



Fig. 118. NATIVES OF AL-KATIK-TSCHEKE.

means of its erosive energy undermine them to such an extent that they *must* descend at the steepest angle possible. But this question, too, we shall discuss lower down. The Tokus-kum dunes appear to be quite as large as those of the Saj-tagh, and in fact resemble a small mountain-range overhanging the river. On the east they terminate with extraordinary abruptness. The kamisch steppe, dotted over with poplars, advances to their very foot without any transition whatsoever, and without the smallest spur of sand penetrating amongst the trees. Now, seeing that these dunes are not held together by the roots of plants, but are absolutely barren, and consequently belong to the category of moving sand-dunes, it might be expected, that on their windward slopes, under the shelter of the woods, there would be a few patches of sand still surviving. But this is not the case. Hence the suggestion occurs, that the eastern foot of the Tokus-kum, like its northern, may at some time have been washed by the river, and, as a matter of fact, there does exist on that side a small crescentic pool, which may very well have formed part of a former loop, that has now disappeared. From the top of the Tokus-kum the only limit to the view was the haze on the distant horizon. To the south this gigantic accumulation of sand is connected with similar masses and patches of sand, all more or less detached and separated from one another by beds of kamisch. And beyond the Opghan-darja begins, as I have said, the continuous, unbroken expanse of the great sandy desert. Indeed, even to the north of the Tarim there is, for as far as we