



Fig. 23. Dragging the canoes over the shallow northern part of Lop-nor

0.19, 0.14 and 0.07 m, where we finally stuck fast. The men waded ahead in a gingerly fashion, dragging the canoes behind them. But at last it was impossible to go any farther south. We made a halt, and sent the men southward to search for a channel. They looked as if they were walking on the water; and the churned-up mud in their tracks was as black as ink.

At our halting-place we took some photographs and further examined the sediments on the bottom of the lake. The yellow river-mud on the top formed a layer 5 mm thick, and rested on a deposit of black mud 10 mm thick. Under this again was a stratum of rather coarse sand, 20 mm thick, while under all was an 80 mm stratum of crystallized salt. In places the salt was even thicker than this.

And yet the northern part of the lake is fresh! Or at any rate, its salt content of 0.3 per cent was hardly perceptible to the taste. The two men had become quite expert at stunning the fishes with a paddle-blade and catching them with their hands. The biggest fish caught was 1.1 m long and 16 cm from dorsal fin to belly. Another was nearly as big; the rest ranged from 0.90 to 0.94 m. It is strange that a fish of such dimensions can live in water 20 cm deep. When they were scared into motion at our approach we sometimes saw the dorsal fin sticking up like a periscope above the surface, that was rippled and eddied by the rapid movements of the fish, so that pursuit was no very difficult matter.

In the northern part of Lop-nor, then, we were in no danger of dying of starva-