

Muran, still farther east, though as large as the Keriya, which supports about fifteen or twenty thousand, is entirely unutilized; and there are many other equally significant cases. The difficulty is that the water never comes to light after sinking into the piedmont gravel, or if it reappears in springs in the zone of vegetation, it has become too saline for use in irrigation. If hard-bottomed canals of concrete could be constructed, such as those now being built in the western part of the United States, both difficulties would be avoided. The present oases could be greatly increased in size, and new ones could be opened. The tremendous fall of the water among the mountains ought to be utilized for manufacturing purposes. The abundant cotton, silk, and wool of the oases could be converted into cloth; the fruit and vegetables could be preserved, and the milk made into butter and cheese. And beside all this, the mountains contain gold and other useful metals.

When all the possibilities of the Lop basin are utilized, its capacity to support life will be vastly increased. And perhaps it is not too much to hope that the conditions of life will then be changed for the better. The isolation of each separate oasis will tend to disappear; life will become broader; and the necessity for steady work and greater self-control will arise. Moreover, another and probably more potent influence is likely to be felt in the further influx of another race with new ideas, which must take place if the resources of the basin thus expand. It is hardly to be expected that any occidental nation should take much interest in so remote a region. If China, however, follows the example of Japan, and wakens to self-consciousness, the great unpopu-