

ious. He bore his quarry to us in triumph. Strange fish! They must lie asleep in the sunshine. One of them, a good meter in length, was evidently awakened by my boat, for it smacked the side with its tail and swam off.

The canoes jumped, caught and bumped against the unevennesses of the mud bottom; stuck fast and bumped again. At times they had to be dragged through water a few inches deep. The topmost layer of sediment was yellow, from 2 to 7 mm in depth, and rested on a rather thicker stratum of black sediment, that must have been there when the water came back about thirteen years before. It thus looked as if the yellow layer with an average depth of 5 mm had taken thirteen years to settle.

Evening was near; the setting sun's farewell to earth afforded us a magnificent spectacle, beyond the power of words to describe. The whole south-east was steel-blue; one could not tell where sky ended and earth began. The sun rested on a bed of red, yellow, violet and white clouds, and a warm, ruddy glow spread over the lake in the west.

The men dripped with sweat as they dragged the canoes over the stiff, muddy bottom till they were dead tired. Under the sediments was a layer of hard, crystallized salt, that made their feet sore.

We changed course, making north-east for the nearest island. We were soon passing through water a foot deep, and the boatmen could get back into the canoes and use their paddles. It was dusk when we landed on an unknown coast, a miniature island of hard, salty ground with a rust-brown crust on which not a blade of grass grew. The canoes were dragged ashore and we pitched camp.

Six planks were placed on the ground as a foundation for CHEN's and my beds, which were laid on canvas and felts. BABEDDIN cooked the fish he had caught and made *shisliq* over the embers.

THE SECOND DAY ON THE SHALLOW LAKE

The orders for May 17th were that the two small light canoes should be held in readiness and manned by BABEDDIN and ALI, with CHEN in one and myself in the other; there was to be no cargo. The object of the trip was a rapid reconnaissance to the westward. Somewhere in the northernmost part of the lake there ought to be a deeper channel, eaten out by the water streaming in from the Qum-darya.

A light mist hung over Lop-nor; to the south and east no land was visible; only in the south-west, in which direction we were now steering, was a strip of coastline to be seen. A light S. S. E. breeze rippled the surface of the lake.

The water turned out to be just as shallow in the west as in the east. We measured