

of water were incredibly shallow; and a long way out in the lakes tamarisks and other steppe plants were growing, which had been surprised by the sudden inundation. This supposition in no sense militates against the fact, that the first lake, with the huts, retained its shores for a long time, even though it may have been with interruptions, for it is also within the bounds of reasonable supposition to infer that the shallowing of this and other lakes is one of the causes which compel the water to overflow in another direction, and that takes place, as we saw not only here but also during our canoe-trips on the Kara-koschun, towards the north, where the basin

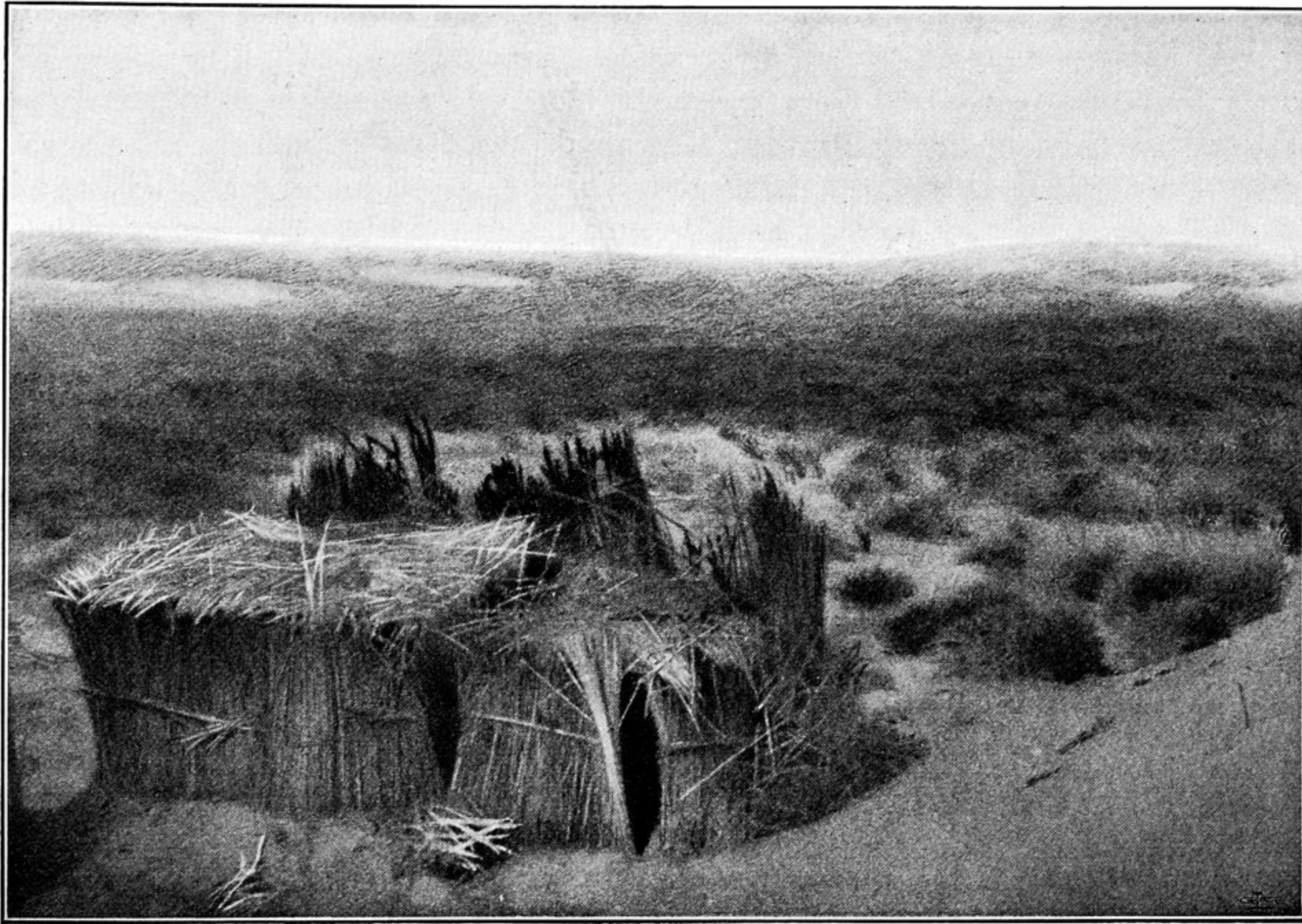


Fig. 118. THE HUT ON THE NORTHERN SHORE OF THE LAKE.

is lowest. The large and small sheets of water which we here had on the south, and which extended a long way to the west, were also completely sterile, the reason being that they have spread out over parts of the barren schor desert. Here our farther advance west was stopped by a channel, 2.2 m. broad, with a mean depth of 0.55 m., a velocity of 0.45 m., and a volume of about half a cubic meter in the second. The water, which was almost clear, had a temperature of $9^{\circ}.4$ C., with a distinctly saltish taste. It issued out of a small lake or expansion, and flowed, strange to say, towards the west. It was absolutely impossible for us, even for a man on foot, to wade across this watercourse, for its bottom consisted of soft ooze, into which our longest tent pole readily penetrated without touching firm ground. When I ascertained that this channel came from the north-east, I at once jumped to the conclusion, that the stream had its origin in the desert lakes of the previous year, and