

gullies, most of them then dry. These all make their way down to the series of tiny lakes or pools which we passed close on our right hand in the middle of the valley. Stretches of grass were quite common, though frequently interrupted by perfectly barren ground. Curiously enough, we failed to detect droppings of either wild yaks or kulans. This broken ground appeared to reach all the way to the foot of the Arka-tagh. The scenery still preserved the same monotony; hour after hour we tramped away westwards without any change taking place. Our view on ahead was unceasingly limited by fresh irregularities and fresh upswellings of the surface.

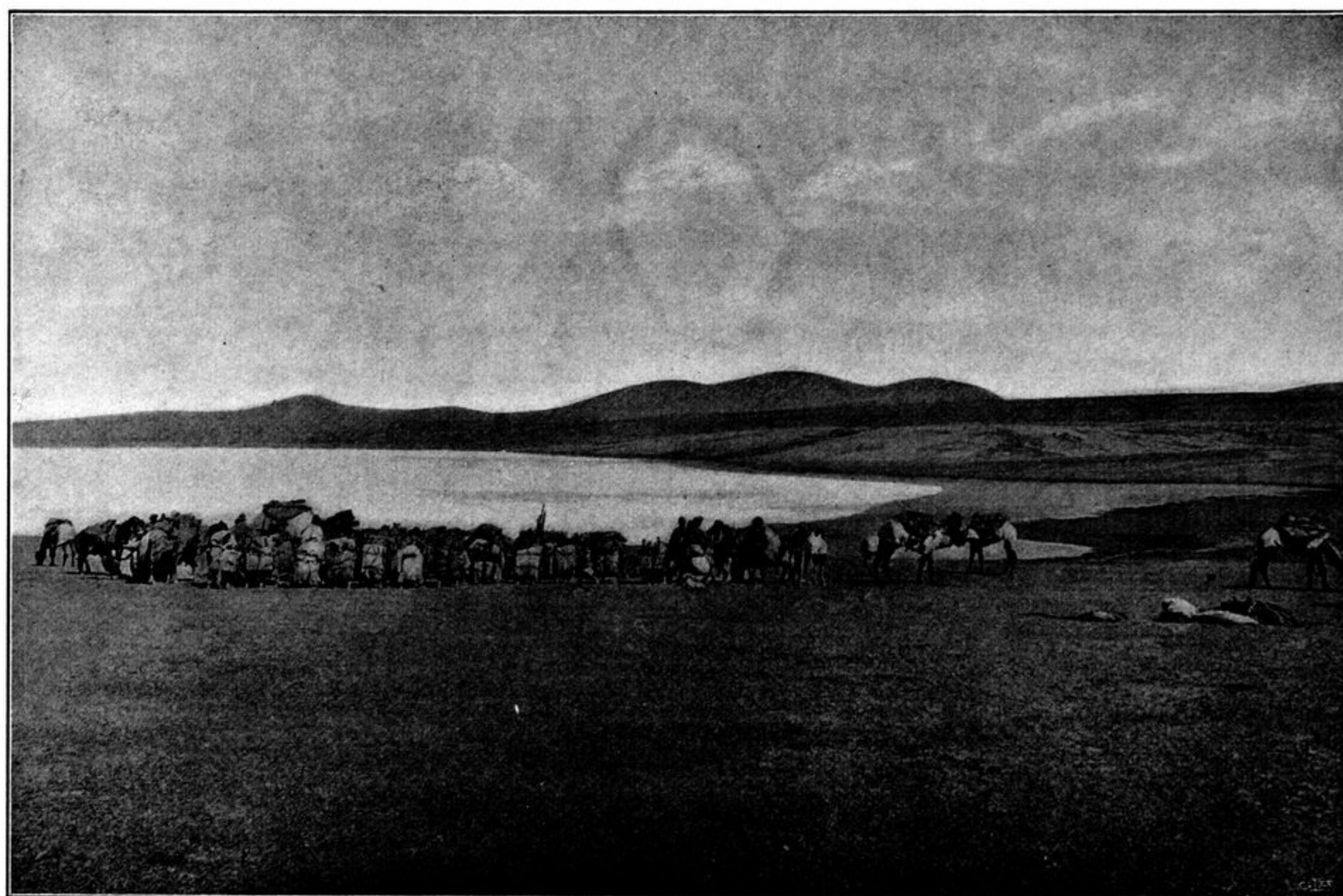


Fig. 343. VIEW LOOKING EAST FROM CAMP XXIII (CONTINUATION TO THE RIGHT OF FIG. 342).

The silhouettes of our advanced guard would be outlined on the top of the next hill, then down they would go on the other side, but soon would loom again on the summit of the next eminence beyond. An immense double peak, which lifted itself up to the N.  $87^{\circ}$  W. from a compact snowy mass of the Arka-tagh, stood out like a beacon at the distance of I dare say a hundred kilometers or so, but was nevertheless sharply and distinctly outlined in the clear, transparent atmosphere. We made Camp XXIII on the western shore of a large pool or small lake at an altitude of 5073 m., almost exactly the same elevation as the last camp before it. The lake was encircled by grassy hills; its ice-sheet was soft, and looked as if it would soon disappear, for there was a ring of open water all round the shores, which were of course a trifle warmer.

At 9 p.m. an extremely violent tempest burst out of the north-north-east; but though it covered the sky with clouds, no rain fell; the temperature however rose