

a storm, plucking up the tent-pegs and making the canvas flap about like a torn sail. At two o'clock I was awakened again by a downpour of rain pelting on the tent, while a fine drizzle of minute drops came down through it. The temperature fell to 48.7° , and the air was cool in the morning, and so clear that the distant hills to the south showed up in brown and red tints.

We travel west-north-west between regular shield-shaped dunes at most 10 feet high. The ridges between the fine groovings dry quickly, and become light in colour, while the hollows between are still wet and dark, so that the dunes are striped like a tiger skin. But the sandhills become higher the farther we advance, and from the highest, which rise 13 to 16 feet above the ground, our riders take a look round to get the bearings of the landmarks, for here there is no sign of a path. The base on which the dunes are raised consists of hard yellow clay, in one place bestrewn with quantities of blue and red fragments of pottery, and here also are left roots of one or two ancient palms. Saxaul and tamarisk occur in quantities, and also other steppe plants. The saxauls are as much as 13 feet high and are like shady trees.

To the left of our route stretches high continuous sand, and we cross an offshoot from it, where the dunes are as much as 26 feet high. The dromedaries roll like a ship in a high sea, and we turn more to the north-west to reach a smoother fair-way. It is again calm and sultry, flies buzz, steam rises up quickly after the rain, and it smells like a hothouse, for now the steppe vegetation is dense again, and the tamarisks show a beautiful green. Nevengk is tormented by heat and burrows in the sand in the shade of tamarisks.

Kachul is the name of a hard bare hill of clay, with a flat top plentifully bestrewn with fragments of pottery, relics of long bygone ages. The tamarisks also have seen better days in this wilderness, now taken possession of by driftsand. Quantities of dead tamarisks lie in the dune valleys like fallen heroes.

After passing round the deep sand, which is called Gerden-rig, we turn again southwards. The ground