

Kosloff describes the »general characteristics» of the Kuruk-tagh in the following words. »Before leaving the oasis of the Sixty Springs I will add a few words about the range of the Kuruk-tagh, the eastern prolongation of which is visible from that spot to a considerable distance, as well as something about the plain which borders it on the south. This range is particularly flat, and rises to only a very slight degree above the plain\* which borders it on the north, whereas it rises to an incomparably greater height above the southern plain, and consequently forms the border-swelling that intervenes between the former plain and the latter. Eastwards the Kuruk-tagh grows perceptibly lower, and, apart from the Jumulak-tagh, possesses no dominating peaks. The plain to the south of the Kuruk-tagh is very desert-like, and is studded in places with low, flat elevations,\*\* with a predominantly east-west trend. Falling gently towards the south, it is seamed by numerous dry torrents, some of which get down all the way to the dry bed of the Kontsche-darja. Nevertheless it is but scantily supplied with water, there being only two wells at which it can be obtained, namely, Nan-schan and Asghan-bulak. The water yielded by all the other springs and wells is exceedingly salt, and has a most injurious effect upon the digestion; and in this respect it grows worse the farther one gets from the foot of the range.»

Then follows the description of the Kum-darja, which I have already given (*vide* p. 4); after that Kosloff continues, »Thus the principal object of the expedition was successfully achieved, and it only remained, on the way back to Kisil-sinir, to observe the ridges and elevations from which the southern plain (the detritus slope) descends, and to cross a second time the dry torrents which we encountered along the former route.»

He again visited Olun-temen-tu; and »from there continued to the north-west, sometimes approaching, sometimes receding from, my former route. The various heights were separated by valleys, more or less broad. These were destitute of life and in the case of those lying near to the Kuruk-tagh were covered with a thin sheet of snow. The lower-lying valleys, more deeply embedded amongst the mountains, were occupied by salt depressions, the crusts of which, it being winter, were then hard. In the summer the water which comes down into them off the mountains converts them into marshes, and there is even marshy ground in winter at the places where the springs gush out.»

»The route by which we returned was characterised in general by an absence of fresh water, by wretched pasture, and by the stony nature of the ground, the stones being sharp-edged, but also by an abundance of fuel.»

»On the third day we came in sight of the culminating peak of the Kuruk-tagh, namely the Tscharajlik-tagh, situated west of Kisil-sinir. Due south of this, at about 20 versts from its free outstanding peaks, is the Kum-darja, and south of that again the lifeless desert, extending all the way to Lop-nor.\*\*\* This it is only possible to cross in winter, with camels carrying a supply of ice.»

\* More correctly »plateau» or »tableland».

\*\* By this he means the detritus scree at the foot of the range.

\*\*\* The existing lake of Kara-koschun.