

elsewhere would have hidden her face in the end of her sleeve and run away, rubbed her head against the arm of a young giant of twenty-five, and teased:—

“Big brother, let me do it.”

He was showing me how fishing-nets are made from the fibre of the “Lop plant,” which, by the way, is one of the finest fibres in the world, as much tougher than hemp as hemp is than cotton. Other things, such as the absence of mosques and of daily prayers, showed that we had reached the extreme limit of Mohammedan influence. Ibrahim, who was a most devout follower of the Prophet, was disturbed because, as he said, “The Lopliks are good people, but they don’t have much work with God.” At Keriya, when first I mentioned Lop, he had asked if it were true, as people said, that the Lopliks wore nothing but the skins of wild animals, and that they were such adepts in the art of eating fish that they could put in the meat at one side of their mouths, and at the same time spit out the bones at the other.

On leaving the friendly Lopliks, we entered what is probably the greatest uninhabited continental area in the world, outside the polar regions. In an area equal to that of Great Britain and Ireland, where the population numbers forty million, there is not a single inhabitant. Much of it has never been visited by any explorer, or even by the natives. For thirty days of steady traveling, we saw absolutely no sign of living man. Except in rare cases, there was no vegetation which even camels could eat, and no water save bitter pools. By traveling in the dead of winter, when the temperature fell to zero every night, and by carefully chopping out and melting blocks of hard, white ice from the midst of the yel-