

mild. It was not till the end of November that the inspiring coolness of autumn changed to the dulling cold of winter. On the whole, the climate of the floor of the Lop basin is excellent. The extremes are neither debilitating nor deadening; the dry air and the freedom from sudden changes make it healthful; and during certain seasons it is stimulating. Its chief drawbacks are the monotony, and the dry, parching heat of summer. One always knows what the weather of to-morrow or next week or next month will be; one is rarely invigorated by a clear day after a storm in summer; and one never has the stimulus of sudden changes, such as that which rouses all the energies of the farmer to get in his hay before it rains, or the gardener to pick his fruit and vegetables before a sudden frost.

Turning now from the climate of the Lop basin to its character and appearance as a whole, the latter can, perhaps, best be appreciated by comparing the basin to a sea. Indeed, except for the accident of the absence of water for the last few million years, since the Cretaceous or early Tertiary era, it has all the qualities of a basin such as that which holds the Mediterranean Sea. For age after age, a great block of the earth's crust — the basin floor, corresponding to the floor of the sea — has been slowly settling downward, away from the surrounding plateaus, — corresponding to the continents, — which once were approximately on a level with it; or else, what amounts to the same thing, the plateaus have been lifted up, and the floor has moved but little. At the west end of the basin from Keriya around through Kashgar to Uch Turfan, and perhaps to Bai, or Kucha, the dislocation between the plateau blocks