strangely fused its colours into death-like paleness. It looked as if we had now neared the extreme edge of this awful sand delta which had held us fast so long. Was it to any purpose to reconnoitre the absolute desert eastwards?

But the high ridge of sand which had guided us so far now rose quite close on our right, and was too good a survey station to be missed. Fully 300 feet high it seemed, and the expanse of bare clayey ground at its foot, overrun only by low dunes, made it look still more imposing. The crests of the big dunes forming its base rose up steeply, with curves of beautiful sharpness. We clambered up in haste to the first shoulder; but the view obtained here at about 150 feet above the plain was so unpromising that Lal Singh, who needed time to prepare for his latitude observation at mid-day, descended in dismay. I ordered him to move the caravan back for camping to where we had left the last living Toghraks, and then alone with 'Dash' hurried up to the summit of the steep slope for the sake of assuring my conscience.

From the top the panorama was grand, but also desperate at first sight. I was searching the ground with my prismatic glasses for indications of living jungle, when suddenly to the south-south-east some narrow bands of white caught my eye. Looking more closely through the binocular I could scarcely believe my eyes when they showed me in four distinct places glittering streaks of what could only be ice—or else salt efflorescence. The distance was fully four miles.

What joy rose in my mind at the chance of finding water thus suddenly revealed! It might be that these were the four small salt lakes which Hedin had heard of from shepherds as situated at the very end of the eastern branch of the river. But however undrinkable their water, they would, if frozen, give us fresh ice. And even if they had since dried up completely, they would at least enable us to ascertain our position and guide us in the right direction. So in haste I shouted the order to Ibrahim Beg below to let the caravan move on. When after taking careful bearings of those saving streaks of white I ran down the