

In the course of our farther march to the north we only once touched any offshoot of the western sheets of water. The aspect of the desert now changed. The flat, but rough, schor grew smaller and smaller, while the jardangs, which predominate in the northern half of the desert, became more and more numerous. Low dunes showed here and there, always accompanying dead or living tamarisks. Gullies or furrows were common. Sometimes it was not easy to say whether they were formed by water or by wind, though some of them have plainly once been traversed by water, just as some of the depressions were evidently once small lakes, and very soon they were going to be filled again. In places the bottom was already moist, and some of them contained small pools of water that came bubbling up from below. The water in the lake-basin beside which we encamped was distinctly salt (sp. gr. 1.0066); nor is that surprising, seeing how saliferous is the ground over which this thin sheet of water was spreading. As we had already ascertained that the water of the Kara-koschun grows increasingly saltier from south-west to north-east, we likewise ascertained that here in these newly formed lakes the salinity increases from south to north.

At Camp No. CLXXI, and at several other places during the next day's march, the 27th March, we noticed droppings of the wild-camel, proving that this animal does roam as far as the vicinity of the Kara-koschun; there is at all events no risk of its being disturbed by hunters either on the east or on the north of the lake. Indeed the distance between its true habitat along the southern foot of the Kuruk-tagh and these newly formed lakes is not, as the map shows, especially great, and for the wild-camel at any rate it is a mere trifle.

Next day we marched north-east and north-north-east, crossing over innumerable jardangs, some of which, immediately on our right, were crowned with dead toghrak forest and tamarisks still standing upright. On the other hand at Camp No. CLXXI there were numerous green tamarisks on the shore, the roots of which had evidently reached down to the ground-water even before the arrival of the fresh offshoots of the lake, for not only were the bushes pretty well advanced in point of age, but there were no withered ones amongst them.

At length we came to the outermost extremities of these lakes, which point like fingers to the north-east, and in every case follow the already existing gullies between the jardangs, sometimes broken up however into long, narrow pools. From that point there was no water visible to the north, only the clay desert with its countless ridges. We were also able to journey westwards without hindrance. For a distance the tamarisk steppe was unusually thick; and although the bushes were still standing on their own roots, most of them on small elevations, they were without exception withered and dry. Next followed a belt of toghrak forest, pretty thick and still standing upright, but likewise withered. To determine, even approximately, at what epoch the change took place in the distribution of the water is impossible. This belt of vegetation grew either on the north shore of the Kara-koschun when it extended farther north than it does now, or else on the southern shore of the old lake of Lop-nor. It is at any rate situated about midway between the two depressions in question; and had I known that the Kara-koschun had that year begun to migrate towards the north, I might have shortened my desert survey by almost one-