

of the Waters» and dealing with rivers and watercourses tells of a hard fight on the lower course of the Qum-darya — evidently an attempt to force the water from the river into an irrigation canal by means of a dam, and thus to utilize it for the field crops.

DOWN THE QUM-DARYA

Temenpu was an extremely interesting place. It was our last camp on the Konche-darya, and here we saw the last groves of living poplars. The whole of our voyage, right down to Lop-nor, was to be through desert, with no living trees and practically no herds or huts. We were to be the first to navigate the Qum-darya and map it in the minutest detail.

At Temenpu, then, we left the point where the river Qum-darya, newly formed since 1921, breaks out of the old bed of the Konche-darya to seek a new route into the desert, or more precisely, to return to its ancient bed, the classic channel down which water flowed in the first Christian era and as late as the beginning of the fourth century A. D.

I closely questioned our boatmen and the *begs* who came to meet us about the characteristics of the river and to what extent it was navigable. No-one knew anything about it; no-one had been on it in a canoe. One prophet of evil thought that we should meet with dangerous rapids, in which we should be wrecked, and lakes and marshes overgrown and choked with reeds, in which we should be caught fast without chance of escape.

On the morning of April 20th we thus took leave of the Konche-darya, to set off on one of the most interesting and, in its geographical results, most valuable expeditions it has ever been granted to me to carry out in Eastern Turkistan.

Hardly had we pushed off before we saw the most striking change in the river landscape! We were gliding between the last living poplar groves, that raised their tops high over the treacherous stream. To the south-east, along the banks ahead, not a single tree was to be seen. The change from wood-lined river to desert river was effected in one bend of the stream. When we had left that behind we were surrounded by bare desolate country — the river was entering the flat, yellow Lop Desert. The stream widened to some 150 m, growing at the same time shallower. The greatest depth we noted on that day's voyage was 4 m. The banks were sharply defined and fell perpendicularly to the river. Sand-dunes and tamarisk mounds were cleft by erosion, and the roots of tamarisks and reeds hung down like curtains into the gently murmuring water. We were surrounded by a silence as of the grave, disturbed only by the gurgling noise with which whole blocks of sand and clay fell down at times from the top of the bank. The water, that in the Konche-darya was clear and light green, now became turbid and assumed