

In this region too there is an abundance of dead kamisch; and ancient steppe covers extensive areas. The former was only one decimeter high, and was so interpenetrated with sand, and so dry and brittle, that it crumbled at a touch like rotten wood, and refused to bend at all. These fields of kamisch grew on the banks of the former river, and beside its marginal lakes, just as we find them growing to-day beside the Tarim and its marginal lakes.



Fig. 54. IN THE KURUK-DARJA.

On the other side of the belt of kamisch the drift-sand gradually increased in quantity, forming crescentic, regularly shaped dunes, 3 m. in height, but standing isolated, with their steep faces turned consistently towards the west-south-west. As we advanced, the dunes increased in height, until we reached a point only a little way short of the continuous dunes of drift-sand, and as we had thus got to the outside of the region watered by the former Kuruk-darja, we turned and went back to the dry bed of this river. Camp No. X was formed not far from the edge of the sandy desert. Although there was *kötäk* amongst its dunes, there was no living vegetation, nor were there any tamarisk-mounds.

At the points where we crossed over the old river-bed during the course of the day's march it presented, apart from a few variations in detail, the following vertical section: a distinctly marked water-channel, with *kötäk* on its banks, and at intervals detached clay-terraces and table-topped heights in the bed. Its dimensions were: breadth 75 m. and depth 5 to 6 m., and although these measurements varied constantly, it was within narrow limits.

From Camp No. X we directed our steps, on the 20th March, towards the north-north-east, across a desert furrowed by the wind. Its more exposed parts, the