that it is the tamarisk-bush which gives rise to the mound, and not the mound which originates the bush. We noticed here too, that the tamarisks which were growing farthest to the east had the biggest mounds; in fact those in the west possessed no mounds. The situation is illustrated in fig. 272. The bajir is travelling in the direction indicated by the arrow. The tamarisk *a* has struck root in the part of the bajir which has just been freed from sand. Tamarisk *b* has been free from sand and exposed to the wind for a longer period, and consequently it possesses a low base or pedestal. Tamarisk *e* has been exposed to the play of the winds for the longest time of all, and its mound or cone is consequently the highest. The linear vertical portion shows that part of the original floor of the bajir which has been excavated and blown away by

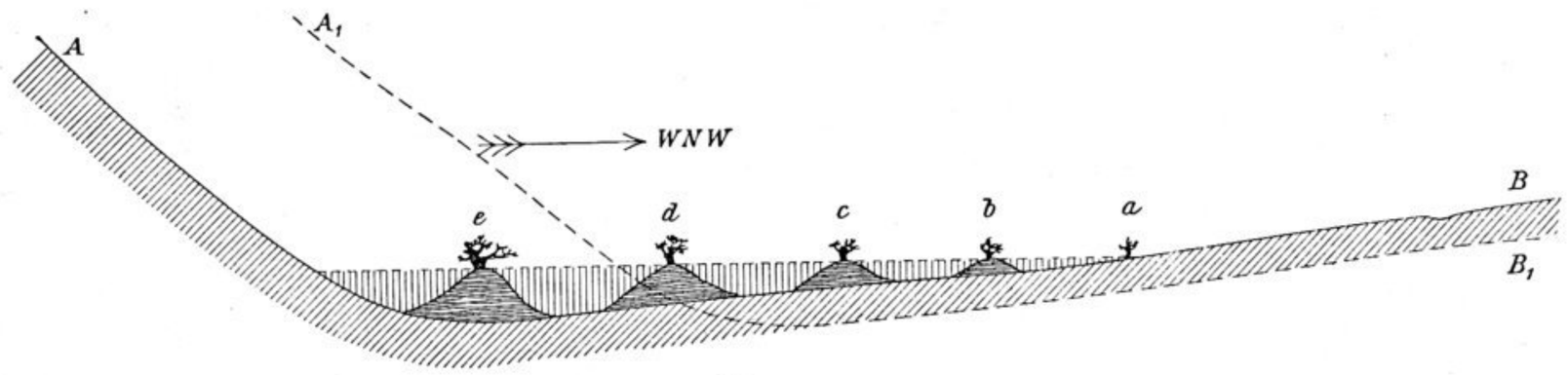

Fig. 272.

the wind; while the horizontal shading indicates the only portions that still survive, namely the mounds or cones held together by the roots of the tamarisks. When the bajir and its attendant dune-waves have travelled from AB to A_1 B_1, the mound *e* will be buried under the advancing sand of the leeward side of the dune-wall. Here too we observed other evidences of organic life, of hares and foxes, and we actually saw a big wolf which fled away westwards. This favourable bajir terminated in a sort of *cul-de-sac*, being surrounded on all sides except the north, from which we had come, by high sand. There we halted for the purpose of digging a well, for it was evident the ground-water could not be very far down. The surface was frozen as hard as a stone to the depth of 18 cm., which was indeed a good sign, for in previous cases in which the *schor* had not been frozen the water was salt. We struck water at a depth of 1.38 m.; it had a temperature of 8°.2 C., and was perfectly fresh and drinkable. It trickled out very slowly, and principally from the southern face of the well. Here again I found additional confirmation of my observation, that the farther we advanced from the river towards the interior of the desert, the better became the water. I have also observed the same thing in various other parts of the desert, but can offer no explanation of why it should be so.