

a deposit of blue clay, and there we struck water that was drinkable. It was probably thaw-water from the mountains, which finds its way into the lake by subterranean channels. Along the shore there was a narrow strip of grass.

The only two places in which we observed hard rock were, first, just above Camp X, where green schist and quartzite cropped out at 60° to the S. 33° E., and, secondly, at the last of the buttes, where a dark violet mica-schist dipped at 29° towards the S. 13° E. The hard rocky skeleton of the mountains is becoming more and more hidden under the deposits of soft material. On the northern side of this peripheral region the disintegration products have been deposited over the gigantic area of the Tarim basin. We were now entering upon that part of Tibet which is constituted of self-contained drainage-basins, in which all the disintegration products are retained, partly filling up and rendering shallower the basins themselves and partly burying and hiding the backbones of the mountains, so that they only crop out at intervals. The basin of Kum-köl is however too big for this disintegration material to have yet been able to bury the small detached buttes which still rise above it like islands. Similarly the Kalta-alaghan rises to such a lofty height, that the greater part of the range consists of bare rock. On the south too it is bordered by an immense range, the Arka-tagh, which again rises to much too great an altitude for it to be in any sense accessible to the masking of the disintegrated materials. But beyond it, still farther south on the Tibetan highlands, we shall soon be crossing regions in which none but the very loftiest ranges succeed in lifting themselves up above this universal ocean of weathered debris.

At its extreme western end, near Camp XI, the Kum-köl is about 5 or 6 km. broad and forms as it were a blunted bay, the shores of which are every bit as even and regular as the shores round the rest of the lake. By means of a short reconnaissance I ascertained that that part of the shore which stretches between the camp and the eastern butte has just as regular an outline, the only diversity being a couple of miniature peninsulas and bays, and a couple of lagoons quite close to the shore. The spring beside which we encamped in November yielded a little water even now, but the small quantity of grazing which we found then had in the interval mostly been eaten off by kulans. The eastern butte screened the view of the northern shore only; the southern shore, with its low heights, was visible for a good way to the east, but eventually it died away in the far distance. To the east no land was visible at all, and this is just what one would expect, for the country between the upper lake and the lower lake is wonderfully flat.

After the entire caravan was collected at Camp XI, we continued our journey southwards on the 6th June, our immediate goal being the Arka-tagh. At first we marched along the shore, which was hard and level, with a scanty sprinkling of grass. Upon reaching a little freshwater spring we were forced to quit the shoreline, owing to the existence of treacherous lagoons and marshes. These are caused by the entrance into the lake of several small brooks and streams from the southwest; in some of them the water was perfectly fresh. Our course from the lake made an acute angle with its southern shore, and we soon lost sight of its waters; and then making our way across a rather flat steppe of köuruk and teresken, we steered south-east towards a glen, or rather a breach, in the low range which rises