

äger-köl, without any visible connecting channel; and on the right an unnamed lake, now cut off from the river, and Bos-ökte. The two last lakes are also without any visible connection with the Tarim; possibly they draw upon some subterranean supply. Here the river makes a sharp bend, the neck of land at the base of the bend being so narrow that at the next high flood it must infallibly be cut through. The place where we encamped was called Ait-öttögön. During the last two or three days of the journey we had observed remarkably few people on the river-banks; in fact, we had seen no natives since leaving Laj-su, although we had on a few occasions observed their huts and *saldams*, that is to say, cubical arrangements of poles on which the antelope hunters place their »bag» for protection, though the only game that we noticed, and that at intervals, were pheasants, hawks and ravens.

December 1st. The drop was ± 0 ; the transparency, 7.0 cm. at 7 a. m. and 6.8 cm. at 1 p. m.; the height of the banks 1.45 m.; the high-water line 1.20 m. The river travels by wide windings towards the north-east. The high sand still keeps us company as before, though sometimes, when the river bends away from it, it becomes hidden behind the forest, which consists here of poplars of a venerable age. At the second of the day's loops the river grazed a high dune, the top of which afforded a wide and commanding view of the adjacent country. The loop was full of sedimentary deposits, and the frozen stagnant water between them, being bright and blue, contrasted sharply with the grey, muddy water of the moving stream. The ice was now a decimeter thick. To the south-east there exists nothing but high sand, absolutely destitute of vegetation — an »ocean» of dunes as far as we were able to see. To the north-west there is low sand as heretofore. The zone of vegetation which accompanies the river is at the most two to three kilometers broad, seldom more, unless we add the scattered tamarisks which manage to subsist amongst the sand; in fact, it appeared to be in a transitional state, verging on extinction. Along the base of the high dunes next the river there is generally a zone of poplars. Dunes which actually impinge upon the river are called by the natives *jar-dung*, or »bank-hill». To-day, again, the drift-ice was not especially plentiful, though it managed in a fashion to persist until the evening. Upon reaching Jigde-söre we were half-way between Laj-su and Karaul, Jigde-söre being on the boundary between the two districts. Here the northern sand touches the left bank of the river, though, as usual, it does so only at the bends. On the right bank is the little lake of Jigde-sörening-köli. Neither our camp nor a saline lake in its vicinity bore any name. The country still continued to be uninhabited, without the least signs of human presence. Names are fewer, too, upon the banks. Those that do exist are the names of *mänsil*, or »stations», marking the places where it pays to fish.

December 2nd. Rise = 0.3 cm. in 14 hours; transparency, 8.0 cm. at 7 a. m. and 9.5 cm. at 1 p. m. Thus during the past few days the river had cleared a little. This was probably due to the banks having frozen down to the water-line, so that the landslips and landslides had now ceased, whilst at the same time the thick fringe of ice checked the erosive action of the surface current. That the river did not clear at a more rapid rate was no doubt due to the great velocity of the stream; in part