

the Ettek-tarim is choked with bare dunes up to 5 m. in height, situated amongst decaying poplars. The process of sanding up has advanced considerably farther here than it has in the south, and there are dunes on both sides of the old watercourse which we repeatedly crossed as we advanced. Very often we lost sight of this last, either because it is obliterated or else filled with sand, though it is seldom that the sand fills it entirely. Here too, that is in the west-south-west continuation of the Lop-nor, the western sand, that is to say the windward side of the next dune-wave, is for a distance lower than heretofore, though it soon rises again and attains considerable dimensions. Of the forest about one-half is now living, the other half being dead. The roots of the trees, brittle, black, withered, or rotting, twist and twine like snakes over the surface of the ground, and when trodden upon snap with a loud



Fig. 367. A TAMARISK IN WINTER.

report. The ground is as dry as snuff; not a particle of moisture succeeds in reaching up to its surface, not even in the deeper parts of the river-bed. The sand-wave on the east is 10 to 12 m. high, but soon rises swiftly into a continuous crest or wall which is almost as imposing as Tagh-kum. In general the farther north one advances the more desolate and sanded up grows the country, and often a space of barely 300 m. separates the sand-masses on both sides, as though they were threatening to overwhelm the belt of vegetation which lies between them. For a short distance there is more dead forest than there is living. But we were now nearly at the end of this growing desolation. In the district of Tana-baghlaghan the river-bed is unusually deep, and distinctly outlined, and thus far, as is plain to see from the still visible water-line, the canal-water from Basch-arghan, already spoken of, had penetrated the preceding year. North of this point the vegetation again becomes fresher and more