

which we took along the line I have indicated were 0.23 m., 0.46, 0.68, 0.79, 0.83, and 0.56 m. Thus a drop of only 0.83 m. would convert all this part of the lake into a single expanse of dry white salt, and the island into a peninsula jutting out from the northern shore. It is possible that something like this does take place every year or after cold summers, when the river carries a smaller volume than usual. As seen from Camp XXX the island really did look like a peninsula, for it seemed to be connected with the low-lying land behind it.

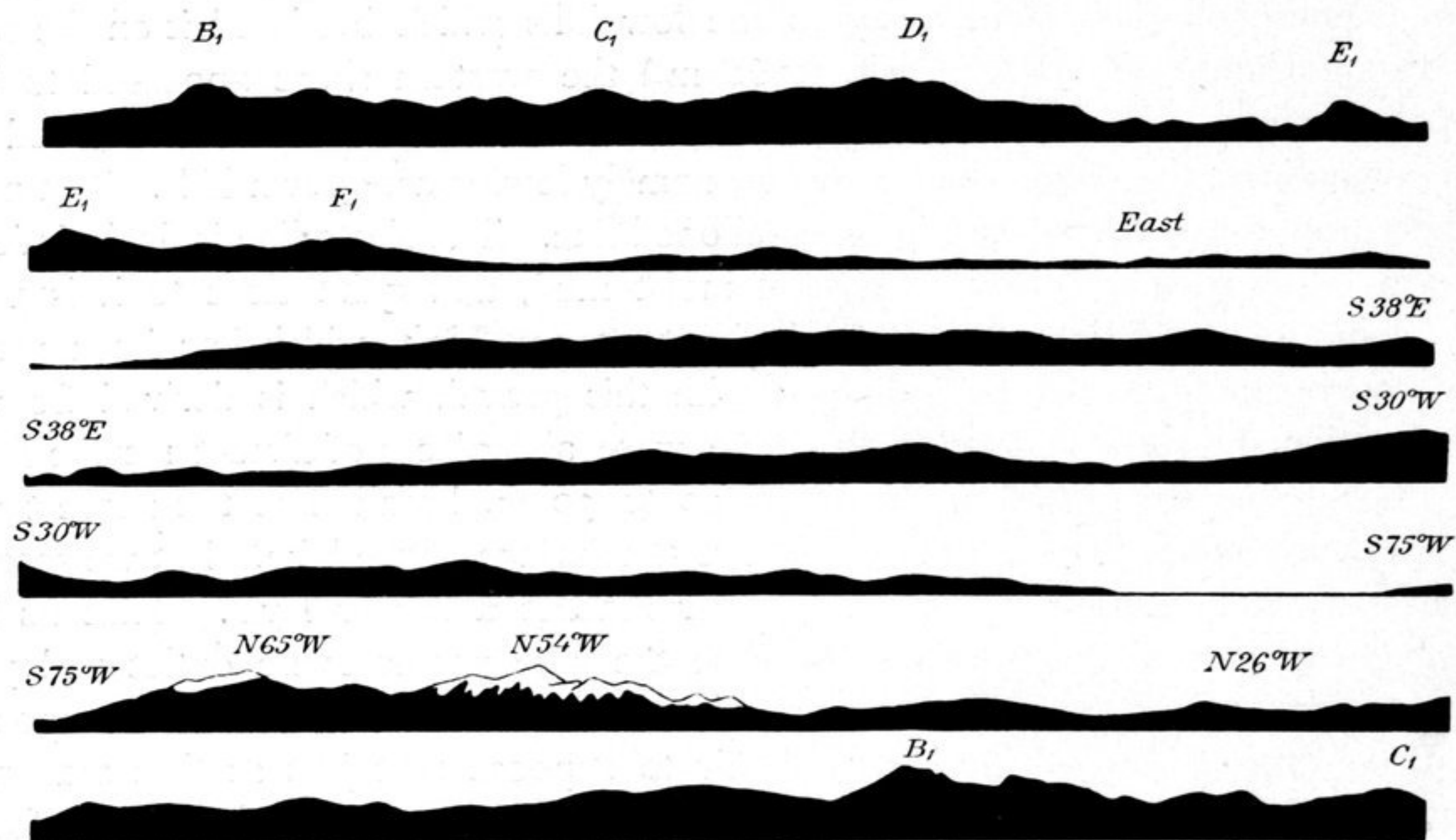


Fig. 78. PANORAMA ROUND THE LAKE, TAKEN FROM THE ISLAND.

The island is pear-shaped, the stalk a low, narrow, sandy promontory, pointing towards the north, so that the depth between the promontory and the mainland is probably very small. The island rises to its highest point, about 5 m., in the southwest; along its western side runs a low ridge, drooping towards the east and the north. This miniature plateau is clothed with excellent grass, which had never been touched, nor was there any sign that it is ever visited by either wild yaks or antelopes. These animals would have no difficulty in reaching the island, but either they never suspect that the lake is so shallow, or else their instinct tells them that in such a precarious situation they would be exposed to greater danger than usual from an attack by wolves. Besides, there are no doubt equally good grazing-grounds in more accessible situations, though this little spot was the best we saw in that part of Tibet, better at any rate than the grazing on the shores round the lake. This may to some extent be due to the influence of the salt water upon the temperature of the air. In the northern part of the lake the temperature of the water in the morning amounted to 14° , but it no doubt drops a few points on a frosty night. During the autumn and early winter this extremely thin layer of water will be cooled pretty rapidly down below 0° ; but before that happens the lake will also to some extent have moderated the cold around its shores.