

The temperature of the Lop basin varies greatly, but the extremes are comparatively easy to endure, and their effect is much less noticeable than that of the variations in precipitation. During the nine months that I was in the basin, from June, 1905, to March, 1906, the observed temperature ranged from minus seventeen degrees Fahrenheit to ninety. The extremes must have been greater, for I kept among the mountains for the most part in the hot months of July and August, and was at the lowest, warmest part of the basin during the winter, which was not regarded as particularly severe. In general, the months of December, January, and February are intensely cold, the temperature remaining below zero much of the time. The people suffer but little, however, since the areas of vegetation furnish abundant firewood in most places, sheep-skins can be procured cheap from the shepherds among the mountains, and warm houses can usually be made of mud. Moreover, the air is dry, and there is comparatively little wind in winter. The chief difficulty caused by the cold, except where the firewood has all been cut off, is the freezing of the shallow streams which furnish the usual water supply. In some cases, as I saw at Oi-Toghrak, east of Keriya, the difficulty is met by digging wells. They are not very satisfactory, however, because of their great depth, sometimes two hundred feet, and because the water is often impure or saline. Still, it is much more convenient to use such wells than to be obliged to melt ice chopped from the frozen canals and brought home in donkey loads, as we saw in some of the smaller villages. Where the main stream is so large that it never freezes entirely, pools, of such depth that they can-