

To the south of the point where the terminal course of the Tarim turns and dies away in the marshes of Lop-nor, the mountain rampart which hedges in the great basin resumes an easterly bearing and sinks to a lower level. Lhasa is over 700 miles away from the little oasis of Charkhlik, which corresponds to the ancient Shan-shan of the Chinese and is now practically the only permanent settlement in this part of the Tarim basin. Yet there is reason to believe that routes descending here had at times served for Tibetan invasions from the south and also for nomadic inroads. Such life-giving moisture as the high valleys and plateaux towards Tibet and Tsaidam may receive, whether from monsoon currents passing across India or from the side of the Pacific Ocean, certainly does not penetrate to the extremity of the Tarim basin north of this part of the encircling range. A wide and utterly barren glaciis, in parts of bare gravel, elsewhere overlain by big ridges of drift-sand, stretches down at this point to that huge waste of hard salt crust which marks the dried-up bed of the ancient Lop sea. To this we shall have occasion to return later.

Beyond the eastern extremity of the Tarim basin the K'un-lun imperceptibly merges in the Nan-shan, the 'Southern Mountains' of the Chinese. In its western portion, where the Nan-shan overlooks the Su-lo-ho trough for over 200 miles, its northern slopes with their aridity and far-advanced erosion closely reproduce physical features already familiar to us from the K'un-lun.

But, on passing east of the Su-lo-ho trough into the central portion of the Nan-shan, evidence of a climate far moister manifests itself to an increasingly striking degree. This symptom indicates approach to the vicinity of the