



Fig. 25. A mighty *mesa* column, May 28th

by wind and weather and sun. They were made fast to stakes driven into the bed of the lake. Our idea was to have canoes, tent and flour ready on the spot in case we should return later.

GAGARIN, eight boatmen and two herdsmen were instructed to return to base camp No. 70 near Yardang-bulaq — five days' journey, we reckoned — with the five donkeys and three sheep and all the rest of our baggage.

We set off at half-past two; and in a quarter of an hour we had reached a last channel with reedy banks. After we had left this the soil became absolutely dry and barren. We followed a row of picturesque *mesas*. I rode one of the donkeys, which tripped lightly and surely over the irregular clay. It was past 6.30 when we reached the last *mesa* and the car at its foot.

At dinner KUNG told us that he had seen the shepherds coming with the three sheep, but without Tagil. KUNG was the last to leave the lake-side camp, and I could not bear the thought of the faithful dog remaining at camp No. 80 in the belief that we should return. The tent was still there and was full of provisions. Tagil would presumably think it his duty to stay and guard the place during our absence, as he had done a few days before, when they had all left camp and paddled off eastward. Of course he would think we were coming back this time too.