

CHAPTER X.

THE HYDROGRAPHIC RELATIONS OF THE UGEN-DARJA AND THE TARIM.

The Ugen-darja was now rapidly approaching. Due north of our camp at Ilek there was a place on its bank called Daschi, inhabited by 6 Loplik families; but between that place and Karaul there were reported to be only two shepherds and their families still dwelling beside the Ugen-darja. The immediate vicinity of the main river is, as we have seen, wholly uninhabited all the way from Laj-su to Karaul, except for an occasional shepherd, who may flit over with his flock for a time from the Ugen; for the pasture beside the Ugen-darja is considered to be better than that beside the Tarim in this part of its course. The former stream was said to be frozen over, though the ice was still thin, and not strong enough to bear a man. Thus the Ugen-darja freezes later than the Tarim, a fact which is due to several circumstances: it is better protected by its thicker forests, it is narrow and deep, and its water is always clear and still. The same circumstances also cause its ice to break up in the spring later than that of the Tarim.

A big bend which the latter river makes at Abbas-kötörmesu, below the forest tract of Jarghutschak-kumdi, approaches very near to a southern loop of the Ugen-darja, the distance between the two being, I am certain, not more than one or two hundred meters. We have an evidence of the fact in the first of these names, for *kötörmesu** means »portage», or the place between two rivers where a canoe can be dragged across from the one to the other, *i. e.*, the narrow neck of land at the base of the loop. Just below this is the double lake of Daschi-köl, which, besides being connected with the Tarim by a channel now dry, derives part of its water also from the Ugen-darja; in fact, it is said to lie nearer to this latter river than to the Tarim. Here the left bank is called Kala-askan, or the »Hung-up Skull», a name that we find under one form or another in various parts of East Turkestan. The next south-going loop makes a serious attack upon the base of the high sand. At the time we saw it, the inner end of the loop, next the dunes, was filled with deposits of sand, and the channels of water which ran in amongst them were frozen. At these points, where the river touches the outermost margin of the sandy desert, changes, even though not of

* From *kötörmak* = to fetch, to drag.