

## VI. FROM SHANDE-MIAO TO THE EDSÉN-GOL

### THE FIRST SAND-DUNES

**F**or the first few days our route swung off to the south, in order to go round the desert of sand that stretches to the west of Shande-miao, and whose scanty watering places are insufficient to supply the needs of a large caravan. But even on our southward route we came in among dunes, now bound by vegetation, now naked and presenting curious shapes of shields and crescent moons, pyramids and dolphin's backs. The landscape is here strongly reminiscent of the transitional belts between desert and steppe in Eastern Turkistan.

Before us we could see the low, dark ridges of the Khara-narin-ula. And between two high dunes one glimpsed the depression or flat arena where the diminutive Khoburin-nor is situated. There, after a very short day's march, we pitched our tents for the night. Actually there are two meres here, the water in the one being sweet, while in the other it contains soda.

This was our first meeting with dune-sand on this journey, and the landscape was a new experience for everybody but myself. The arena was on all sides surrounded by quite high and almost sterile dunes. ZIMMERMANN measured a couple of them, finding them to be 12.5 and 18 meters in height.

Next day we headed right into a narrow belt of sterile dunes. There was a sudden change of scene here — the sand giving place to even ground with steppe-tussocks. To the right one saw the high sand, against whose yellow wandering hills the green of the scrubby vegetation stood out in strong relief.

Time and again we crossed small lateral arms of the sand-belt, where the route led up and down and in and out. Small rocky outcrops also occurred; these were a crystalline slate formation.

At Talin-khashiat (The Enclosure on the Plain), our camping place for the night, a number of worked chips and cores of flint were collected.

The last day in August was HASLUND's twenty-ninth birthday, and MARSCHALL and HUMMEL celebrated the occasion by entering the tent at an early hour and singing songs in his honour. For the rest, the birthday was celebrated by the march to Tukhumin-gol, over gravel and sand and artemisia-steppe, past the well Ulin-khashiat, where merchants from Wu-yüan were staying in three tents, and to