



Fig. 16. Looking south and south-west, May 8th

INTO BLIND ALLEYS

We steered south-west, west, north and north-east along a curiously winding arm with a good current. For long stretches we felt that we were on one single, uninterrupted arm; but in reality a number of small canals ran out of it, well concealed in the reeds and giving access to other arms of the delta and lakes. Only from the tops of mounds could we make anything of the involved labyrinth of water-ways.

At last, however, our channel narrowed, the current slackened and we found our way out into another, which led to a fair-sized open sheet of water. We had now a choice of two routes, and took one running N 25° E. The water was quite clear, green in colour, and fresh to the taste. A slight current was perceptible. We were frequently surrounded on all sides by thick reeds, above which solitary *yardangs* stuck up here and there.

We went on searching and searching in every direction. A fresh blind alley forced us back a good way to the south-west, where a channel led us to another large sheet of water, bordered at some distance by reed-beds. Some flocks of wild geese rose and disappeared to the south-west.

»What grazing grounds for sheep and cattle!» exclaimed SADIQ. He was right. The reeds grew and withered there each year to no-one's profit; and volumes of valuable water were lost, instead of being used for irrigation, that might have given bread and prosperity.

It was half-past seven when we encamped on a bank where there was no fuel. We sacrificed two deck planks to the camp fire.

IN THE NORTHERNMOST PART OF THE DELTA

On the night of May 8th-9th there was a minimum temperature of 5.8° C. (42.4° F.), strangely cold for so late in the year! The scouts had been out, and when we got up in the morning they reported that they had not been able to find an arm of