

When we at length started again for the second time, on 25th August, from Camp XLIV, in order to traverse that part of the highlands which still lay between us and the Selling-tso the sky was anything but propitious; but it seemed hopeless waiting for better weather, the glens and mountains were constantly filled with dense, dark masses of cloud, and the sun showed himself but seldom. The incessant downpour of the last few days had also made the loose earthy hills in our neighbourhood as soft as pap. The entire region was like a veritable dumping-ground for all the mud for miles round; we sank into it deeply without finding bottom. When we started it was raining cats and dogs; nevertheless we proceeded, travelling south, with an inclination towards the west, and having forded the river

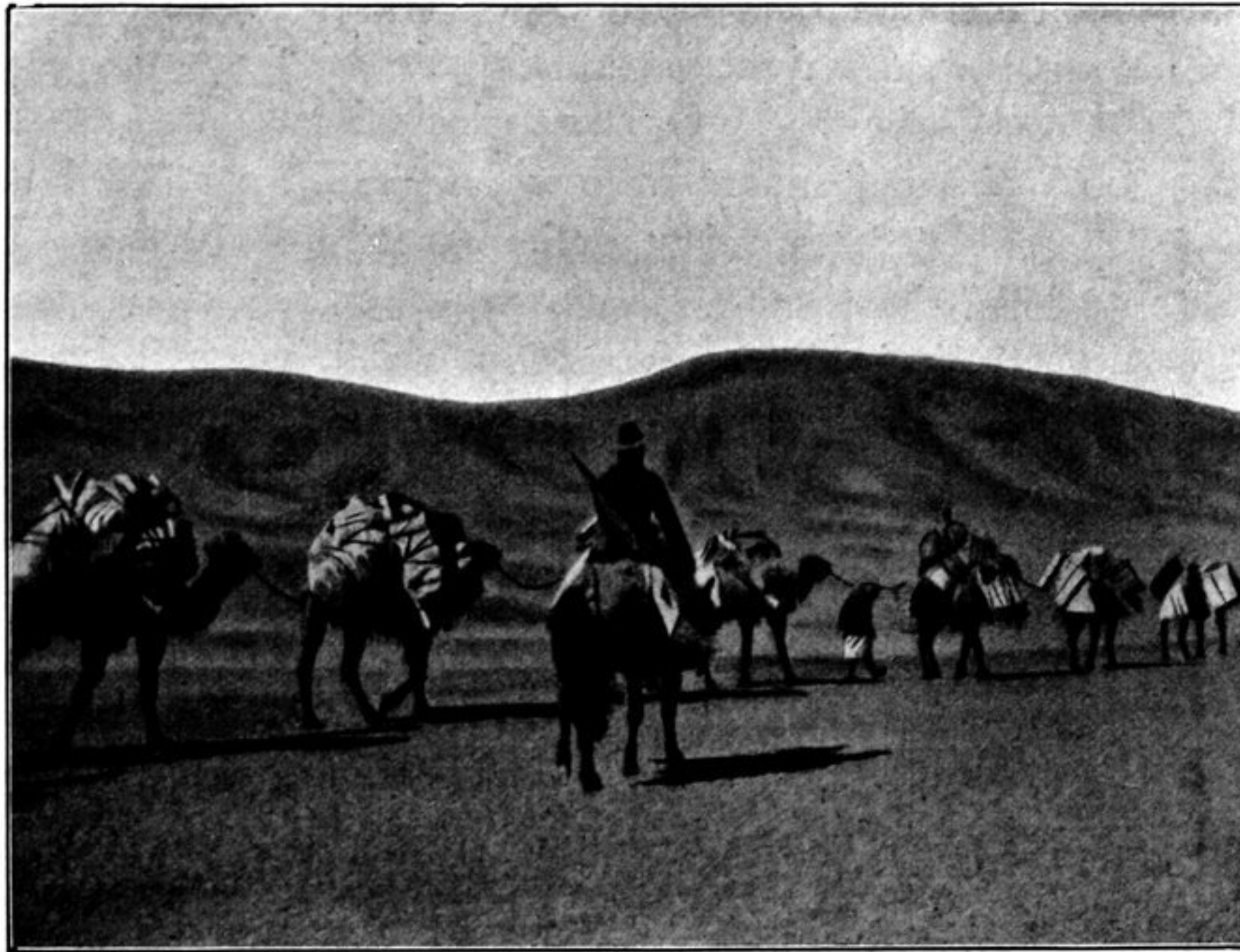


Fig. 2. ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU.

which was then in fuller flood and muddier than ever, we ascended the bed of a little contributory watercourse on the opposite side. There the ground was one vast pudding, and we were obliged to zigzag a good deal and often to retrace our steps for long distances. The watercourse led up to a little pass having an altitude of 5198 m. After that we crossed over a second, smaller threshold, as well as a stream swollen from the rain and flowing towards the N. 70° E., which united shortly afterwards with the river of our headquarters camp. Thence the ground sloped slowly up towards a main pass in the foothill range at an altitude of 5236 m. This climb was one of the stiffest, if not absolutely the very stiffest, that I have ever made in Tibet. Had I not been accompanied by so many men we should have been obliged to leave several of our camels behind; but as it was, by all working together, we succeeded in saving them all. One lesson I learned thoroughly, that neither summer nor autumn, nor above all the rainy season, is the time to choose for travelling in Central Tibet. It is only in late autumn, in winter, and in spring that the ground bears everywhere.