

November 29th. Just above our camp the stream of the transverse glen forms a narrow ravine or gorge, marvellously deep and steep, sunk between precipitous granite walls and with its bottom choked with detritus and stones. The steps and platforms in its bed will of course form waterfalls after rain. This gorge is absolutely impassable; accordingly, in order to get past it, we were obliged to cross the glen, just above our camp, by means of a very steep detritus slope, the summit of which we only reached after zigzagging backwards and forwards times without end. On the other side of it we again descended into the glen, which was then wider. Shortly afterwards we came to the trough proper of the glen, or the gathering basin into which the waters, whether from springs or melting snows, collect from

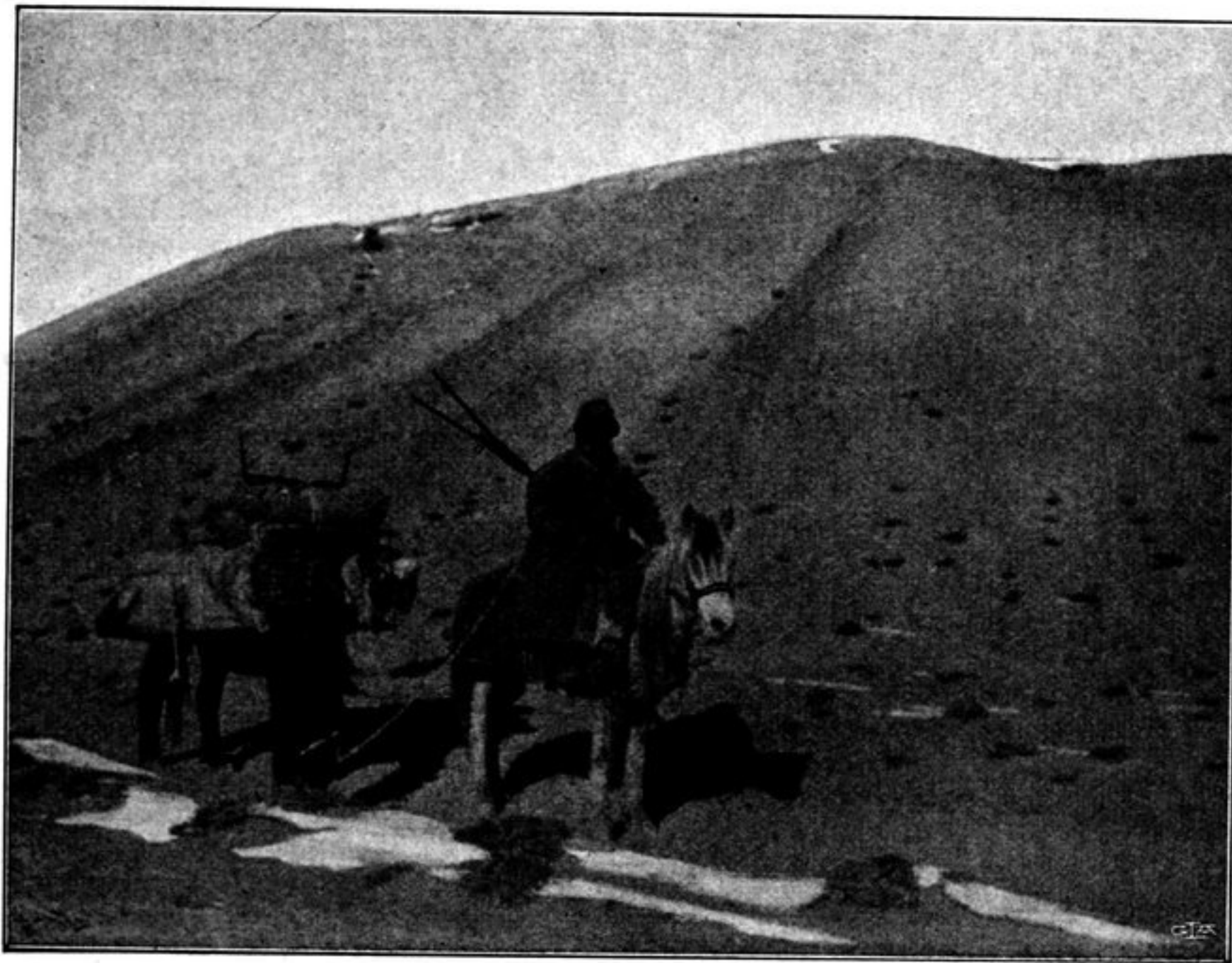


Fig. 188. THE PASS OF GHOPUR-ALIK.

all directions to feed the torrent which forces its way through the gorge I have mentioned, and below which the glen again expands. The ascent, which had all the time been very steep, increased to a notable degree, while the pass became inconceivably difficult and irksome, and to make matters worse the acclivity was everywhere thickly strewn with moderate-sized gravel. The snow lay here in a thin but unbroken sheet. The pass formed such a slight depression in the crest of the range that we were hardly aware of it until we were close upon it. The peaks at each side rise but very little higher than the pass itself. The summit of the pass is narrow and sharp, and bears no resemblance to the flat arch or platform which is so common a feature of the passes on the highlands of Central Tibet. Another characteristic feature is the short and precipitous ascent. The absolute altitude amounts to 4926 m., so that this is one of the loftiest passes we essayed in northern Tibet. Its name is Ghopur-alik; Ghopur being reputedly a hunter from Tschertschen who used to come here yak-hunting.