

vigorous. Every now and again there is a dried up marsh by the side of the river. Then in a deep spot in the river-bed we came upon a pool 20 m. long, with a snow-covered sheet of ice upon it; this water too was derived from the canal of the preceding year. After that the forest thins away, while luxuriant kamisch beds make their appearance, embracing amongst them a large pool. In the district of Tschapghan-köl (the Lake caused by a Dug Canal), just south of the Tarim, there are old poplars growing amongst the kamisch, thickets, and brushwood. Here at Basch-arghan the Tarim looks so small and insignificant that it is difficult to imagine it is actually the same majestic stream which we had floated down for three full months. It is like a narrow ribbon of ice clasped by the reeds and the forest, and is not visible until you stand on its bank. Since the ice formed in the beginning of winter, the water had dropped 0.96 m., so that the ice was sagging heavily in the middle. The breadth was here only 23.65 m., but at the point where we struck it, it had measured 43 m. across in the autumn. The ice was 0.52 m. thick, and the water which flowed underneath it was practically quite limpid.

Leaving the river once more on our left, we passed through the forest, which is in part old and seems to be more extensive than the forest in the Ettek-tarim, the growth of the latter having been arrested. It is however frequently interrupted by dunes, huge convex tamarisk-mounds, beds of kamisch, sedge steppe, thickets, and underwoods. Here are the two small lakes of Ghadaj-tschapghan and Al-katik-köl. At Ghun-köl, which was frozen, there was a recently inhabited satma. The lake is said to have been formerly 2 to 3 fathoms deep, but is being gradually filled up with mud and drift-sand. We encamped at Arghan or Ajagh-arghan, on the point of the confluence over against the station-house. According to the unanimous statements of the inhabitants of the adjacent village of Tosghak-tschantschti, the river contained then a smaller quantity of water than they ever remembered it to have done; a diminution to some extent dependent upon and mutually connected with the volume of water in the eastern waterway, along which are situated the lakes of Avullu-köl, Kara-köl, etc. The spring-flood was expected to arrive here in the middle of March, and would last for two months; and the autumn flood usually begins in the end of August. The prevailing wind comes from the east-north-east, blows strongest in March and April, and brings with it great quantities of fine sand and dust.

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