

The sand-dunes seemed to grow in height as we slowly approached the previously mentioned ridge to the south-west. But at last the patches of hard loess became larger and larger as the level rose and the ascent became perceptible. The ridge which had looked so high from a distance through the haze proved only about 300 feet above the sandy plain. Its pebble-strewn slopes bore a curiously scarred and withered look, testifying to the force of long-continued erosion by wind and sand. No stone or distinct formation of conglomerate appeared on the slope, swept clean as if with a brush.

On the top of the ridge a number of high staffs serve as a directing mark for the pilgrims. So the place bears appropriately the name of Ulugh-Nishan ("the High Standard"). Arslan Padshah is believed to have addressed from there his last prayer to the holy Beg, his adviser, who lies buried at Hazrat-Begim ("My Beg of holiness"). The latter shrine was visible to the south-west, and as the slope is far steeper on that side and quite clear of drift-sand, we soon reached it. Hazrat-Begim has little to detain the traveller, for around the modest mud-built quadrangle enclosing the saint's tomb there are only a few wretched huts of Mujawirs and a sandy plain strewn with bones and refuse. The camels were, however, tired by the ten miles' march through the deep sand, and Kizil, the next inhabited place, was too far to be reached that day. So my tent was pitched on what I suppose to have been an old burial-ground near the shrine. The water from the well close by tasted extremely brackish, and neither filtering nor the lavish use of "Sparklets" could make it palatable.

On the morning of the 15th of September I resumed my march across the plain, which gradually turned into a scrub-covered Dasht of hard loess. At Saduk-Langar, some four miles off, I hailed with pleasure a little green oasis, created by a small watercourse. It is a Waqf or endowment for the benefit of pilgrims; so we could with a good conscience allow