

salt plains, old lakes, labyrinthine mesas, and dead cities was over; ahead of us lay life and the land of fresh running water, in place of death and the land of scattered salt springs whose water we loathed. We wondered silently at the contrast between the landscapes on the two sides of the great tamarisk barrier. To the east lay an infinitely varied monotony of intricate mounds and hollows, some composed of yellow or reddish sand, and others of clay, white, pink, and pale green — faint, dull colors, broken only by the dark spots of dead tamarisks and the gaunt skeletons of perished poplars: to the west, a smooth, rich river plain, extending as far as the eye could see, orange, yellow, or straw-color in the reedy portions, dark purple where tamarisks prevailed, and a delicate grayish brown among the splendid poplars.

“You said there were no people here,” was the men’s first comment. “How can that be? There must be people in a place with all this wood and water and good land.” And I too marveled that what looked so fair should be uninhabited.

We found a sheep-trail the following morning, but it came to an end after a mile or two. Most of the day we struggled in a pathless wilderness, making the hardest march of the whole journey. Occasionally we zigzagged pleasantly among poplars and tamarisks; often we made vexatious détours around the frozen shores of rush-filled ponds; but most of the time we painfully forced a way through thickets of reeds and tamarisks twelve feet high, and so dense that at every step we had to force the stiff, dusty stems apart. Toward evening, we succeeded in getting out of the jungle into the comparatively open area of dead vegetation between