

On 9th March we rode a pretty considerable distance south down the glen of Kurbantschik. Its erosion terraces are very distinctly marked, and on the top are diversified by hills and small outcrops of rock. Close under the terrace on the left side of the glen there are a dozen magnificent kara-jaghatsch trees, which with their pendent plume-like branches must afford excellent shade in the summer, converting the space underneath into a veritable tent. The brook from the spring came to an end a short distance below our camp, after having spread itself out and formed a large sheet of soft ice. Quitting this glen by a side-ravine, we directed our steps to the south-east across slightly undulating saj, thinly sprinkled with scrub and furrowed by shallow gullies. But one such trench that we crossed was deeply scored in the ground, an indication that it issues from a transverse glen of the Kuruk-tagh.

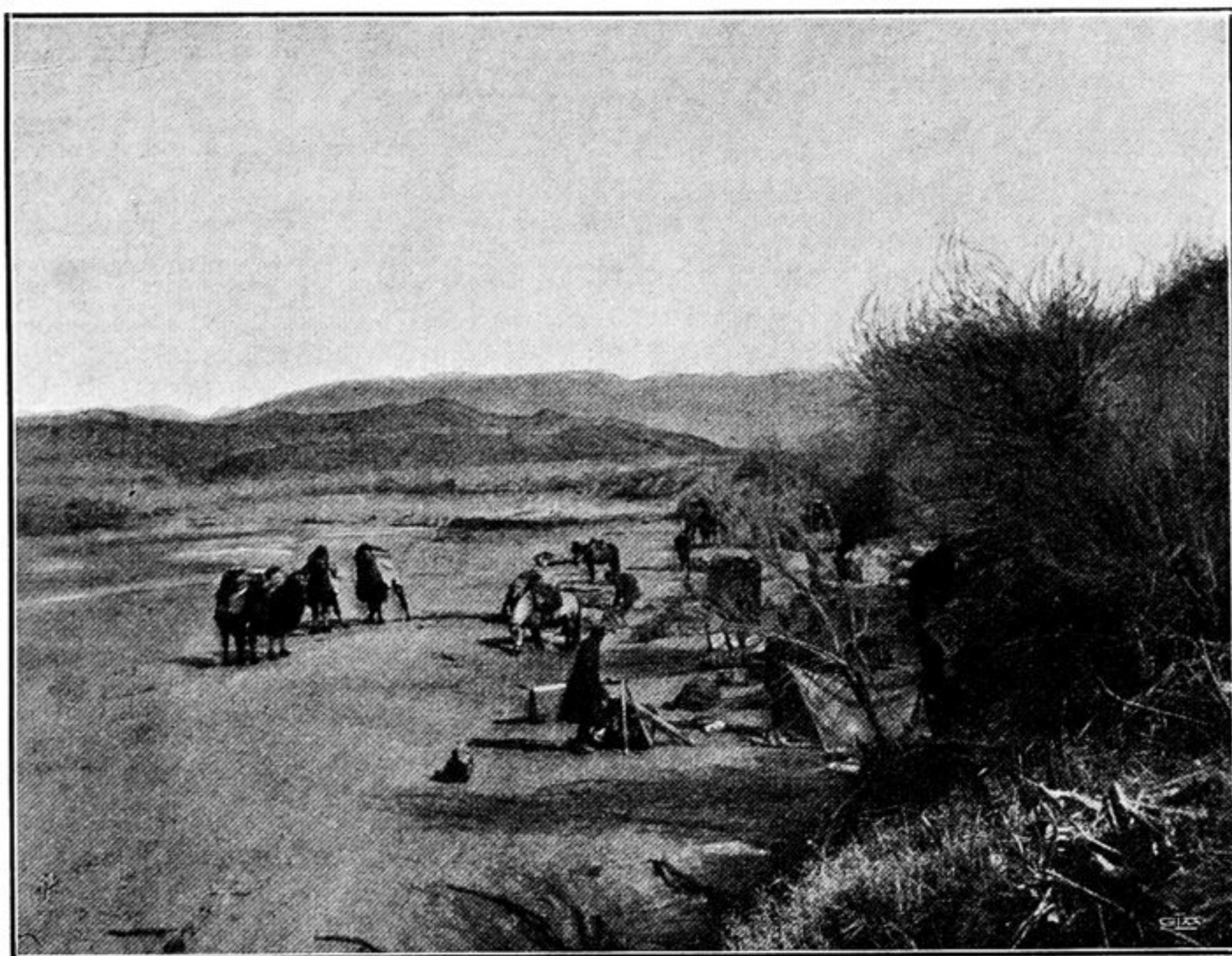


Fig. 18. OUR CAMP AT KURBANTSCHIK.

South-east of this last lies a tangle of hills and ravines, and beyond them we entered a sort of »corridor» glen, indistinguishable in places from a fissure-like hollow defile, which is joined on both sides by a number of similar contracted ravines. This labyrinth of eroded trenches or deep gullies is carved at first through soft material and shut in by rounded hills; but eventually it terminates in a valley encircled by hard rock, the bedding of which dips 63° N. In many places this valley is fenced in by high and perfectly perpendicular walls of rock. Its floor however is level and dry, has a very gentle slope towards the south-east, and is littered with coarse sand or gravel. After a while it inclines towards the south, being at the same time joined by a side-glen. In the expansion thus formed not only are there magnificent toghraks and thick luxuriant reeds, but a spring also gushes out, and this had given rise to spacious sheets of ice in the bottom of the valley. This sheltered and charming little oasis is called, as one might almost guess, Toghtrak-