

it was easy to make out the series of semi-lunes into which the drift-sand forms under the action of wind. In the intervals between these ridges the ground was fairly hard and white with alkaline salts. The ponies' feet sank deep into the loose sand, and each ascent of 30 to 40 feet was thus a tiring performance. The lines of sandy ridges ran mostly from south-west to north-east, the steep inner sides of the semi-lunes facing all to the south-east. After a tiresome march of some five miles from where we first entered the moving sand region, we drew near to our goal. A long, open valley appeared between the dunes, and at its entrance from the north we could make out a group of stunted poplars. They grow near a well of brackish water, which is carefully protected by a wooden shed from the advance of the neighbouring sandhills. The water-surface was at the time some six feet below the level of the artificially cleared ground in front of the shed.

It was nearly dark when we reached there. But the water tasted so bad and the neighbouring rest-house looked so dilapidated, that I readily moved on to the main settlement of the desert shrine some half a mile off. There I found a collection of huts and Sarais built for the accommodation of the local custodians or 'Mujawirs' and their pilgrim visitors. One of the rest-houses had been cleared for my party, and there our ponies found grass and water. I myself was glad to discover at some distance a spot where the ground was firm enough for pitching my tent, and where I was safe from the odours that rose from the accumulated refuse-heaps of this strange settlement. It was a long wait till the baggage turned up, towards eight o'clock; but in the pure desert air the evening breeze from the east felt delightfully fresh, and when at last the late dinner appeared and I could retire to rest I had almost forgotten the fatigue and heat of my first day in the long-looked-for desert.

The morning showed me my surroundings in their true