

prominences being of bare igneous rock, but the depressions are filled with gravel of a grey colour.

*May 20.*—A really delightful morning. The desert is not so dreary after all ; for no artist could wish for a finer display of colouring than the scene presents this morning. Overhead is a spotless, clear blue sky, and beneath it the plain has lost its dull monotonous aspect, fading away in various shades of blue, each getting deeper and deeper, till the hills are reached ; and these again, in their rugged outline, present many a pleasing variety of colour, all softened down with a hazy bluish tinge ; while the deceitful mirage makes up for the absence of water in the scene, and the hills are reflected again in what appear to be lovely lakes of clear, still water.

For two marches we kept gradually ascending towards a watershed, connecting the Hurku with a similar but somewhat lower range running parallel to the road, eight or ten miles to the south. Crossing this connecting ridge, we arrived at the Bortson well in the early hours of the morning of the 22nd.

There were a few Mongol yurts here on the banks of some small trickles of water, running down from the Hurku Hills to the north. Here I crossed Prjevalsky's track. In his first, and also in his third journey, he had crossed the Galpin Gobi from the south, and passed through this place on his way northward to Urga. The description he gives of the Galpin Gobi is not cheerful. He says, "This desert is so terrible that in comparison with it the deserts of Northern Tibet may be called fruitful. There, at all events, you may find water and good pasturage in the valleys : here there is neither, not even a single oasis—everywhere the silence of the Valley of Death. The Hurku Hills are the northern definition of the wildest and most sterile part of the Gobi."

The Galpin Gobi, where I crossed it to the Hurku Hills, could be seen extending as far as the eye could reach to