

always made these soundings in the parts which appeared to be the deepest, or which my canoe-men told me were the deepest. Accordingly, it may be taken, that the other parts of these lakes were shallower than the several respective soundings which I quote. On the north shore of the Ghol-köl there were innumerable mounds.



Fig. 88. TSCHAPGHAN IN THE KARA-KOSCHUN.

Dead fish were seen floating on the water or lying upside down on the bottom of the lakes, their bodies shining white through the pure, limpid water; and the farther east we advanced the more numerous they became, often as many as a score or more together in one small area. Judging from the vast numbers we saw, I should say there were hundreds of thousands scattered over the whole of the Kara-koschun. The natives believed, it was the quantity of snow, together with the thick ice, which had killed them. In a lake so shallow as this the explanation is not unreasonable, for over large areas the marsh must have been frozen to the bottom, and certainly those portions would be cut off and isolated which lay behind the shallow thresholds. Higher up in the Kara-koschun, where the current was still lively, the mortality is said not to have been

so great. The fish however were in worse condition than the natives ever before remembered them to have been. Very often there was a rank, unpleasant smell of putrid fish on the lake. Large flocks of crows were circling over the northern shore, no doubt attracted by the dead fish. It was as though a large part of the fish in the Kara-koschun had been smitten with some epidemic; anyway, their remains would help to fill up the lake. Generation after generation of them are spawned and die, and their skeletons and other remains settle down into the mud at the bottom. We also saw a large number of dead wild-duck. They were said to be birds which usually spend the winter at Kara-koschun, keeping to the parts in which the currents prevent the ice from forming, and where there is consequently open water all the year round. But that year even these places had been frozen over, and the wild-duck, being unable to get at their food in the mud at the bottom of the marsh, had perished of hunger and the intense cold.

In places where the reeds were thick we noticed several narrow passages, or tunnels, leading through them. At first we took these to be ordinary tschapghans; but we were soon informed differently. They were made by the wild-boar forcing their way through the reeds on the ice, and thus breaking them down to the level of the water. As for the tiger, he had not been seen on the shores of the Kara-koschun during the last two years. I was told a wonderful story about the tiger, a story which sounds quite fabulous, and yet the natives asserted that it is a fact. They said that when the she-tiger throws young, she always avoids localities in which there are ants, for the ants attack the young tigers in thousands, and kill them, and the natives assigned this as the cause of the tiger's not having shown