

part of the year from the Mongolian plateaux into this the lowest portion of the Tarim basin, in obedience to the powerful atmospheric factor known as 'aspiration'.

The march across those terribly hard banks and trenches of clay over which our route took us at an angle, was tiring men and animals badly. It was most trying to the camels' feet, their soft pads becoming easily cracked and lacerated on such ground. Thus at every camp several of the poor beasts had to undergo that painful if always effective operation of 're-soling'. It consists of sewing small pieces of ox-hide on to the live skin so as to protect the sore spots. It is an operation requiring a good deal of skill, as the camel naturally resists it. Fortunately Hassan Akhun was a great expert at it and ever ready to train the other camelmen—though his methods of instruction were far from gentle, involving sometimes blows and kicks.

In the midst of this forbidding eroded ground we crossed at intervals shallow depressions usually marked by rows of fallen trunks of dead wild poplars. They could be followed by the eye winding away in the distance, just like branches of rivers before they lose themselves in the level expanse of the sandy desert. And, in fact, observations repeated on the different routes by which I successively crossed this part of the Lop Desert, together with evidence furnished by our careful mapping of all such features, have led me to believe that these depressions with the strips of dead forest along them mark the terminal beds in which the waters of the Kuruk-darya, the 'Dry River', which once irrigated the land around the ruined site of Lou-lan, had at different periods made their way into the marshes fringing the great dried-up Lop Sea. The topographical and archaeological