

the murkiness of the atmosphere I was unable to make out its orographical structure; possibly the watercourse issued from a larger transverse glen in the same chain, though the alternative just suggested is the more likely. Anyway the fresh chain which we now had immediately on our right had a south-west strike; and the same direction was adhered to by the principal watercourse which ran close under its base, gathering up all the dry brooks that came out of the range as it proceeded. In several of them there were living scrub and tamarisks growing on mounds. We observed the tracks of hares, antelopes, and wild-camels; the presence of the smaller animals suggested that there was a spring not so very far away. In a pretty deep side-ravine we found a mound a good deal higher than usual and crowned with tamarisks; the ground round it was very moist and coated with salt. Here too there was water pretty near to the surface, but it was excessively salt. Near the mouth of the next transverse glen, which was cut down through the slope to the depth of 3 to 4 m., a little salt spring gushed out, and formed an ice-sheet about 12 m. in diameter and 1 dm. thick. This spring, which really saved my caravan from destruction, was evidently one of those that Abdu Rehim had told me about the year before. A conclusive proof that the spring is known to the hunters existed in a small semicircular rampart crowning the hills overlooking it on the left-hand side. It was built of clods of earth, packed one upon the other to the height of $\frac{1}{2}$ m., and evidently had served as a screen for some hunter lying in wait for wild-camels. Just above the spring grows the hard desert plant *tschutschun*, though in the immediate vicinity of the spring itself there is no vegetation except two small tamarisks. The temperature of the water was $+2^{\circ}.2$ C., and its specific gravity 1.021. At the head of this transverse glen, we saw, at a distance of about 6 km., the mountain-chain, which now appeared to be of pretty considerable dimensions. Just above Camp No. CLII there was a large cairn of stones crowning a hill and visible from the spring. Possibly the ancient route between Hami and Lâu-lan may have passed this spring, which is no doubt of great value in winter, when there is ice.

Continuing our journey to the south-west and west on 22nd February, we crossed over a great number of smaller dry torrents, bordered by low elevations. In two or three of them we found pretty large quantities of tamarisk trunks and branches embedded in the dry mud at the bottom. The chain which lay nearest to us on our right ceased to be continuous on the farther side of a larger watercourse, and was thereafter broken into smaller detached groups and knots, which often showed miniature peaks and jagged crests. But it was overtopped by another crest immediately behind it, apparently the highest range we had yet observed. To the south there were no mountain-ridges, only low hills. Of the clay desert we could see nothing, the atmosphere being thick with dust in consequence of the violent wind. Generally the surface was hard and level, and strewn with fine gravel. On a little isolated hill, with steep sides, which we passed on our left, there appeared formerly to have been a cairn of stones, though it is now thrown down. We made Camp No. CLIII in a very shallow, ill-defined dry torrent, running to the south-south-east. On a small area we found here a tangled thicket of living tamarisks, several of them withered, together with a little kamisch. In the deepest part of the bed the surface was moist, but after striking a layer of salt as compact and as hard