

gularly shaped slabs, with an opening in the middle. The entrance to the grotto is about 3 m. high. Standing in its interior, in the deep cool shade, we had a peculiar and enchanting view of the mountainous country to the east, then bathed in sunshine. That this grotto had long been used as a human habitation was manifest from the thick coating of soot which clung to its roof and walls, betraying that the fires had been made of yak-dung or sheep-dung. Indeed there was some of the last named still heaped up inside the grotto; from this we may also infer that shepherds sometimes use the grotto as a night-shelter for their flocks in winter. But the numerous slabs, with the usual formula of prayer engraven on them, that were lying on ledges and cornices of rock all over the inside of the grotto pointed

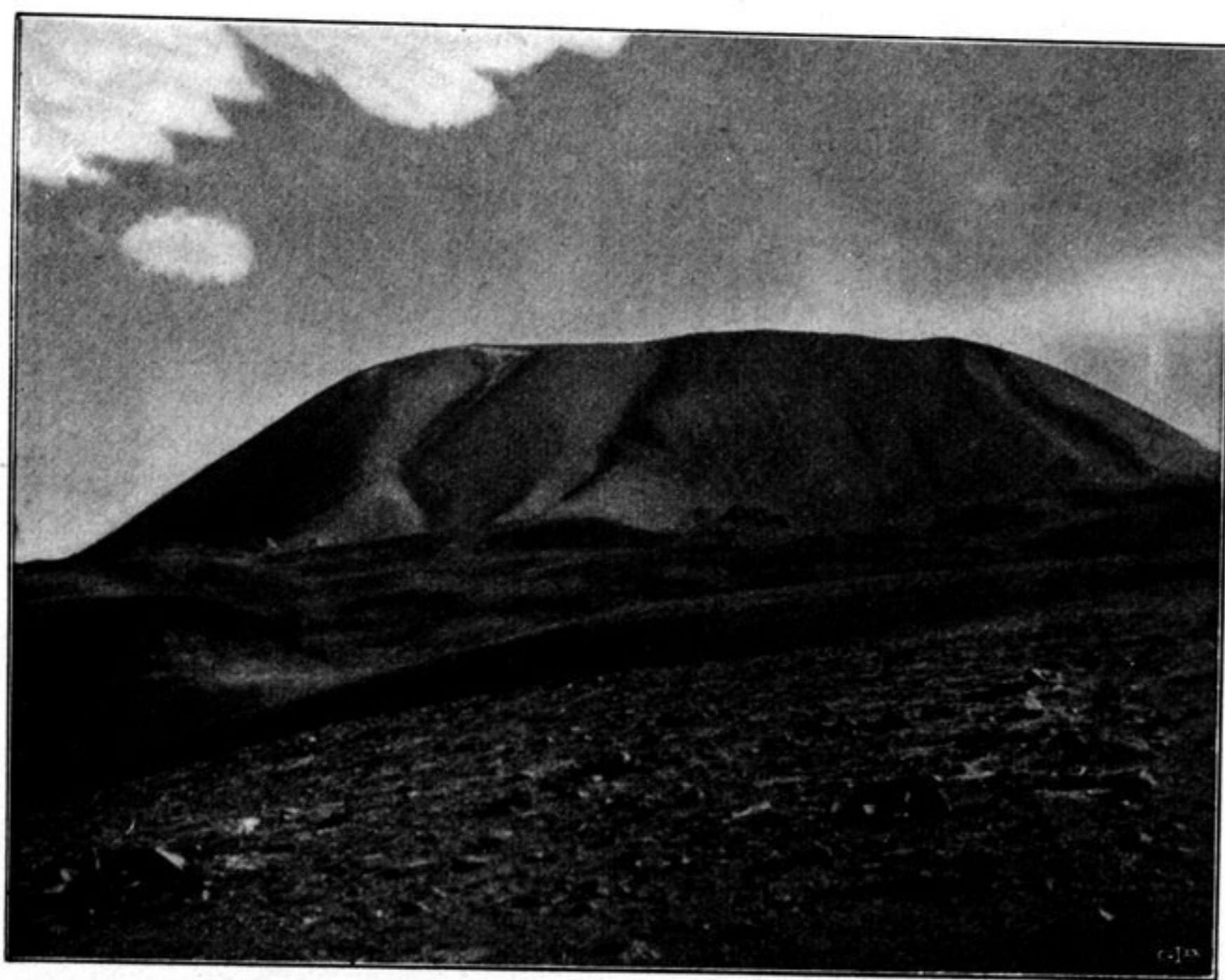


Fig. 77. THE ERENAK-TSCHIMO AS SEEN FROM THE PASS.

to its apparently being used for religious purposes. Possibly some hermit or lama, having dedicated his life to the service of the deities of the mountain, may have had his domicile here. The discovery of the sacred slabs at these two places, the obo and the grotto, are an unmistakable proof, that the mountain is regarded as holy. The obo was not, it is true, of any great size; but it was nevertheless erected with a certain amount of care. It consisted of a square pediment, with a big stone placed on edge on the middle of it, while several slabs, all inscribed with the prayer formula, were arranged round it as if placed on a table. The slabs were made of marble, green schist, and red sandstone. Nor is it surprising, that a people, addicted as the Tibetans are to belief in nature gods, should be induced by the peculiar features of this particular region to consider that it is in intimate connection with their deities. Even by its very appearance alone, towering up as it does amongst the clouds, and visible as it is from every direction, the Erenak-tschimo produces an especially striking effect upon the mind. And then there are the little crests, with their strange outlines, resembling fortress walls, erected by