

was separated from No. 30 by a sandy isthmus only 1,200 m. across. All the same this narrow dividing-line formed the boundary between the barren parts of the desert and the beginnings of vegetation. And for several successive days we travelled through similar bajirs, a whole series of them, and then once more we plunged into the blank desert. Although the vegetation was niggardly, nevertheless at the first glance I concluded we had struck the region which in former times was reached by the extreme tentacles of the Kara-muran; for in the locality where the Kerija-darja becomes finally lost in the sand I had discovered a not very poor vegetation. At the present day the Kara-muran is a small stream, and it will soon die out altogether; but it is quite certain, that in former times it was bigger, in fact, it may once have flowed all the way to the Tarim, in the same way as the Chotan-darja does now. If that was the case, it must have described a decided curve towards the north-east, and this opinion derives strong confirmation from a comparison with its neighbours, the Chotan-darja, the Kerija-darja, and the Tschertschen-darja. If we assume that the Kara-muran bisected the space between the Kerija-darja and the Tschertschen-darja, it would have flowed approximately through that part of the desert in which we then were. I inferred therefore, that if we continued to follow the same direction as heretofore, the vegetation would soon cease. And this indeed proved to be the case.

But the presence of this vegetation admits of explanation even without the Kara-muran. It is evidently so long since the river retired, that there has been time for one or more »sand-waves» to cover, and so stifle, the last remnants of vegetation that still survived alongside its bed. Hence further reflection has led me to the opinion, that the kamisch we saw has nothing whatever to do with the river in question. All the conditions requisite for its origination and perpetuation are indeed present without it. The soil, a mixture of fine dust and sand, is precisely such as kamisch thrives best in, and then the ground-water is not very far down. The only question that remains is, how the reeds could find their way thither across the mountains of sand. And yet the explanation is quite simple, after the flocks of reed-down which we encountered in an earlier bajir. The agency of its dissemination is the wind, either the powerful east-north-east or the south-south-west wind, blowing from the prolific and extensive reed-beds beside the Tschertschen-darja. The absence of vegetation in the bajirs previous to and including No. 29 may be due to the amount of saline impregnation in them being too great for any vegetation to thrive; otherwise some of the drifting reed-down must surely have struck root, at all events in bajir No. 29, if in no others. It will be remembered that the water in the well we dug was nothing more nor less than a concentrated salt solution. Farther on we shall find that the wells yielded water that was virtually fresh. And in fact the experience of my former journeys goes to show that the farther you advance from a river the greater becomes the likelihood of finding fresh water.

In the bajirs in which we found kamisch, the arrangement of the sand was so far different that the small dunes were distributed pretty evenly over their entire area, and there were no desiccation belts discernible. Thus, however thin and scanty the vegetation, it seems to possess the power of arresting the sand, and of holding it together in the usual small accumulations on its sheltered side, where they grow bigger as time goes on. The dust which falls there must also be relatively more