drainage areas may, then, be traced to the fact that they are situated in those regions of the earth's surface where the prevailing winds blow from colder to warmer latitudes, and from off land and not directly from off the ocean. The distribution of salt lakes may consequently be said to depend more on meteorological than on topographical or geological phenomena. These meteorological conditions have also a very marked influence on vegetable, animal, and human life, as well as on the geological strata now in process of formation.

Should the climate in the neighbourhood of these inland drainage areas change and the rainfall become more abundant, the salt lakes would slowly increase in size, and would ultimately find an outlet by means of a river to the ocean at the lowest part of the rim of the basin. What was once a small salt lake would gradually become a large fresh-water lake, pouring its waters directly into the ocean through a river. It is most probable that this has frequently occurred in the past history of the earth, but traces of the change have been wholly obliterated, or are now difficult to detect. Numerous instances of the contrary process, where large fresh-water lakes have been converted in recent geological times into salt lakes, are to be observed in many inland drainage areas. Instances of this nature will be pointed out in the following pages. In some desert regions both the river channels and the lakes are completely filled up with blown sand. The artesian wells along the course of the Oued Rhir in the Sahara often throw up fresh-water fishes and crustaceans, thus indicating a buried river. The lakes of inland drainage areas may be, as previously stated, either fresh or salt. The higher lakes, having an outflowing river, remain fresh and drinkable, while the salts which are leached out of the surrounding land all accumulate in the lowest lake of the series, the salts in solution varying both in quantity and composition in each locality.

In the following pages we shall in the first instance refer to the inland drainage areas of the northern hemisphere, and then to those of the southern hemisphere.

NORTHERN HEMISPHERE.

Eural-Asia.

The largest inland drainage area is that of central Eural-Asia, which occupies, according to Murray, 4,785,000 English square miles, and stretches from about long. 35° to 125° E., and from lat. 25° to 60° N. (see fig. 63). It includes the lakes of the Aralo-Caspian depression, the lakes of the Gobi Desert, Lake Hámun in the Seistan depression between Afghanistan and Persia, Lake Urmi on the Persian plateau, and Lake Van in Eastern Anatolia.

The greater part of Central Asia is occupied by two high plateaus: a western one extending in a south-eastern direction from the Black Sea to the valley of the Indus, and an eastern one stretching from the Himalayas to the north-eastern extremity of Asia.