

little distance. We want nothing from them, and they have nothing to say to us; and so we pass one another as ships on the sea, without signalling, and we soon lose sight of one another in the mist.

This day, too, the temperature does not rise above freezing-point, and therefore the hoar-frost thickens on all the shrubs and bushes, which now grow close together. Nothing can be seen of the bushes themselves, for they are all white, and look singular against the dark ground. Several flat dells open out among the hills to the left, and we follow one of them; one can scarcely call them dells, for they are so extremely shallow and flat, and are rather drains for rain-water. The country, however, is undulating, at least the little we can see of it. Here and there are spoors of antelopes and of wild asses in great numbers, crossing one another in every direction. In summer the wild asses wander as far as the neighbourhood of Doasde-imam; they eat the shrubs of the desert, tamarisks, and saxaul, and drink the briny water of the springs in the hills.

After the last dell we are up again on the even plain at a little higher level than before, and the smooth hard ground bestrewn with coarse sand affords as convenient and excellent a road as a drive in a park. The track is quite perceptible, but not much worn. To the right appears again a slight rise, evidently another step running round the small ridge of Tallhe. To the left, also, small elevations are visible. The channels we now cross occasionally are probably running down to the large valley with salt water. But the country is extremely monotonous, the only variation being in the different forms of the hillocks and the outlines of the terraces, the steppe shrubs, from which we collect fuel, and the closer or more scattered growth of the rime-covered bushes. And the day's march is not more agreeable in the obstinate mist which has now pursued us for several days, hiding the view and rendering it impossible to insert in the map anything but the inequalities close to the road. Of the sun not a glimpse is to be seen, and we might have strayed into a latitude where at this season it never rises above the horizon.