

much rougher sea. If they are only bound together strongly enough, they can ride through almost any sea, for, owing to their construction, they cannot fill or sink. Even if the waves break over them, they still lie as high out of the water, while a Lop-nor canoe fills in quite moderate waves.

From our camp a continuous expanse of water of very wide dimensions is seen to the east, north and all round to the north-west. This is the great Hamun. From north-west to south-south-west is visible a light-blue elevated outline, the high country we have lately crossed, and which forms the western boundary of the Hamun region. The distant highland tract seems to rise directly from the surface of the water, but that, of course, is only an illusion. Almost all round the line of the horizon seems as though drawn with a ruler, and only here and there huts, beds of reeds, and grazing animals form small inequalities.

The lake is, as we have seen, extremely shallow, though it may be taken for granted that there are deeper hollows outside the line we followed. But it is very extensive, the water spreading as thin as paper over large areas of this alluvial land, and the water is everywhere sweet. The whole Hamun is, as it were, an expanded mouth or a flooded delta of the Hilmend, just as Kara-koshun is an inland delta of the Tarim.

The shore where we stayed lies exposed to the north wind, and as this abated the water sank, though only a small fraction of an inch. One would have expected a heavy surf on the shore, but nothing of the sort was observable. This is owing to the reeds, which in some places act as a breakwater. When the northern wind drops altogether, the water returns northwards in a slow swell, to cover again the beaches swept dry by the wind.

We encamped early, hoping that the new transport animals would turn up before evening, but not a sign of them was seen. We kept an outlook in vain, and waited on our miserable island, where we had not a stick of fuel after the last wooden box had been sacrificed. We were also badly off for provisions, and even the tea and sugar