

Nor was it long before the hail began to smite us, and that with terrific force, and the tempest lasted for several hours. Sometimes it was impossible to get a glimpse of the country in our neighbourhood. During the second half of the march neither hail nor rain fell, but the massed clouds continued to be quite as dense and an unearthly darkness prevailed all day. In all my journeys in Tibet I have found it an almost unfailing characteristic of the mountain-ranges that they are practically always enveloped in clouds, and that precipitation is always taking place, whereas the relatively low latitudinal valleys on both sides are, thanks to the lofty bordering ranges, relatively protected against hail and rain. This is at all events true of the summer and spring; though from the accounts of Bonvalot and Grenard the quantity of cloud and the amount of precipitation are both less in the winter.

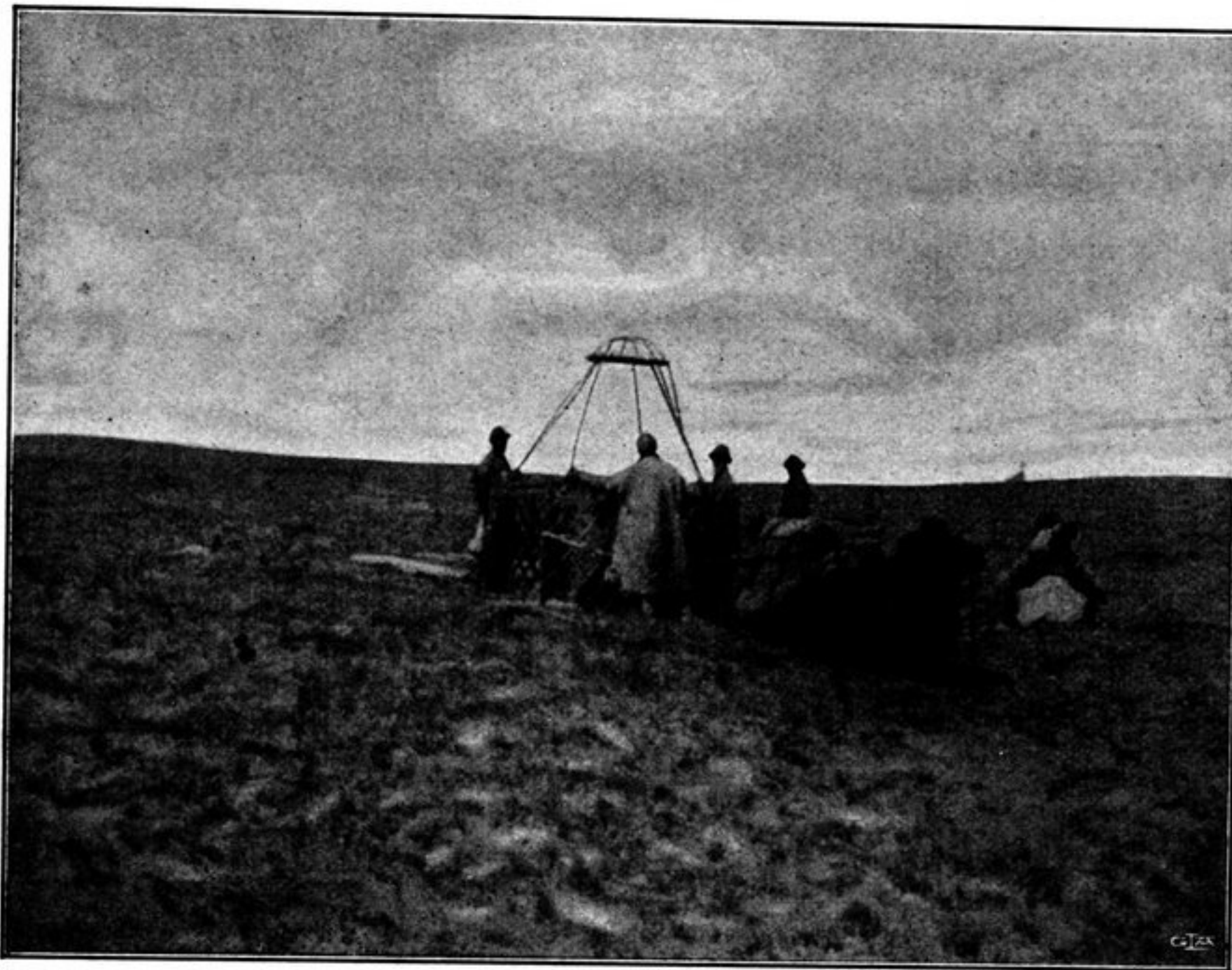


Fig. 369. RELATIVELY GOOD GRAZING.

We now directed our steps towards the south-east and south-south-east, still continuing up the glen, where the surface soon became almost completely barren. We again drew near to the river, and at the point where we next forded it it was divided into only two arms, containing together a volume of 8 cub.m. This great falling off was due not only to the weather and the time of day, but also to the fact that lower down the stream is joined by so many tributaries. After that we did the rest of the ascent on the left bank, sometimes in the bed of the stream, though this was in places dangerously soft, and sometimes on the hills that overhang it. Except for a few rare patches of short, thin grass, the vegetation was now reduced to moss. The glen had again grown flat and open, and the view extensive, in so far as it was not obscured by clouds or hail. In three separate localities we saw traces of hunters' camps, the easily recognisable sign being three sooty stones arranged to support the cooking-pot, with ashes in between them. One of these