

in advance the task which awaited us at each ruin and to enable me to select suitable camping-places nearest to water. Never did I feel more the strange fascination of this desolate border than while I thus traced the remains of wall and watch-stations over miles and miles of bare desert and past the salt-marshes. There were, indeed, the towers to serve as guides from a distance. But what with the marshes and salt-encrusted bogs encountered between the tongues of the desert plateau, and the strips of treacherous ground along the edges of the marshes, it seemed to me at times like an obstacle race.

The search for the remains of the old wall was, of course, still more exciting. Over considerable stretches, where the direction coinciding with the prevailing wind and a sheltered position on lower ground had reduced the force of erosion, the wall still rose to a conspicuous height, in a few places up to twelve feet or so (Fig. 71). Elsewhere it often needed a careful scanning of the ground to discover the low, continuous swelling which marked its line, together with the ends of neatly laid reed bundles cropping out from below the gravel.

Once we had hit the line on a particular stretch of higher ground it was easy to follow it right through to the nearest watch-station eastwards. The position for the towers had invariably been chosen with a sharp eye for the advantages of the ground commanding the nearest depressions. Where the clay terrace or knoll selected ensured by itself a wide outlook, the towers had not been built so high and access was therefore still practicable to the top. As I sat there amidst the debris of the small watch-room usually provided to shelter the men on guard, and let my eyes wander over