

CHAPTER V.

GRUM-GRSCHIMAJLO'S JOURNEY ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS NORTH OF KURUK-TAGH.

Altmisch-bulak is a small and beautiful oasis in the midst of this desolate stony desert. It resembles a sharply outlined island, and, like Basch-toghruk, stands on a terrace a couple of meters above the circumjacent barren region. It measures 2760 m. in circuit, and its vegetation, which is especially luxuriant, particularly in the vicinity of the springs, consists, as usual, chiefly of kamisch and tamarisks, forming in places thickets so dense as to be impenetrable. The south-west margin of the oasis is crossed by a glen which comes from the north-west, and it is in its *thalweg* that the largest as well as the greater number of the springs are situated. The gully at Altmisch-bulak is very distinctly marked, especially by the dense thickets of kamisch which grow along its edges. Its bottom consists of gravel, and below

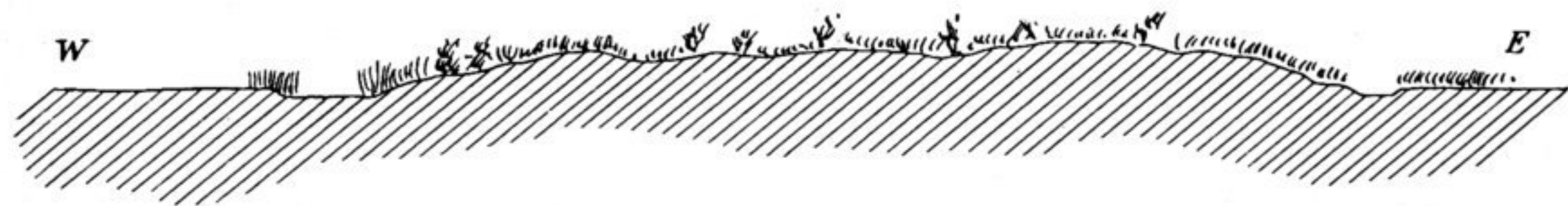


Fig. 67. VERTICAL SECTION OF ALTMISCH-BULAK (HEIGHT EXAGGERATED).

the springs it was, at the time of our visit, in great part filled with pretty large and thick cakes of ice. I pitched my tent amongst the sheltering bushes, not far from Kosloff's camp, the situation of which Abdu Rehim pointed out to me 112 m. S. 60° E. from my own. Thanks to this point of contact, our routes admit of being combined and compared. South of the spring there is a small plateau or shelf of rock of a dark green, fine, crystalline variety, dipping 58° S. 30° E. On a minor shelf of this we found some pieces of brick, belonging to a furnace in which lead had been smelted, though when that was the men from Singer were unable to tell me; but they said they had discovered marks of an axe in the tamarisk-trees, and the wood of these had, in their opinion, been employed for heating the furnace, and to judge from the axe-marks, it could not have been so very long since the furnace was in use. Some pieces of the slag were still left. For my own part, I believe rather that these indications of human activity go back to a remote period,