

furrowing out depressions, there piling up fantastic sandhills, while, 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, till they stood everywhere 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.

I suggested to the guide that we should halt for a day when we came to a good grazing-ground, to let the camels pick up, and then make a renewed effort to reach Hami; but he said that if they were to halt for one day, they would not go on at all the next—the only thing was to keep them at it. Rather like the cab-horse in 'Pickwick,' which had to be kept in harness for fear of it falling down!

The Altai Mountains, rising to a height of about nine thousand feet above the sea, and covered with slight snow on the summit, now lay about twenty-five miles to the north. They were entirely bare, and the southern slopes were steep, but not precipitous. In the centre