

like such an impression on his solid Jat artisan's brain. Again and again he expressed doubt whether his fellow-villagers far away in the Punjab would believe him when he returned and told this tale. Poor fellow, how lucky he was not to know that the big lustrous eyes which had witnessed this wonder of camels walking over deep water were never to see his Indian home again!

By sunset we pitched camp under high tamarisk cones by the north-west corner of the lake, and there late at night we were visited by the solitary fisherman of Kötéklik-köl whom Tokhta Akhun and Aga-bergan had at last succeeded in tracking down. He had no supplies to spare for our labourers beyond a few fish which they devoured half-raw; but the information elicited from him made it easy for me to locate our position on the chain of riverine lagoons which stretches along the east of the main Tarim bed and is connected with the flood channel of the Ilek. The attraction we had unconsciously undergone on our desert crossing, owing to the easier ground between the high Dawans stretching north to south, had tended to make us steer a somewhat more southerly course than the one I was bent upon. Thus on striking the Tarim, or rather the Ilek, we found ourselves fully a march to the south of the Merdek ruin.

This made it necessary to recover what we had lost in latitude by marching up the Ilek on January 5th. The night had been perceptibly warmer than any of those passed in the desert; as we moved along sheltered depressions and under a bright sky, the day's tramp was quite enjoyable. It took us along a succession of frozen lagoons to the fishermen's reed-huts by the Sadak-köl abandoned for the winter. Then through wide expanses of reed-beds, in which the channels of the Ilek seemed completely to lose themselves, we reached a belt of luxuriant Toghrak jungle where we decided to halt for the night. Under the shelter of the magnificent poplars the evening seemed almost warm, and next morning the minimum thermometer showed only twenty degrees of frost. Luckily the small foraging party I had sent out towards the fishing station of Tokum by the Tarim now returned with a supply of