

Tsajdam. In some places however there were patches of level silt left by the rain.

On the farther side of the cauldron-shaped valley we climbed slowly up the next ridge, which consisted of a green coarsely crystalline variety of rock, greatly disintegrated. On the top we rode for a long way towards the east-north-east across a plateau, which undulated so gently that its slope only became evident when I lagged a good distance behind, and saw the caravan dipping down out of sight, as it occasionally did. Towards the north there were a couple of jardangs; but the mountains were very low and a long way off. From the lowlands of the Kuruk-darja we were separated by the low swelling of the foot-hills. The soil, thickly strewn with fine gravel, was almost completely sterile. The only living specimens of plant-life were a few tamarisks in an eroded gully.

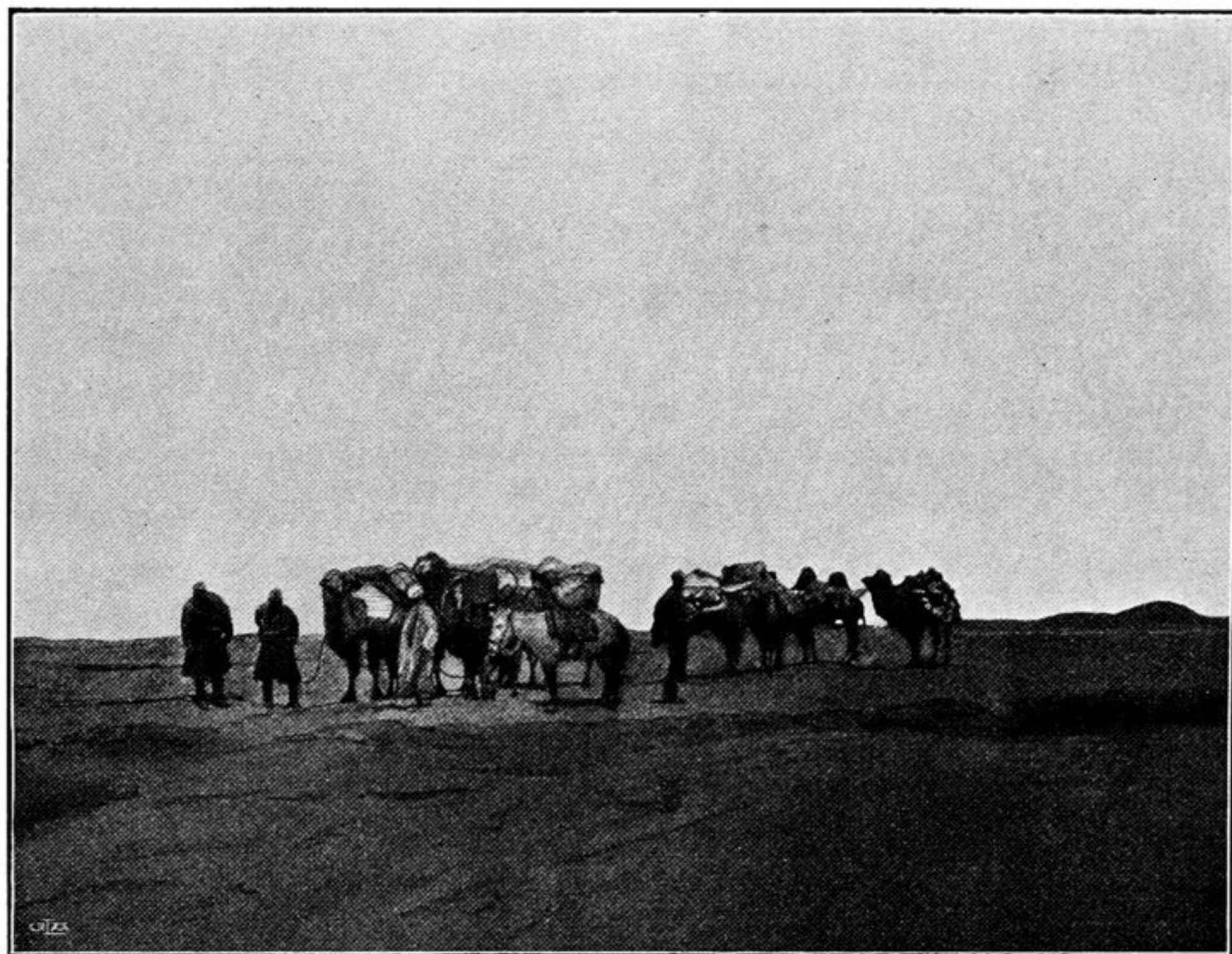


Fig. 49. ON THE SOUTHERN SLOPE OF THE EASTERN KURUK-TAGH.

But upon reaching the hollow in which the Jardang-bulak is situated we found a decided change; for this is a real oasis, having springs, thick luxuriant kamisch, and tamarisks. Here within a fairly limited area there are four distinct springs; (1) the one beside which we encamped, the Atschik-jardang-bulak; (2) half a potaj to the north-east the spring of Jokarki-jardang-bulak, which is stated to yield water, but has no grazing; (3) half a potaj to the south-east Tömänki-jardang-bulak, which possesses good grazing, but as a rule no water; (4) Jaka-jardang-bulak, a little farther towards the east-south-east, which supplies grazing and indifferent water. Thus the best of these miniature oases is Atschik-jardang-bulak; for it possesses an abundance of both grazing and fuel, while the water trickles out of several small springs in the bottom of the gully which has carved its way through the thresholds of