

lake bottom, and that the former lake was sweet, at any rate round the margin, as is shown by the reeds which otherwise would not be found here.

Another hour's ride and we are on the right bank of the Shela. Its erosion terrace is steep here, and 18 feet high, while the left bank is a gentle slope, thickly clothed with bushes. The deepest part of the bed is full of salt water, on an underlayer of crystallized salt. The river runs towards east-south-east, but it is said to bend afterwards to the east and east-north-east, and to flow a good day's journey before it debouches into the Hamun-i-Zirre, as my man called the depression. This is said to be three or four days' journey in length and to contain no water, but its salt-impregnated bottom must be at least moist in parts, so that any one attempting to cross would sink in deeply. After unusually heavy rain and high water in the Hilmend it seems that ephemeral lakes are sometimes formed in the God-i-Zirre. The pools now left in the bed of the Shela, and becoming smaller and fewer down its course, are said to have been left by the last high water some few years ago. God-i-Zirre is, then, the ultimate and lowest recipient of the Hilmend system, though the water may now seldom reach so far. That this actually occurred not so very long ago is plain from the assertion of my guide that his father had seen inhabited huts on the Zirre. The guide was himself about forty-five years old. He remembered that, twenty years before, there was much water in the Shela, and that the swamp along the bank reached to the neighbourhood of the ruins of Zirre. According to M'Mahon the God-i-Zirre is a large lake of clear, deep-blue water, 25 miles long and 5 miles broad, surrounded on all sides by a broad ring of firm salt (*Geogr. Journal*, vol. ix. (1897), pp. 393 *et seq.*).

I determined the height on the bank with a boiling-point thermometer, and found it to be 1621 feet; we had, therefore, descended 1903 feet from Cha-Muhamed-Riza.

Over old lake bottom, where the extinct reeds have been succeeded by steppe vegetation, we continue our journey to the south-south-east, and are able to follow comfortably the erosion furrows ploughed up in the ground by the