

noticeable in the sterile clay of the desert. At one place ridges barely a foot high run parallel to one another, probably produced by some lateral pressure in the clay masses. A belt, 500 yards broad, consists of dark material, and is smooth and wet, and farther south we pass three hollows only 50 to 65 feet broad, lying entirely in black mud. They are like erosion beds, and stretch out east and west as far as the eye can see. At the south side of each stands here and there a discontinuous strip of salt three-quarters to one inch thick. After another dry belt follows again black mud in a bed containing salt. It is hard to explain the occurrence of these beds, for erosion by running water is scarcely conceivable on this level desert. My men also assured me that water never flowed through them, though after rain they might contain pools of stagnant brine. As they are parallel to the northern and southern shore lines of the desert, whence the solid matter is washed down, these wrinkles are also probably due to tangential pressure. In a bed of running water cakes of salt would not find time to collect.

"*Hei kun, sor shud*" ("Press on, it is noon"), calls out Gulam Hussein at eight o'clock to Ali Murat, who sits half asleep on the foremost camel. We now ride, all three, jolting over this dead sea where not a fly hums, not a tuft of grass, not an inequality in the level horizon breaks the monotony. The only signs of organic life visible are the tracks and leavings of passing caravans or a small dead bird that has not been able to fly farther. We look in vain for a small stone or grains of sand which would indicate the proximity of land. Nevengk is much interested in all the carcasses and skeletons of camels we pass; he examines them thoroughly, lies down on his back, rubs and scrubs himself against them with a friendly growl, and smells of them for days after. He often takes a rib or a piece of flesh with him and holds it for half-an-hour between his teeth, and when he is tired of it he digs a hole with his forepaws, buries the bone and fills up the hole with his nose. He is unnecessarily cautious in this country where there is no one to rob him of his prize, and besides, there are plenty more skeletons all along the route.