

the N.E. Where Prjevalsky crossed it its width was eighteen miles only, and it was 3570 feet above the sea. The Mongols there told him that it extended to the east and to the west for twenty days' march. It forms a marked depression in the great Mongolian plateau, and is a distinct dividing-line between the Altai and the In-shan mountain systems, for I will show presently that the Hurku Hills may be regarded as the prolongation of the former mountains.

On the 22nd we continued along the southern base of the Hurku Hills, passing over an almost level plain of an extremely desolate appearance. It was composed of a grey gravel, and was covered with small tufts of plants perfectly scorched up. What little there had been of spring green is already disappearing, and the young grass and plants which have had the courage to show themselves are withering, and all is brown and bare.

On the 22nd we had the misfortune to lose one of our camels; he shied at something, broke loose, threw his load (luckily), and disappeared into the darkness. He was never heard of again, although we hunted most of the night and all the next day till the evening.

After this we crossed some low hills running down from the Hurku range, and arrived on the banks of a delightful small stream, about a foot wide and a few inches deep, with some patches of green grass on its margin. Here we halted for three days to buy a couple of new camels. There were several Mongol yurts about here, and we had visits from some of the men. They are very fine-looking, tall, strong, muscular fellows, more like what one would expect of the descendants of Chinghiz Khan than any other Mongols. They were, however, very childish, amused at everything, and very rough in their manners.

The caravan from Bautu which was passed on the road on the 13th, caught us up here and pitched camp close by.