



Fig. 151.

there was a copious inflow into the lake, the erosive energy of its emissary must have been especially energetic. And yet the absence of a watercourse along the bottom of the valley

is not surprising, because the rivulets which stream down off the northern mountains towards the mountains on the south are far too feeble to get as far; in fact, they probably disappear shortly after they issue out of their respective transverse glens. During the course of time the volume of the lake's emissary will have grown less and less, until at last it was a mere brook that crawled along the base of the terrace, and now even the brook has ceased to flow. When that came to pass, the lake was cut off and turned salt. In the intermediate transitional stage the lake would oscillate and vary in level from year to year and from season to season. Now it has entirely disappeared, with the exception of the basins at the springs, and these probably expand in area during the rainy season. Here we have an instance of the way in which the plateau-land of Tibet becomes broken up into a continuously increasing number of self-contained drainage-basins in consequence of the progressive desiccation of the climate. On the whole these parts of western Tibet preserve the same accentuated characteristics as those parts of it which we had been travelling through all the way from Naktson-tso. Its character is best and simplest defined by saying, that it is a stupendous plateau-land, upon which mountain-ranges exhibiting wild craggy outlines have been piled up; these run towards N. 50° to N. 60° W. and are separated one from the other by latitudinal valleys more or less broad. From the route that we travelled there would have been no difficulty in making our way towards the north, for the ranges on that side are often broken and possess many convenient passes. But it would be a much more difficult business to penetrate southwards from the same line of march, because the mountains in that direction are higher. Hence we may still continue to speak appropriately of the immense swelling which divides Central

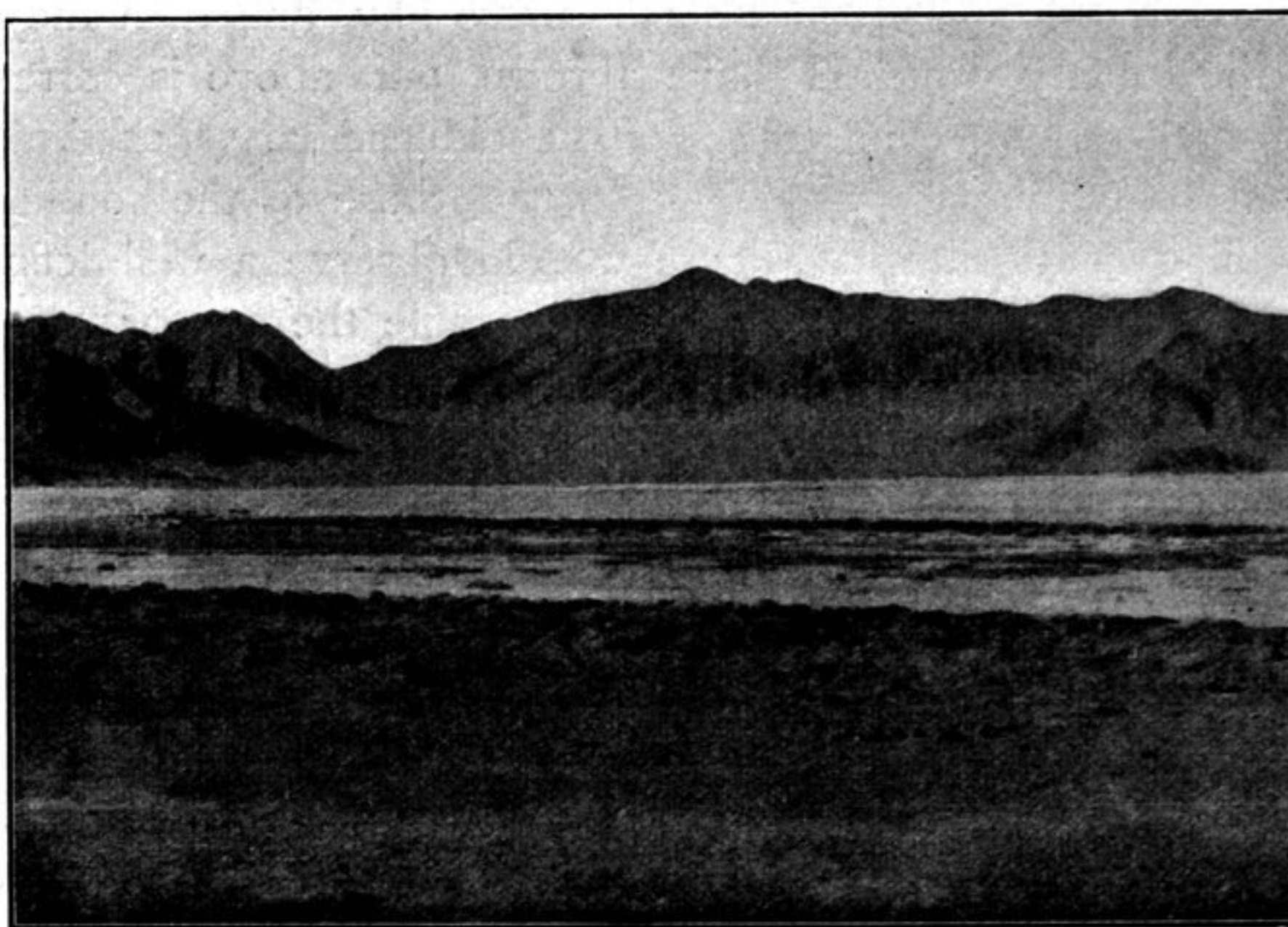


Fig. 152. LOOKING N 22° W FROM CAMP CXXXIV.