

slight snow on it. In the space between the two ridges—fifty or sixty miles—is a succession of lower hills, rising about one thousand feet above the plain. The two ridges rise abrupt and clear from the surrounding hills. Between my route and the Altai Mountains is a succession of low, narrow ridges with intervening plains running in a southeasterly direction. All are perfectly bare; there are no signs of bushes, and even grass is extremely scanty. To the south the same succession of ridges and plains extends. The ridges are from three hundred to five hundred feet in height, and five or six miles apart. On the next march we followed down the gravelly bed of a stream which appeared occasionally in a small trickle above the surface, and the margin of which was covered thickly with the soda efflorescence which seems invariably to mark the presence of water in the Gobi.

On the 17th we emerged from the hills again, on to another great plain running between two parallel ranges of bare hills. On this plain we saw some more wild asses or horses, which I had good opportunity of examining with my telescope. They have large heads and ears, and thick, rather short, full, round bodies, legs well in proportion to their bodies, long tails reaching nearly to the ground, and thin like a mule's or donkey's. As far as I can see, they have no mane, or only a very short one. The guide calls them mules, and says they are from wild she-asses.

The following day we continued over the plain, but after sunset it became extremely dark, the sky being covered with heavy rain-clouds. About eleven the camels began floundering about, and we found we were in a bog. There had been heavy rain here during the day; the soil was a very slimy clay, and the ground broken up into hillocks. The guide was with difficulty persuaded to light a lantern, as he says that it frightens the camels, and they see their way better without it.