

exist anywhere on the earth a more monotonous and more desolate region than this. The route led from Jurt-tschapghan to Dunglik. But as the lakes of Abdal, which are known as Usun-köl, stretch some distance west of Jurt-tschapghan, it is necessary also in the month of April to make a wide detour in order to get round them; but on the occasion I am speaking of, the 30th June, we were able to take a short cut by traversing a bridge thrown across at a narrow neck between two of the lakes. There is an even shorter cut still, lying yet farther to the east; but it can only be used for about two months in the summer counting from the beginning of July, when the lakes dry up completely, though it can also be followed in the winter when there is ice. For my own part I preferred to travel by water, and did it at night, proceeding from Jurt-tschapghan to Tusun-tschapghan, and then crossing over the Ifane Kullu-köl, entered the southern waterway by which I journeyed in April. Everywhere the lakes had diminished in area and were smaller in circuit; in the Sate-köl the depth was only $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 dm., and the water was perceptibly salt. For a good distance my canoe was dragged like a sleigh through the ooze, until we at length reached Jol-arelisch, where the road divides, one branch going east to Tung-chuan, the other east-south-east to Dunglik, Tschimen and Tsajdam. After that for the rest of the way to Dunglik the ground is, so far as one can judge by the eye, perfectly level, and without a trace of vegetation. Altogether we saw only three fragments of tamarisk-roots, all no doubt old drift-wood; at no place did we discover rooted tamarisks or even signs of their mounds, still less any trace of the »old forest» mentioned by Littledale. Our only supply of fuel was the dry reeds which two or three of the Loplirks brought in from the adjacent marsh. We also had to fetch our drinking-water from a long way out in the Kara-koschun.

Although the track is everywhere distinct, sign-posts are nevertheless erected at intervals. We crossed a few torrents, not exceeding $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. in depth, some of them excavated by the rain-water, in which case they were dry, while others issued from springs situated within the zone of vegetation. Two of the latter class, Tscholaki-mijani and Atschik-bulak, contained even then slight traces of intensely salt water. This hard, lumpy, but on the whole flat, schor ascended a little towards the south, as was evident when we turned and looked in the opposite direction: the marsh of Kara-koschun had the appearance of a faint dark line, and its kamisch-fields appeared to hover, as it were, in the air above the horizon.

At Dunglik—though this name is applied generally to the vegetation zone as a whole because of the tamarisk-mounds (*dung*)—there is a well 3.29 m. deep, with water that is drinkable at a pinch. Its temperature was $14^{\circ}.3$ C., the temperature of the air being 40° C. Here a little station-house was erected in 1896. The vegetation consisted of the usual varieties, except that toghraks were absent. The zone is much narrower here than farther west at Tscharklik. It would however be a mistake to jump to the conclusion, that these mounds, and the bushes which crown them, grew originally on the shore of a former lake, the outline of which is indicated by the zone of vegetation as a whole, because the latter is continued, as I have said, a long way west of Tschertschen, where there is not the slightest indication of the former existence of lakes.
