

organique ne peut reparaitre que par suite de quelque bouleversement terrible. On assistait, pour ainsi dire, au commencement de l'agonie de notre planète.

“La seule chose qui nous consolait dans le désert, était la conscience d'avoir marché; les monts Mourghab, qui la veille encore nous apparaissaient à l'horizon comme un brouillard sans forme déterminée, se dessinaient nettement sur un ciel de plomb, et derrière eux s'élevait le mont Derbend, qu'on disait être rapproché de la limite du désert du côté de Yuzd.”¹

Professor A. von Bunge, the botanist of the expedition, furnishes the following valuable description of the same road: “In the night between the 3rd and 4th of April we travelled on camels in the dreadful desert of the Lut, without water or vegetation. . . . A deep and broad river-bed, the Khosrud, where we camped on the first evening at sunset, gave the landscape an almost ghostly appearance. . . . Before the sun rose mirage began to produce its illusions. . . . The country remained still lifeless and dismal, the heat increased from hour to hour, the plain sloped in front of us till evening, and we soon came to the lowest parts, barely 1000 feet above sea-level, where the ground of clean firm salt clay has assumed over extensive areas a peculiar conformation like freshly cleared land, where the large clods have already fallen to pieces; these large flakes are very hard crusts of salt mixed with clay and grains of sand which are, as it were, cemented together by salt clay thrust up from below and probably formerly of a semi-fluid consistency—evidently a salt swamp which has shrunk through long drying, and which now apparently is not converted into swamp even by heavy rain. Beyond these tracts heaped-up mounds of salt clay rise above the plain, not infrequently presenting a delusive resemblance to ruins of colossal buildings, which, especially owing to mirage, assume the appearance of a huge town fallen into decay. These are, perhaps, the shores of the great lake of former times. Between these mounds we came at nightfall to a river with

¹ Khanikoff, quoted by M'Gregor in *Narrative of a Journey through the Province of Khorassan*, vol. i. p. 109.