

more easterly, for this sheet of water, which begins at Schirge-tschapghan, terminates in the Kara-koschun, a day's journey below Kum-tschapghan, according to the natives, at a point due north of the old fishing-village of Kara-koschun (Prschevalskij's Karakurtschin).

In the evening the wind blew hard from the south-west, though it soon veered round to the west, and afterwards in an instant shot round to the north-east, where it stuck. In the afternoon it began to drizzle, and early next morning it rained for a couple of hours so smartly that we, lying out in the open as we were, got rather wet. All next day the weather continued cool and raw, a thing scarcely to be expected at that season of the year. Before the morning was over we were in the middle of a regular kara-buran, smothered under clouds of dust and drift-sand. But so long as we kept in the shelter of the reeds it did us no harm; but when we attempted to manœuvre our heavily laden canoes out in the opener parts of the lakes, our position became anything but enviable.

Owing to the tolerably large open spaces, we at first made excellent progress, although the lake-shores were everywhere hidden from us by impenetrable thickets of reeds and sedge, and it was only by the glimpses we got every now and again of the tamarisk-mounds and dead poplars that we knew where the shore was at all. Our course turned towards every point of the compass, though on the whole we travelled west. At its maximum this lake was one meter deep, generally only  $\frac{3}{4}$  m., and almost everywhere its bottom consisted of bare sand. To the north we saw two or three open sheets of water surrounded by tamarisks. In the narrow, shallow parts of the lake the current was distinctly perceptible. But this first lake soon contracted to an arm (*tarim*) or sound of 4 m. in breadth, with a velocity of 0.42 m. in the second, and successive depths of 1.47, 2.80, 2.60, 2.10, and 2.40 m. The sound was bordered by firm banks of clay, with numerous mounds of living or dead tamarisks, and on the southern side dead poplar forest. But not all the water of the Schirge-tschapghan branch came along this route; some of it is said to find its way by other channels to north and south of it, and this information appeared to be confirmed by the narrow winding ribbons of water and the vast beds of kamisch.

After that we emerged upon broad expanses, but soon plunged again into a perfect labyrinth, where even our guides did not know the way. In fact it was an absolute maze of small basins, open sheets of water, tamarisk-mounds sticking up here and there, dense impenetrable reeds, towering above us like house-walls — thickets, promontories, bays, and sedimentary islands — all flung down pell-mell together with no directing current by which to find one's way through the confusion. We spent three hours trying, almost at haphazard, to get out of that disagreeable *jangal* («thicket-forest»); nor was it much use to climb to the top of the highest tamarisk-mounds with the idea of looking around us, for the water was everywhere hidden by the tall, thick reeds, and at some distance away there was nothing at all to be seen owing to the dense dust-haze in which the entire landscape was enveloped. Three times we dragged our canoes across little tongues of land, and several times set fire to the reeds, that we might get some glimpse of where we were more immediately going to; but after the rain the reeds would not burn, and we only got smothered with soot. In one place we found the reeds had been burned by the