

perpendicular; sometimes indeed they overhang the river. This is due to their being still moist, partly a consequence of the high-water of summer, partly the result of the capillary attraction of the sand. The left bank in many places recedes a little from the river, though never more than a hundred meters or so, and it is then screened by reed-beds. In all this desolate region there was not a vestige of life to be seen, neither man nor animal, not even so much as a raven. It is only very exceptionally that the Lop fishermen visit this part of the river; its water is too muddy to make fishing profitable. The fish prefer the lagoons and the stationary parts, where the water has cleared.



Fig. 110. BED OF THE NEW TARIM THROUGH THE SANDY DESERT. DUNES ON THE RIGHT BANK. VIEW LOOKING UPSTREAM.

On the other side of the strip of sand on the left bank the Kara-akin flows parallel to the Tarim. We noted several small lakes on both sides of the river, and there were no doubt others hidden amongst the reeds — all relicts of former lakes of larger size. At first the river is wonderfully narrow, contracting to little more than 20 m. in width; indeed in two or three places, where it is encroached upon by the reeds from both sides, the open fairway is little more than 10 m. across. At the very beginning of the day's journey a large arm broke away on the right, and was shortly followed by a second; these then form a long chain of lakes, with connecting links, which ran parallel with the river all day. Thus