

CHAPTER II.

OVER THE AKATO-TAGH AND THE TSCHIMEN-TAGH.

July 9th. For some hours further the track led almost due south. The snowy top of Ilve-tschimen shone out brilliantly in the clear atmosphere, but the long crest of the Astin-tagh was but faintly outlined, and now appeared, seen at such a great distance, to be twice as high as when we were close to it. That however was but an illusion, due to the long gentle slope on its southern versant. As seen in the morning sunlight, it was lit up with precisely the same shades as the range itself, the whole appearing like one unbroken upward sweep (fig. 28). On our left we had the range of the Akato-tagh, with its tolerably low offshoots, for we were approaching it at an acute angle, the range here running towards the east-north-east. Out of the transverse glens in its flanks issue the numerous gullies which we crossed, though they are frequently pretty deep and distinctly marked. The ascent was very slow in the direction in which we were travelling, though we could feel that it was gradually growing steeper. The surface was soft, there being but a thin sprinkling of gravel. The teresken steppe thinned out, the scrub being confined to the watercourses and gullies, in which water sometimes flows. To the west of our route I noted, at a distance of one to two kilometers, two quite small isolated rocky knolls rising above the level ground.

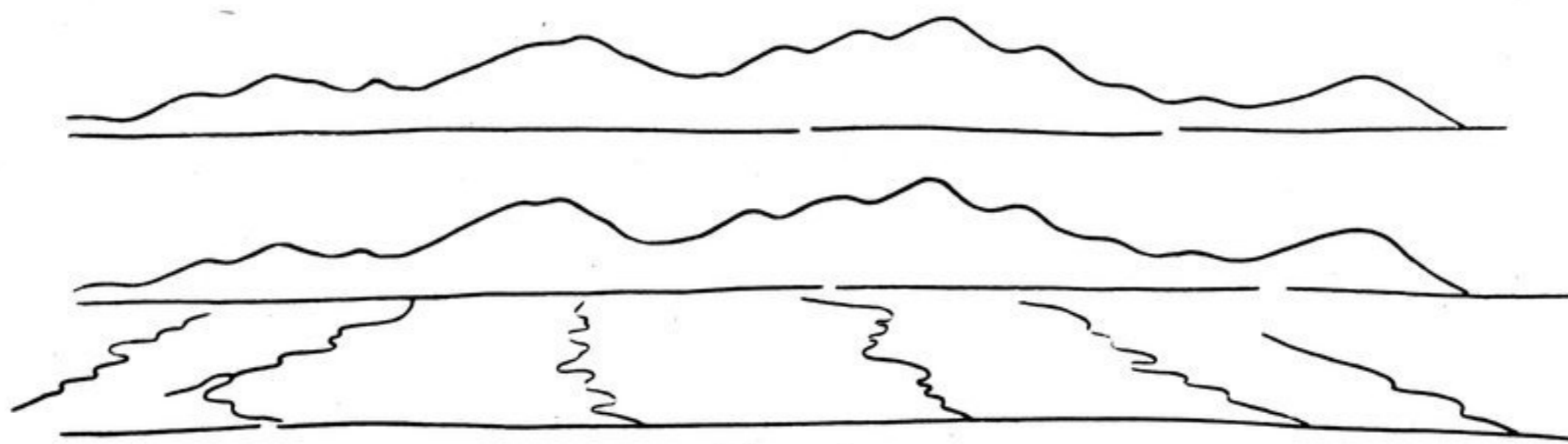


Fig. 28.

At the foot of a little spur of the Akato-tagh, built up of soft materials, there is a spring with a small open basin; its water, bright and beautiful, had a temperature of 12° C. This spring, which is known simply as Bulak, is surrounded by a small patch of luxuriant grass. A long way off in the S. 80° W. we could see a