

high-water period. The stream is undecided, and shows a tendency to form an inland delta. During the autumn these branches are for the most part dry and the river then resumes its regular appearance, all the water flowing in one and the same bed. Owing to the lateral spread of the water and the low-lying character of the country, there are seven marginal lakes, all bearing names, though possibly there are several others that possess no names. Taken all together they resemble a large marsh or overflow area. On the right bank is the dune of Koral-dung, 10 m. high and bearing vegetation. Around the Ak-kunning-jughan-köl there is a wide expanse of sand. This lake is connected by canals with those alluded to above.

19th November. The river continues to be narrow, and without alluvial deposits, though with numerous marginal lakes, and in fact it may be said generally, that these characteristics become more pronounced in proportion as the country grows flatter towards Lop. The belt of forest very narrow and often interrupted; on both banks a preponderance of sandy ground. The various stretches of dunes bear the names of Peghan-kum, Bel-kum, etc. In two or three places wheat is grown.

20th November. Marginal lakes, side-branches, belts of sand, steppe predominating, as along the last stretch.

21st November. The river-bed recently formed, and consequently straight, narrow, and entirely devoid of alluvium; poplars sporadic; reeds on the actual margins of the river-bed. The transition to the desert, to which we were here close, is very abrupt. The big forest adheres to the old river-bed that we left on the north. The new bed follows in part the marginal lakes of the old bed, and consequently all these have now become filled. On the south a couple of side-branches. The river flows here towards the south-east. The desert on the south is called Tschong-ak-kum. In this region the river is known as the Jumalak-darja. In places there are rapids.

22nd November. Here the river, which follows a moderately winding channel with slight bends, and with side branches and marginal lakes on both banks, cuts its way through a belt of perfectly barren sand, with dunes 10 to 15 m. high, and almost entirely sterile, except for an occasional young poplar and a thin sprinkling of tamarisks and scrub. Close to the edges of the river narrow belts of kamisch with a good many gaps. The branches mentioned in this and the immediately preceding sections as being situated close to the south side of the river, and of which the largest is known as the Kara-akin, may possibly be regarded as evidence of a tendency on its part to flit over into the new bed. On the whole, the river appears to manifest a predilection for shifting its bed towards the right, i. e. the south, though probably there is in this direction a limit which it cannot transcend, and after that the changes of bed will by preference take place towards the north. Thus the river-bed oscillates periodically between a northern limit and a southern limit, precisely in the same way as the terminal lake does.

23rd November. The river moderately winding, the bed still narrow and with very little alluvium. The belts of sand recede and the forest increases in area; marginal lakes and side-branches few in number. On the left bank the little detached patch of sand known as Jar-jeghan-ak-kum.