

greatly in quantity, possibly because the water is not perfectly fresh, at all events not so fresh and unvitiated as farther west. This circumstance again is interesting; but the question requires for its elucidation an ampler fund of observations than I have at my command. All the same the natives are unquestionably right, when they declare, it is during the last ten years that the fish have decreased in number; nor is there anything strange in it if they have, for the lake itself is dwindling. I am however unable to explain where the fish go to. Perhaps they have an instinctive premonition that the lake will one day disappear, and consequently retire up-stream and enter the marginal lakes which promise to be more permanent. Difficult though it is to disentangle the intricate delta of the Tarim, it is even more difficult to account for the migrations and wanderings of the fish. It cannot be denied, that in these waters, which change their position and their course so frequently and so suddenly, the conditions under which the fish live are more than ordinarily precarious, and there can be no doubt that many of the changes that take place in the riverbeds cause hosts of fish to perish.

Leaving the Tojaghun, we entered a canal running towards the north-east and having a maximum depth of 4.51 m. This led us into the lake of Jäkänlik-köl, this too a very common name in those regions;\* in which firm ground exists only on the right, that is towards the south — possibly a long narrow tongue of land, or an elongated island, parting two equally long chains of lakes or strips of water belonging to the Kara-koschun.

On the right the Jäkänlik-köl is entered by a canal, which I was told was the one upon which I rowed in 1896, although I was of course unable to recognise it again, for all these canals are precisely alike. It was however interesting to learn, that almost the whole of the route I then traversed from Kum-tschapghan to Jokanak-köl was now completely overgrown, so that it was no longer possible to force a passage through it with a canoe. True, the people had endeavoured to keep the canals open as long as ever they possibly could by every spring diligently pulling up the freshly sprouting kamisch and jäkän by the roots, but in the long run the vegetation had proved too much for them; and as the canals had also shallowed, and the fish deserted them more and more, the fishermen too had eventually abandoned them to their fate. After the very first year that they abstained from pulling up the reeds, the canals became overgrown to such an extent that it was no longer possible to find them again in that impenetrable *jangal* (jungle). Thus the route I followed in 1896 lay to the right of the route I had thus far pursued, i. e. to Jäkänlik-köl, namely the new, two-year-old waterway farther to the north.

In the Kakmak-tschatschkan-köl there was firm ground towards the north, but the Usun-köl is bordered by firm ground on both sides. The latter gave depths of 2.05, 3.55 and 2.20 m.; these soundings were obtained in the same part of the lake as that in which I got my maximum sounding in 1896, namely 4.25 m. As the soundings in 1896 and those in 1900 were not taken at the same spot, it will serve no purpose to compare them together; indeed in waters that are so changeable as these are, it is scarcely possible to obtain different soundings in the same precise spot. It

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\* In 1896 I was told that this name was Jokanak-köl.