

us into an unfrozen, watery salt-bog in zero weather, in a region so cold and dry that we were carrying ten or twelve days' supply of ice for drinking-water. If the mud had been a little softer, we should have lost the camels and perhaps ourselves. If we had ventured to traverse the soft, smooth areas to the west of our line of march across the great salt plain, we should probably have found ourselves in danger of being swallowed up on every side, and might never have returned to corroborate the Chinese tales of bottomless muck.

On the fourth morning of our weary march, we were cheered by encountering a shore-line, marked by a steep bluff thirty feet high. On climbing to its top, we supposed that we had left the old lake-bed behind. After walking a quarter of a mile among æolian mesas of clay, however, we dropped down another bluff, and were in the salt plain again. We had crossed a finger-shaped peninsula, ten or twenty times as long as it was wide. All that day and till noon of the next we encountered similar peninsulas, or elongated islands, separated by bays and sounds of similar dimensions. The axes of all were directed northeast and southwest, as the map shows. Apparently, during a dry interfluvial epoch preceding the last marked expansion of the lake, the violent winds of the region, which prevailingly blow from the northeast, had carved out great hollows between countless mesas, as they are doing now in many other places. Later, when the lake again expanded, it penetrated the hollows and widened them into a network of parallel sounds and bays, dotted with an archipelago of elongated islands and peninsulas. The flat-topped islands, with steep red and green bluffs