

and west. Despite the snow and rain, the ground was hard and firm, and not even the slightest saddle interposed itself in our path. Both north and south we had low crests at a pretty considerable distance away. That on the south, which appeared to be double or even treble, was not able to mask the main range which towered up behind it, and which by reason of its immense altitude presented anything but an inviting appearance. The lowest part of the valley is occupied by two quite insignificant salt lakes, and into them run from every direction a number of dry and not very distinctly marked watercourses. The grass thinned out towards the east, the moss was more abundant, but perfectly barren tracts were quite common. In the neighbourhood of our camp we came across a variety of grass to which my Mongolian Lama gave the name of *buka schirik*, or »yak grass». On the great road between Tsajdam and Lhasa, this is said to appear four days before the first Tibetans are encountered. There was any number of wild animals; the wild yaks, the kulans, the orongos all formed small herds, and besides these there were hares and partridges.



Fig. 362. LOOKING N 5° E FROM CAMP XXXVII.

We directed our course towards a minor projecting spur; but before reaching it, crossed over a river with several arms, running towards the north-east and carrying about 5 cub.m. of water, only in part clear. This came down from the southern range, which was now at no very great distance away. The nearest foot-hills on