

thin, and if they lay in suitable positions, it would be able to lift them and transport them along the ground. Still it would be no very great distance they would travel in this way; for they occur precisely in the region where the Kuruk-darja flowed, and vast quantities of them still lie on the very spots where they originally settled.

Then for a space we had tamarisk-mounds, with living bushes on them; the ground near by being in two or three places moist. Here you could certainly soon dig down to water, though beyond doubt it would be saliferous. For a short distance the Kuruk-darja was here outlined with extraordinary distinctness. Its high, steep, sharp-cut erosion-terraces are crowned with tamarisks, tamarisk-mounds and kötäk, both standing and fallen. The dead forest clings like a skeleton to the lifeless banks, which nevertheless show so distinctly and so palpably that water once flowed between them. In the next bend the banks were 4 to 5 m. high, counting from the bottom of the river; the bed was in some places slightly moist, in other places thinly strewn with gravel. The features of the landscape were peculiar. On the whole the surface appeared to be level. The winding, cañon-like gully or ravine was no longer visible, and yet I could hear the tinkle of the camels' bells quite close at hand, as I rode amongst the kötäk on the bank. It was not until I stood on its very verge that I became aware of the winding trench which has cut its way through the clay desert. The colouring was a universal yellowish grey — the clay soil, the kötäk, and even the sky itself — a lifeless and monotonous region! Often enough it was difficult to make out which way the river went; it was as full of windings and sharp bends as the lower Tarim, and appeared likewise to split into a number of arms. Sometimes we climbed up out of one of these arms and travelled for a while on the top of the terrace, until after the lapse of a few minutes, we would again find ourselves on the edge of a fresh gully, resembling the one we had just climbed up out of, though lying at right angles to it. Then it sometimes took us a good hour's search, and entailed a long detour, before we succeeded in getting across the new obstacle, or descending its steep side.