

our view across the desert-ocean, on the margin of which we once more found ourselves, was limited.

Here, where the hard rock comes into immediate contact with the light pulverised rock-material, there exists a very peculiar type of landscape. The shallow, eroded watercourse hugs closely the foot of the western »claw» of the mountains, and after sweeping round it in an arc penetrates north into the sand, describing innumerable windings. It is so closely invested by gigantic dunes that its narrow, sharply cut channel could not be observed from behind them. If, instead of following the torrent, we had travelled along the terrace-like, sand-covered heights above, at the

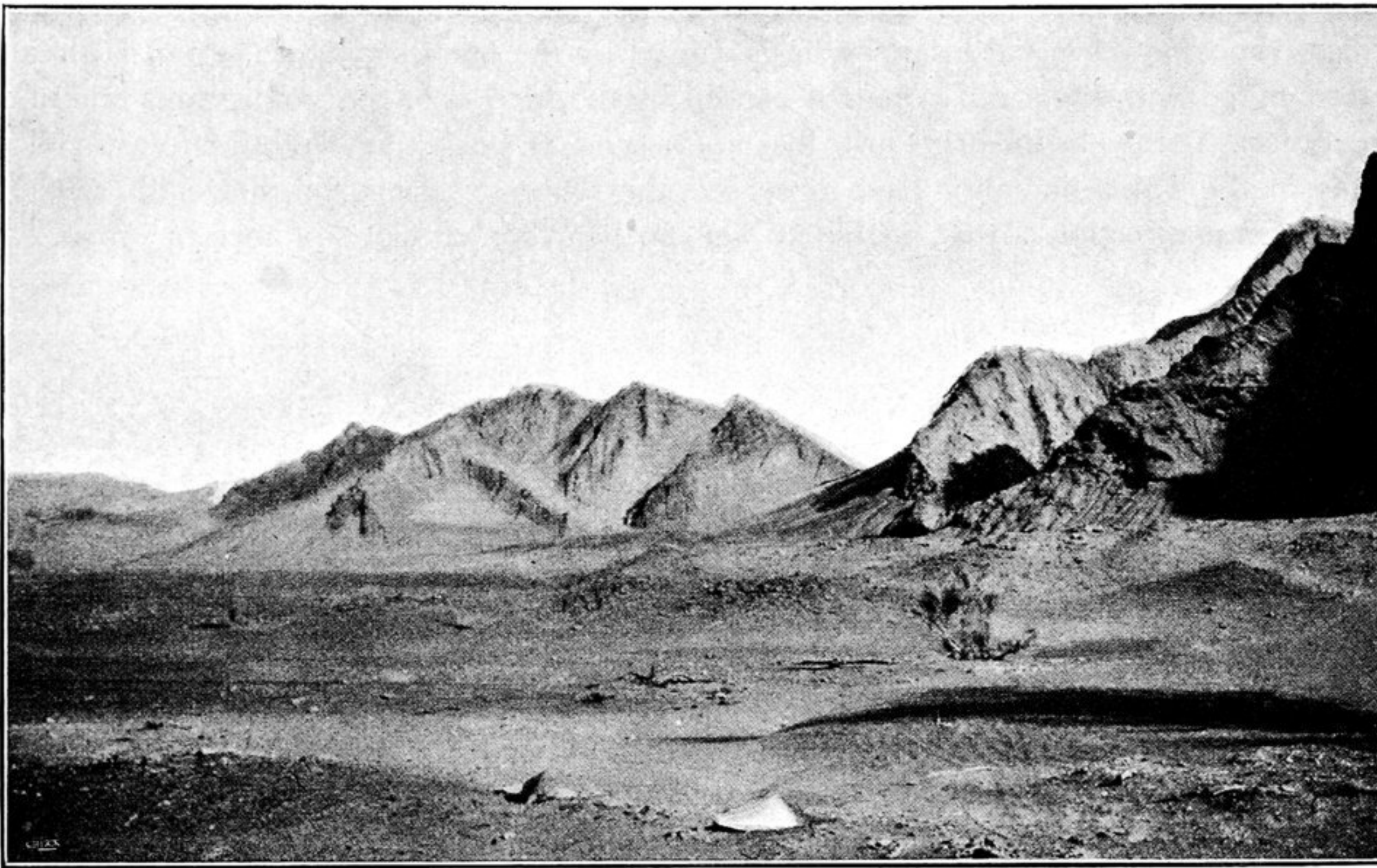


Fig. 206. ANOTHER VIEW OF THE SAME.

foot of the lofty cliffs on the right, we should at once have become entangled in a chaotic labyrinth of high dunes, displaying none of the regular and favourable architecture of the dunes in the Desert of Tschertschen. The northern slope of the rocky projecting »claw» on our left was covered more than half-way up with wave-shaped dunes; and without doubt the same thing has happened all along the northern face of this desert-range. Immediately along its foot the dunes have piled themselves up to twice their ordinary height, like the breakers on a rocky coast. Smaller obstacles, such as tamarisk-mounds and poplars, are avoided by the sand, which arranges itself round them in an annular dune, a consequence of the arrest of the atmospheric current when passing the obstacle. On the sides of the mountains the effect appears to be different. Where the slope is not too steep, the atmospheric current merely deviates vertically, and thus its power of transporting the drift-sand is not checked. It might be expected that the individual dunes would indeed be able to climb up a