

0.2 m high and obviously of recent formation. Our men crossed a depression 5 m deep and 200 m wide; but it had not been formed by running water. Next, along the route to the S. S. W. and south-west, they had come to a 500-m belt of dead trees and high tamarisk mounds among *yardangs* of varying heights.

From a point where living tamarisks grew they sighted, to the W. N. W., the high tower at Lou-lan; and 1.5 km from this place dead reeds became plentiful. Fragments of pottery were to be seen almost everywhere. They reached Lou-lan at 2.15 p. m., and stayed there for two hours.

CHEN climbed up on to the tower, where the flagstaff that HÖRNER and he had planted on the summit still stood upright. But of the Swedish flag only a small fragment remained. At the foot of the flagstaff lay the tin cylinder in which three years before they had placed two papers, one describing NORIN's explorations right up to this region in 1928—30 and their own investigation in the winter of 1930—31, and the other bearing the following words in English, so complimentary to myself: »In honour of Dr SVEN HEDIN, Lou-lan's discoverer and first explorer, his men hoist his flag here. Lou-lan, Jan. 19th, 1931. NILS G. HÖRNER, PARKER C. CHEN.»

CHEN now added to these two new papers, one of which recorded our journey to Lop-nor, while the other was a Chinese poem singing the praises of Lou-lan.

There was no question of excavations or any other kind of research; they had no water and no provisions, and they were 18 km from camp No. 86. After a rest they began their return journey, marching till they came to an arm of the river whose water was slightly salt. CHEN drank too much of it and was violently sick, but slept well in the night.

They set out again before six next morning, soon coming to a channel 15 m wide and 1 m deep. Here they made tea and at last drank their fill of fresh water. For the last stretch of their journey they had followed their own tracks on the march from camp. They had found on the way a stone slab, 28 by 21 cm in size and 4 cm thick. It bore no inscription.

It was beginning to grow dark, and still nothing was heard of ALI.

»He's gone mad, and won't be able to find us again,» suggested SADIQ with the utmost placidity. It is as dangerous to lose one's way in the maze of the Lop country *yardangs* as in the subterranean passages of the Roman catacombs.

I had just given orders to SADIQ, BABEDDIN and ROZI to follow the missing man's tracks the next morning when I heard the cry »*Ali keldi!*» (ALI's come!); and sure enough, there he came staggering to my tent, half dead, and with a distraught look. He had lost the track and wandered this way and that till he had seen our fire.

Our Lop-nor expedition was drawing to an end; of the two months that had been allotted to us by the Urumchi decree, only one week remained. Summer was coming on, but the temperature was still falling.

In the morning CHEN found a scorpion, 5 cm long, under his sleeping-bag. This was the first visitor of the kind we had seen.