

that part the bajirs, the only difference being that the intervening spaces, the depressions, were themselves choked with dunes, so that there was no longer any bare soil to be seen. Of such depressions we crossed five. Slowly we worked our way up to the summit of the crest of each such accumulation, whence the descent to the south was steep and long, as heretofore; thence too, when the atmosphere was clear, we had an extraordinarily extensive view. At 4 o'clock the snow began to come straight down, and blotted out the landscape all round us, making it impossible for us any longer to select the lowest and most convenient saddles; we had simply to march by the compass. The face of the country was again one uniform sheet of white. Towards the south the sky was sometimes clear, but above our heads it loomed heavy with black clouds. Close to the surface of the earth there was a fresh south-south-west wind. At length we came across a couple of black and dead tamarisks, growing on mounds; these and the presence of a little kamisch invited us to halt. In spite of the unfavourable going, we had managed to do 21.9 km., and in this stretch there was not one square meter of ground that was free from sand, this being the first day of the journey on which we marched uninterruptedly over sand. Here, although the sand was barely half the height it was beside the Tarim, it was incomparably more difficult to travel over, because the arrangement was no longer what it had been — sharply defined ridges and chains of dunes embracing bajir depressions free from sand. Here again we observed quite recent signs of foxes. It would have been very interesting to have now altered our course, and to have steered straight for the spot where the Kara-muran enters the desert; but the distance was too great, and I considered it more prudent to choose the nearest way to the Tschertschen-darja.

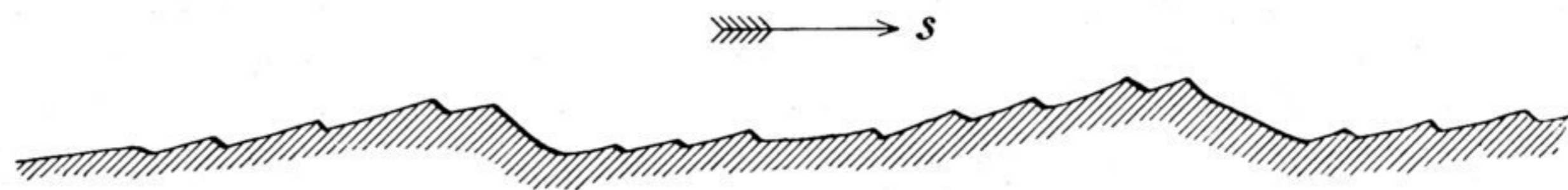


Fig. 280. VERTICAL SECTION OF A SANDED-UP BAJIR FROM NORTH TO SOUTH.

At Camp No. XIII we rested a day in order to dig a well, selecting for this purpose a relatively deep hollow in which some kamisch was growing. We struck the ground-water at a depth of 1.13 m.; its temperature was $6^{\circ}.9$ C., and although, when compared with the water we obtained from the river-ice, that we carried with us, this had a faintly bitter flavour, it was nevertheless quite drinkable. The ground was frozen to a depth of 33 cm. It snowed all day without interruption, and often very heavily; now the snow was of the usual flocculent character, and fell softly and silently like tiny parachutes, and when the camels trod on it, it crunched under their feet; by evening the sand was covered with a very thick sheet, as loose and soft as cotton. All day long too we were shrouded in a kind of twilight, out of which the soft white flakes came floating towards us from all sides. But it was a lighter, purer, pleasanter haze than that caused by the dust. During the following night the thermometer dropped to a minimum of $-30^{\circ}.1$ C. It was a peculiarity that winter, that the severest cold was coincident with the snow-fall; possibly the salt which the soil to some extent contains may have been mixed with the snow, and so