

they are temporary formations caused by variations of temperature.

Distances are deceptive, and it is impossible to judge of the size of an object. At the edge of the Kal-i-nemek, or "salt river," stands a cairn of salt blocks, 3 feet high, which at a distance assumes the dimensions of a tent or a camping caravan. Round its base extends a horrible belt of mud, also running WSW. to ENE. The camels slip and reel like rudderless ships in a high sea. A camel skeleton on the horizon is mistaken by Gulam Hussein for an approaching caravan.

The southern hills rise slowly up from the horizon, and new summits crop up like dark points, while the hills to the north of Turut sink and fade away. The first thing we do when we mount our camels is to cut away our soles of mud with a knife. The ground is just the same as in the salt desert of eastern Tsaidam, the same hard, dry, porous crust of clay impregnated with salt, which is called *shor* by the natives of Turkestan, and which also occurs in the desert of Lop.

At half-past four o'clock we have travelled a farsakh more than half-way, and are at the point Chil-i-palun-i-kher, where another mud-belt begins. It becomes dusk and the clouds close up, and it is quite dark before the moon rises, veiled in clouds, but still shedding a diffused light. It is too dark and too tiring to splash along in the mud, so we ride winding and jogging through the darkness. A slap is heard in the mud, one of the camels is down, and the others stop till he is helped on to his feet again. A fine thin drizzle begins; what will it be like if a regular rain softens the desert, already wet and troublesome?

But now we can go no farther; we have done enough for the day after fourteen hours of continuous march. After some search we find a fairly dry place, but there my sleeping rug is stuck fast next morning. We dig a hole by the light of the fire to examine the structure of the upper layers of earth. At the top there is a third of an inch of wet clayey mud, then a layer of hard salt $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches thick resting on half-dry clay, with a depth of 6 inches. Beneath this the clay seems to become wetter, and at a