

From the high dunes of Kum-tscheke, we perceived on the right hand of the river an extensive complex of marshes, small lakes, and lagoons, with creeks or bays, capes, all plentifully supplied with kamisch, and the whole known as Dschajir-köl.

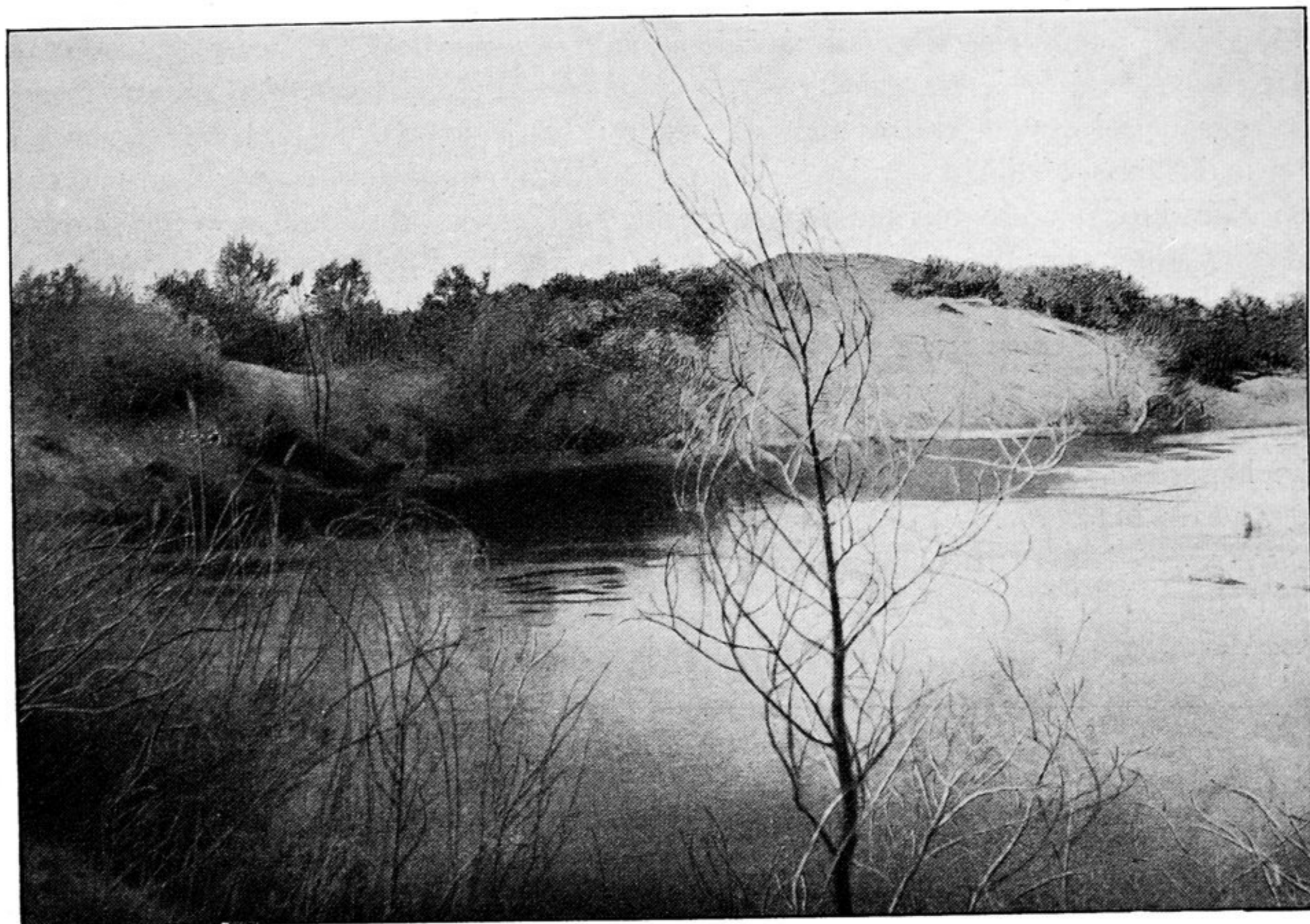


Fig. 412. THE LEFT, HIGH BANK OF THE ILEK; VIEW TAKEN FROM THE SANDY SIDE IN THE VERY BEND OF KUM-TSCHEKE, LOOKING DOWN STREAM.

Resuming our journey on the 24th April, we paddled north against the current; and although the river wound a good deal, its windings were long and easy. To the east of the Ilek lay the elongated lake of Karaune-tokkan-köl; the exit of its canal connecting with the river, just above Dschajir-köl, was almost hidden in the reeds. But higher up this long lake is fed by two other canals from the river. All the way the toghrak forest is abundant, the trees standing close together; everywhere the two rather narrow strips of forest keep close to the banks on each side. These poplars, which have reached quite an advanced age, prove that water used formerly to visit this region too, and that during the intervening arid period their roots were able to reach down to the ground-water. As is generally the case, the toghraks grow most luxuriantly at the sharp bends, where there is a *bulung* («bay»), with deep water swirling gently against the river-banks and moistening them. At one such bend, Toghkak-tscheke, or the Poplar Bend, the old trees stand close together in dense clumps. Some of the bends have worked their way in amongst the outliers of the eastern sand, and in such places the dunes go down steeply into the water. Between the Tarim and the Ilek there is said to be, at this latitude, a belt of sand, which however was not visible to us owing to the north-east (N. 55° E.) storm then