

cotton slightly terraced for irrigation; the same winding lanes lined with white poplars and willows (Fig. 5); the same little arbours or orchards inviting him with their shade and their plentiful produce of European fruits.

Within the Tarim basin there still remains for us to visit the terminal depression of Lop at its eastern end. The central and geographically most striking feature of this depression is the great salt-encrusted sea-bed which our surveys have proved to extend for fully 160 miles from south-west to north-east with a maximum width of some 90 miles. This marks the position of a prehistoric salt sea which was fed by the drainage of the Tarim basin when the climate of Central Asia was moister. It already showed the same forbidding aspects as at present when the Chinese first became acquainted with it more than two thousand years ago. But in the now equally lifeless ground which adjoins this dried-up sea on the north-west there can still be traced, in an area of bare clay overrun by light drift-sand and now undergoing excessive wind erosion, a series of well-marked dry river-beds. Our surveys have proved that they belong to an ancient delta formed by the dried-up Kuruk-darya, the 'Dry River'. This during the first centuries before and after Christ carried the waters of the Konche river which drains the Kara-shahr valley, together with water from the Tarim, to the then partially occupied territory of ancient Lou-lan. A remarkable hydrographical change has, during the last few years, brought back these waters again to a considerable portion of the desolate waste.

Abundant archaeological evidence brought to light at various ruined sites of Lou-lan since Dr. Hedin first discovered one of them, makes it certain that the waters from