

times the spirits will call him by name; and thus shall a traveller oft-times be led astray so that he never finds his party. And in this way many have perished. Sometimes the stray traveller will hear as it were the tramp and hum of a great cavalcade of people away from the real line of road, and taking this to be their own company they will follow the sound; and when day breaks they find that a cheat has been put on them and that they are in an ill plight. Even in the day time one hears those spirits talking. And sometimes you shall hear the sound of a variety of musical instruments, and still more commonly the sound of drums. Hence in making this journey 'tis customary for travellers to keep close together. All the animals too have bells at their necks, so that they cannot easily get astray. And at sleeping time a signal is put to show the direction of the next march. So thus it is that the desert is crossed."

It was not such reflexes of old folk-lore beliefs which occupied my thoughts most as we passed by long marches along the dreary salt-encrusted shores of the great dried-up sea-bed (Fig. 69) and then up the wide desert valley which divides the foot of the eastern Kuruk-tagh from the high sand ridges covering the glaxis of the Kum-tagh in the south. There were plenty of interesting geographical observations to keep my mind occupied, especially after we had passed from what looked like the head of that desert valley into ground very puzzling at first sight.

There, in a wide basin enclosed to the north by the sombre and absolutely sterile slopes of the Kuruk-tagh and in the south by high ranges of dunes rising to more than 300 feet, we found a series of unmistakable dry lake-beds, and between and around them a perfect maze of clay terraces