

The following day, we traveled eighteen miles to the ruins of Lulan, discovered by Hedin. Everywhere we found patches of pottery and other signs of human occupation. On leaving the ruins, which Hedin has described most minutely, we again found pottery for a distance of fifteen miles, until we left the area of dead vegetation and entered the zone of piedmont gravel north of the Kuruk Dariya or Dry River, an old bed of the Tarim River, which once brought life to the country before it was diverted southward to Abdal. Forty miles farther west, we again crossed to the south side of the Kuruk Dariya, and at once found pottery and other signs of human occupation. During the first few centuries of the Christian era, luxurious vegetation and prosperous villages covered the country for scores of miles, as may be seen on the map; to-day, all is desolation, not a trace of verdure, not a sign of any living thing, nothing but unending stretches of weary mesas, large and small, studded with the stubble of reeds, the dead trunks of poplars, and the gnarled remnants of old tamarisk mounds. Here, perhaps, more than in almost any other part of the Lop basin, the signs of desiccation are unmistakable; but they must be interpreted with care, for the Tarim River could again be brought here.

On the morning of January 24, eight days after leaving Altmish Bulak, we saw the first living poplars since leaving Abdal four weeks before. By three o'clock, we reached a great line of sandy mounds fifty feet high, shrouded in a most vigorous growth of tamarisks, unmistakably a rampart built up by the wind along the northeastern edge of the zone of vegetation, which is supported by the interlacing Konche and Tarim rivers. Our month of guideless wandering among