

the wide marshy expanse at its foot, and the size of its glaciers, made the view truly imposing. Behind this great semicircle of snows, for which the Russian travellers Roborowsky and Kozloff heard the Mongol name of Shagolin-Namjil, lie the drainage of Lake Kokonor and the confines of north-eastern Tibet. But I knew well that my plans could not extend to those regions.

All day on August 13th we skirted the great basin in which the Su-lo Ho gathers its main sources, having mostly to keep close by the foot of low side spurs to avoid its spreading marshes. But scattered over this boggy expanse there showed, near and far, glittering ridges of drift sand, in the shape of big semi-lunes so familiar to me from the desert. It was strange to meet this combination of dunes and marshes on a scene set with ice-crowned mountains. But was it not the most fitting birthplace for the river which was to end its course amidst those dreary wastes of sand, gravel, and salt marsh which I had surveyed beyond the westernmost end of the Tun-huang *Limes*? At one point I managed to approach the nearest chain of dunes, and found there a succession of big semi-lunes or Barkhans, to use the technical designation, running roughly from south-east to north-west with intervals of 400 to 600 yards between them (Fig. 242). The one I examined closely measured fully 330 yards between the extreme ends of its receding horns, and showed forty feet as its maximum height in the centre, which with its convex side was pointed to the north-west. The ground within the concavity of these Barkhans was generally quite clear of sand and in places occupied by small spring-fed marshes.

From the point where we halted for the night of August 13th, close on 13,500 feet above the sea, we had a majestic view of the Shagolin-Namjil group (see Fig. 155). But clouds were now gathering above it, and a distinct change in the weather on the following day prevented the determination of the highest peaks rising above the large glaciers. The next march took us over easy detritus slopes, boggy in many places, to the top of a long-stretched flat ridge forming the lowest point of the