

indications of old volcanoes in the Chang-pei-shan, or Long White Mountain, and the river of lava between Kirin and Ninguta, while signs of volcanic action are to be seen in the Tian-shan Mountains, as was first noticed by Humboldt, and afterwards confirmed by Russian travellers.

A small stream—here a few inches deep only, flowing over a wide pebbly bed—runs down from these hills. My guide called it the Ho-lai-liu, and it is probably identical with the stream which Prjevalsky crossed on the southern side of the Sheitung-ula.

We encamped near it on the 10th, in a spot bounded on the south by a low round range of hills, or rather undulations. During the morning I set off to look at this, thinking it was a couple of miles or so distant, but the distances are most deceptive here, and I found myself at the top in ten minutes; it was merely an undulation. A few days previously I had strolled out casually to a hill which appeared to be about five minutes' walk off, but was obliged to walk fast for half an hour before I got there. There is nothing to guide the eye—no objects, as men or trees, to judge by; only a bare plain and a bare smooth hillside are to be seen in front, and it is hard to say whether a hill is half a mile or two miles distant. On this occasion I was glad to find it was only half a mile, as I had more time to examine the country round. We were between two parallel ranges. The intervening country is undulating, the depressions being generally sandy, while the slopes are of alluvial deposit, covered with a reddish clay, which supports a scanty crop of coarse grass and scrubby plants. A few flowers of stunted growth appear occasionally, but they evidently have a hard struggle for existence with the severe climate of these deserts. The flower that flourishes most in this region is the iris, which does not, however, attain a greater height than six or eight inches, though occasionally it is seen in clumps growing to a height of one or one and a