

Buriat Cossacks, who never fired unless they were sure of hitting.

Now the steppe becomes more continuous, and the shrubs grow close together, and consequently the tracks of camels are more numerous, and we suspect that a spring is near. If we turn round and look north-westwards the steppe we have traversed seems to be under water—another trick of mirage. We are warmed by walking and enjoy the light breezes which now and again sweep over the country from the south-west. In several furrows, where streams are wont to flow after rain, small crescent-shaped banks of earth have been thrown up; in this way the herdsmen collect water, damming it up into a pool which will last a couple of days, and save the herdsmen and camels a journey or two up to the nearest spring at the foot of the hills. Such dams are called *bend-i-rejab*. Wells are often dugged in the furrows for the same purpose—to take advantage of the rain-water.

Now it is close on four o'clock, and we have listened to the clang of the camel bells all day long and are eager to encamp. The steppe forms a blunt projection into the Kevir, and a large number of camels are wandering about among the tamarisks and other steppe vegetation. Before us, to the south-east, is seen a man, probably a herdsman, and we decide not to encamp until we come up to him. Gulam Hussein thinks that he has his *mensil* or camping-ground here, and that he is about to drive his camels together to lead them to a spring in the morning. The place is convenient, with grazing and fuel in abundance, but there is no water, and our camels have not drunk for three days. The supply of water left in our skins is amply sufficient for our own use, though stale and musty; but we have no choice on the march.

When at length we reach the herdsman we come to a halt; the men make the camels kneel with a sharp shout and a quick tug at the muzzle-rope; the ropes round the loads are loosened and our boxes and provender sacks are deposited on the ground. The usual work proceeds smoothly and quickly, and while the other men pitch the tents Avul Kasim lights the first fire. Height 2539 feet.