

On the west side of the hills which stand immediately west of that Camp (Camp XXIV of this present journey) the grass was relatively good, so that I there gave the caravan a day's rest. On the opposite or right bank my Cossacks and the Lama built up an *obo* in the shape of two pointed pyramids (fig. 346), while the Mussulmans set up a smaller *nischan*. Hence it will be quite easy for the future traveller to recognise the spot.

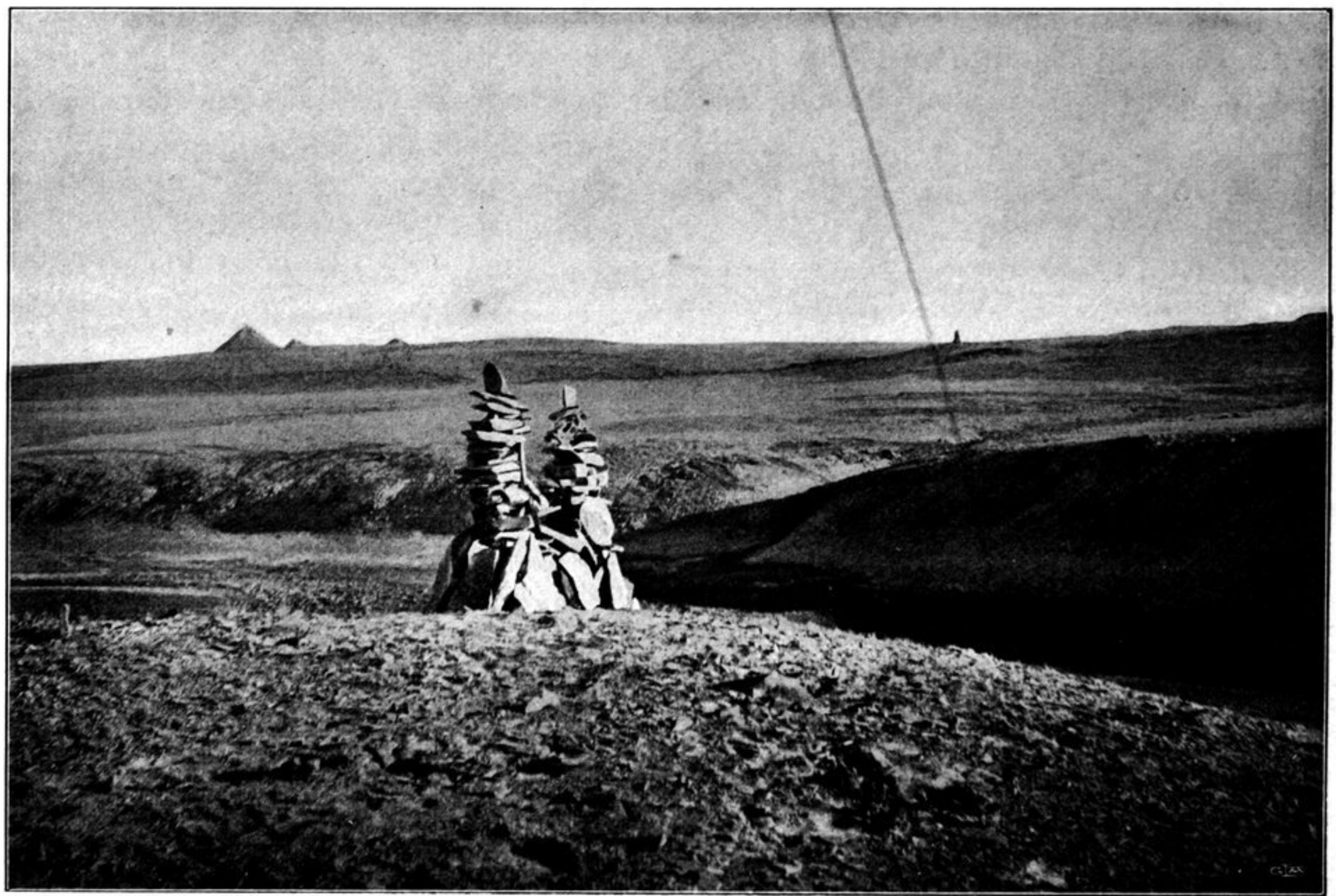


Fig. 346. CAMP XXIV. VIEW TO THE S 25° E.

Faunal life was the reverse of plentiful; the only living creatures we saw were a couple of wild-geese, which came flying from the west, though next day they returned in the same direction. On both these days the temperature was unusually high, being not far short of 20° at noon. Nevertheless the wind continued to blow hard from the west, just as it had done when we visited this lake before. The wind drives in fact through these open latitudinal valleys with the regularity and force of a trade-wind; and, as the ground in this region was dry, the air was filled with whirling clouds of dust.

As for the lake, end of June though it was, it was still for the most part frozen, though the ice was rotten and soft, and looked as if it could not long resist the now rapidly rising summer temperature. In the beginning of July, or at all events during the first half of that month, the lake would be entirely free from ice; but it would hardly remain unfrozen for more than three months. On the 28th September we found the lake itself without a vestige of ice, though in a detached basin at its eastern extremity, into which a river discharges, there was a thin crust.