

the ancient lake shore. They were from fifty to eighty feet high, and as we passed between them I noticed that their slopes showed salt efflorescence at different levels, thus proving that these terraces had been formed during periods preceding the present desiccation of the great lake. But that they had originally been carved out of the low gravel-covered plateau which fringes the salt marsh on the southern side of the basin was quite clear.

In the evening we moved across the top of this Sai for about a mile and a half where it projects northward, forming a kind of promontory. Finally, we descended again to the foot of the shore cliff, and along it completed in darkness the remainder of the twenty-six miles to the stage of Lowaza. Already I had for some distance noted isolated tamarisk cones and moist patches with salt efflorescence. On reaching the spring we found its water drinkable and the ground all round covered with a plentiful growth of reeds and low scrub (Fig. 149). Next morning I saw that the water was issuing in a thin but steady flow from a narrow cutting of the terrace behind, and that its course at the foot of the latter was covered with a thick sheet of ice for a distance of fully a hundred yards. It was a great boon for the animals to have water in plenty, but for some it came too late. It was again midnight before all the loads were in; but not till next morning did I learn that two of the donkeys had been left to die on the road. Three more were reported unable to get on their feet.

It was evident that, if such losses continued, there would soon be not enough transport left to carry our supplies through to Tun-huang. There was reason to fear that the men sent with us to look after the donkeys from Abdal and Charklik were getting indifferent to the fate of their charges. So I arranged that the animals' feeding should be looked after by my own men, all fodder being issued from a common store, and the whole donkey train placed under Ibrahim Beg's supervision. To encourage the donkey drivers I promised to pay them a special reward, distinct from the hire due to the owners, for each animal brought through safely. These measures proved