

sketch indicated no connecting links between these lakes and marshes. This was a serious objection, and left me in puzzling doubts about the problem before me.

Chiang-ssü-yeh joined me in the evening for our Chinese reading, and on finding me still poring over maps and absorbed in this geographical question, with his usual keenness set forth a puzzle of his own. He well remembered having seen Chinese cartographical works in which Lop-nor was made to extend far away to Tun-huang. Ever since Abdal he had eagerly looked out for the great 'Lake of Salt.' Now when we had finally passed out of the dried-up basin, he was more than ever exercised by the difference between that traditional representation and the small size of the marshes he had actually seen. It was but a poor substitute for enlightenment when I told him that recent European literature about 'the Lop-nor problem' was threatening to fill book-shelves, and that there was little hope of our finally emerging from all its controversial lucubrations until the whole of that dreary region had been mapped with a mesh of accurate surveys such as we had just endeavoured to carry out along the least formidable of its possible route lines.

It was by no means the first time that I had occasion to appreciate my excellent secretary's lively interest in geographical matters and his keen eye for surface formations. His place was invariably by my side or that of the Surveyor whenever we set up the plane-table. With that natural aptitude for orientation and map reading which seems common even among less educated Chinese, he had long before made himself familiar with the use of the diopter and the rudimentary principles of plane-tabling. Gladly would he have applied himself to the theodolite, too, if only Ram Singh had found time to teach him the practical handling of it for star observations, and I had possessed the requisite Chinese knowledge to expound the theoretical basis of the operation. More than once he surprised and nonplussed me by the acute questions he put about the 'reasons why,' when confronted by novel topographical features. Altogether I often thought what excellent material the Survey of India would command, if