

freely, and from which the ground again falls slowly and evenly. It is enclosed among hills entirely of loose material; here and there grows a solitary tamarisk, but farther down there is not a sign of vegetation, and a little source comes out of the ground depositing lines of moist saline crystals along its bed. Here it is more difficult than ever to walk, this viscous moist soil clinging like a sole of lead at every step.

Before us, to the right, rises a comparatively high eminence of a red and black colour, and with very steep slopes. Its summit rises scarcely more than 300 feet above the surrounding country. It forces our valley to make a bend to the left where a smaller similar hill stands. At one time they were connected, forming a ridge which has been breached by the valley, the opening of which enters a more open arena-shaped collecting basin. To this several other such flat dells converge from all sides, except to the S. 25° W., where the united channels find an outlet to still flatter and lower country. All the fragmentary hills in the district are in an advanced stage of degradation and disintegration, are rounded, levelled, and smoothed down, and consist for the most part of loose material, but also occasionally of solid rock, which at once reveals its presence by a bolder and more rugged relief. They are ruins of former mountains which in a region where there is no vegetation to protect them from complete destruction lie bare and exposed to wind and weather, frost and precipitation, and the very great differences in temperature between winter and summer. Denudation tends, as in other places on the earth, to degrade these heights and fill up the depressions. But beside these ruins we can also notice inequalities which are directly produced by denudation and erosion, and remain after other looser material has been swept away by wind and weather.

At the foot of this hill lies an open spring basin surrounded by a little grass, an unusual and striking appearance, an oasis in miniature. At the mouth of a small steep gully, where the spring of Mulkabad is situated, we pitched our tents on the top of a flat sandy mound, where we were