

sents a bare, sterile appearance, though a few plants mentioned by Prjevalsky, including the peach, may be found in places.

The range which runs parallel to the Hurku Hills, almost throughout their entire length, is very similar in general character, but is usually at a lower elevation—the difference in height varying from four or five hundred to a thousand feet. At the western extremity, however, the southern is the more elevated of the two by about eight hundred or a thousand feet.

On June 8, towards dark, after passing through the sand-hills, we approached a low range of hills. The guide halted here and told me to take out my revolver, as, he said, the hills were a favourite resort of robbers. So I dismounted and went on ahead of the caravan, revolver in hand; the boy and the guide (the latter armed with a tent-pole) each took a flank. We took the bell off the camel, and approached the hills in dead silence. It was most sensational, as it was now quite dark, and we could see nothing but the black outline of the hills against the sky, while the absence of the "tingle-tingle" of the bell made the death-like silence of the desert still more impressive.

When we got close up to the range, the guide said we had better wait till daylight, as the robbers had a nasty habit of rolling big stones down upon caravans going through the pass. So we put on our sheepskins, and lay down on the ground till day broke, taking it in turns to watch.

The Mongol said he had seen a horseman riding to the hill while it was dusk, and my boy occasionally conjured up images of others riding about, and let off his revolver twice; but nothing happened, and we resumed our march at 3.30, still on the defensive, with our revolvers in our hands, as the hills we now entered had plenty of suitable hiding-places for brigands. Nothing could be wilder or more desolate than these hills—utterly devoid of vegetation, and covered with a dark gravel.