

and it is evident that the wind has driven the sand from this up into the hollow between the Hurku Hills and the range to the south, thus forming these remarkable sandhills. Tradition corroborates this supposition, for the Mongols say that a large force had been collected, and was preparing to march to China, when a mighty wind arose, blowing the sand of the desert against them and burying them all together, with several villages and temples. At the present time a stream runs along the northern foot of the range; this stream has some patches of meadow land on its banks, on which are pitched several groups of Mongol yurts.

The country we passed through was undulating, sloping downwards towards the range. In parts the soil was firm gravel, and in parts very loose sand—much more loose than ordinary sand. It seems to me that this is sand formed by wind, and not by water; it is finer and more gritty. The actual surface is very thinly coated with grey gravel, but this is so thin that each footstep leaves a mark in white from the underlying sand.

After passing the end of the sand-range, we entered a country different from any we had yet gone through. In origin it was probably a plain of sand, but the wind's action has broken it up into sandhills and depressions, making up a scene which, for its extreme wildness and desolation, surpasses anything I have ever seen. The elements of the air seem to have fought with and rent the very surface of the land, and the scene is one of indescribable confusion. To add to the weirdness of the spectacle, the country was covered with tamarisk bushes, the roots of which had been laid bare by the wind blowing the sand away. There they stood, with their gnarled and contorted roots exposed to view. The sandhills were sometimes very quaint and curious in shape, but they usually ran in long ridges, cutting into one another from every direction. They rise in the most sudden manner out of a level