

of ancient towns. I do not think so, however, because extended observation has convinced me that sand rarely encroaches upon a region until after a decrease in the water supply has caused the death of vegetation. In the Kenan legend it is distinctly stated that the amount of water diminished. The villagers said to me, "You see, what happened to Kenan long ago was like what happened to Dumuka in the days of our fathers. The river dried up."

From Malakalagan I struck a little north of east across the desert to the Keriya River. The first day, our way led through the peculiar scenery characteristic of the parts of the zone of vegetation where the water supply has decreased, whether it be on the edge of the zone near the mountains, or, as is much more common, the remoter border near the sands of Takla-Makan. Steep-sided mounds, twenty or thirty feet high, were scattered over the plain so thickly that we had to wind hither and thither through the narrowest of passages. Rarely could we see more than three hundred feet in any direction, and often only fifty. Through the veil of sand shrouding the sides of the mounds, we perceived that their lower half was composed of stratified river silts full of the gnarled roots and underground stems of ancient tamarisks, while the upper half consisted of fine sand deposited by the wind and kept in place by the upper parts of the tamarisk bushes which projected from the tops. Sometimes the feathery bushes were gray-green and flourishing, with sweet-scented spikes of minute purple flowers, but oftener they were wholly dead, or had already shed the small stiff spines which serve as leaves. At the bottom of the mounds, one was in a maze of sandy slopes, dead tam-