

waste so discouraging, that after a couple of miles we decided to resume our southward course as the safest. Over high ridges of sand we regained the bed followed during the morning. But shortly afterwards all traces of it disappeared under heavy dunes.

The Shahyar men, now that the hopeful excitement of the morning had worn out, trudged on more heavily than ever. I, too, felt the depressing effect of the death-bound waste through which we now steered by the compass. High sand-cones, with dead tamarisk clumps on the top, closed in around us. Nowhere a living bush or tree. Vainly I climbed up the sand cones and ridges to catch a glimpse of the river bed which we had been following. Yet suddenly, when the sun was setting and I had almost abandoned all hope of securing a few living Toghraks for our poor camels to feed upon, the screen of dead tamarisk cones opened, and we emerged once more on a short reach of open river bed. Was it the same we had followed in the morning or another channel of this confusing desert delta? Little enough it mattered as things now stood. A look at the few patches of hard clayey soil exposed in the bed showed that there was no hope of reaching water here. Yet the men, driven by thirst, settled down in sullen despair to digging a well. After eight feet or so no trace of moisture appeared, and the work was stopped.