

lowish, mushy material covering most of the pools, we managed to get water which, in that part of the world, is called drinkable. We were troubled with thirst most of the time, and the indigestion caused by the salt water lasted a month or two after we ceased using it. No creature but the wild camel can drink the wretched liquid habitually. Even upon that hardy animal it has a marked physiological effect. In Kuruk Tagh, after leaving the Lop desert, I once dined on wild camel. The meat was fairly good, like very coarse beef. Though perfectly fresh, in one sense of the word, it had become distinctly "corned" because of the salt which had accumulated in the animal's body from the water.

For eight days eastward from Abdal, we kept close to an old strand of Lop-Nor, following a caravan road used about once a year. To the south, barren gravels stretched interminably toward the mountains; to the north, the brownish-white expanse of the old lake-bed stretched sullen and unexplored to a sea-like horizon, or faded to nothing in dusty haze. Nothing relieved the monotony except a sharp lacustrine bluff, sixty feet high, rising suddenly from the insignificant zone of vegetation. The zone was a mere strip of brown reeds, dotted with bright-blue pools of brine, unfrozen because so saline. At Koshalangza we halted to make preparations for the plunge into the utterly unknown region to the north. I estimated from the map that, barring accidents, we ought to reach the salt spring of Altmish Bulak in six days. The spring lay ninety miles away in an air line, at the foot of the Kuruk Tagh, or Dry Mountains. There was no knowing, however, what delays we might encounter, or how long we might have to hunt for the spring. In such bit-