

period of recent inundation had been too short in this area to allow of the growth of vegetation, or had been altogether exceptional.

The soft salt crust or 'Shor' of the dry lagoons affected the soles of the camels' feet so badly that I hailed it with relief when at last towards the evening we emerged on an area where wind-eroded banks and 'witnesses,' six to seven feet high, rose among low dunes. Bleached remains of dead poplars and tamarisks strewed the bare soil in abundance, silent proofs of a belt of luxuriant riverine jungle having once existed here. Shells of fresh-water snails were also plentiful. A mile or so beyond, the dusk obliged us to pitch camp at the foot of high sand-cones covered with hoary tamarisk growth, some of which was still living. At a point where the sand felt moist I had a well dug which yielded water at a depth of only five feet. But I scarcely felt disappointed when it proved to be utterly salt and undrinkable even for the camels.