

dust, with only an occasional patch of hard schor. On this apparently quite level expanse there does not exist one single table-like elevation of clay. The line of division between the terrace country and the steppe country is therefore very sharply drawn, and there is a very appreciable difference of altitude, so that in going from the former to the latter it is like stepping down a brae. At the same time the inference forces itself upon you, that at some epoch or other this boundary coincided with the dividing-line between land and water, or in other words that the distinctly marked front of the terrace-formation was once the containing shore of an inland lake, the bottom of which was identical with the existing level steppe.

At Camp No. CXXXVII the kamisch was rather thick and vigorous, and there too we observed two or three tamarisks growing. Upon digging a well, we obtained water at a depth of 1.14 m., which, although slightly salt, was nevertheless drinkable. The water rested upon a clay formation, but we had to dig down through sand to get at it. The temperature of the ground at a depth of 25 cm. was -0.7° , at 50 cm. $+1.0^{\circ}$, at 75 cm. $+2.5^{\circ}$, and at 114 cm. $+4.51^{\circ}$.

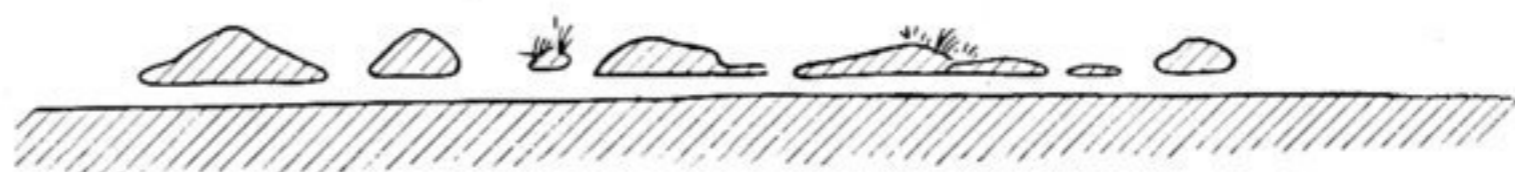


Fig. 217.

On the second February a stiff gale from the east seemed to indicate that the characteristic spring storms from that quarter had already begun. Immediately north of the camp we discovered a very distinctly marked path through the kamisch, running towards the west-north-west, and the footprints and droppings of wild-camels soon revealed that it had been made by those animals, and not by men, for indeed human beings never visit these desolate regions. Another wild-camel track, which we subsequently crossed over, ran towards the S. 80° W. Shortly after that the kamisch and other vegetation thinned away, and was followed by a perfectly barren tract, which we crossed towards the north-north-west. It was in part perfectly level, in part rugged, semi-hard, the surface being covered with a thin layer of wind-driven dust. After that the schor surface became slightly moist on the top and assumed a dark brown colour, while at intervals were small strips of the vanishing kamisch. After that we traversed a narrow zone of dead toghraks, a couple of meters high and a foot in diameter, merely dried up, contorted trunks, scattered rather thinly and standing some on the level ground, some on small conical elevations. Except for one solitary specimen, which appeared to retain just a spark of life, all the others were but »relics of a vanished past». Nevertheless every one was still standing upright on its own roots. The surface there was gently undulating, and consisted of sand and dust intermingled. Then, after a belt of similarly dried up tamarisks, the standing poplars again made their appearance, as also kamisch. The former were thinly scattered, but in some of the smaller depressions the kamisch was quite abundant. In one of these depressions, which was surrounded by sand-dunes 1 to 2 m. high, we made Camp No. CXXXVIII. When seen at the distance of only one km. the sand-dunes had, owing to the mirage, quite an im-