

had left the hot tropical plains of India, and within another few weeks I should be in the warm and sultry clime of East Turkestan; and between the two intervened the narrowest part of the Tibetan highlands, with its still arctic climate.

Towards evening we sent the two hundred yaks with their eighty drivers up towards the pass to trample down the path, which we intended to use as early as possible the following morning.

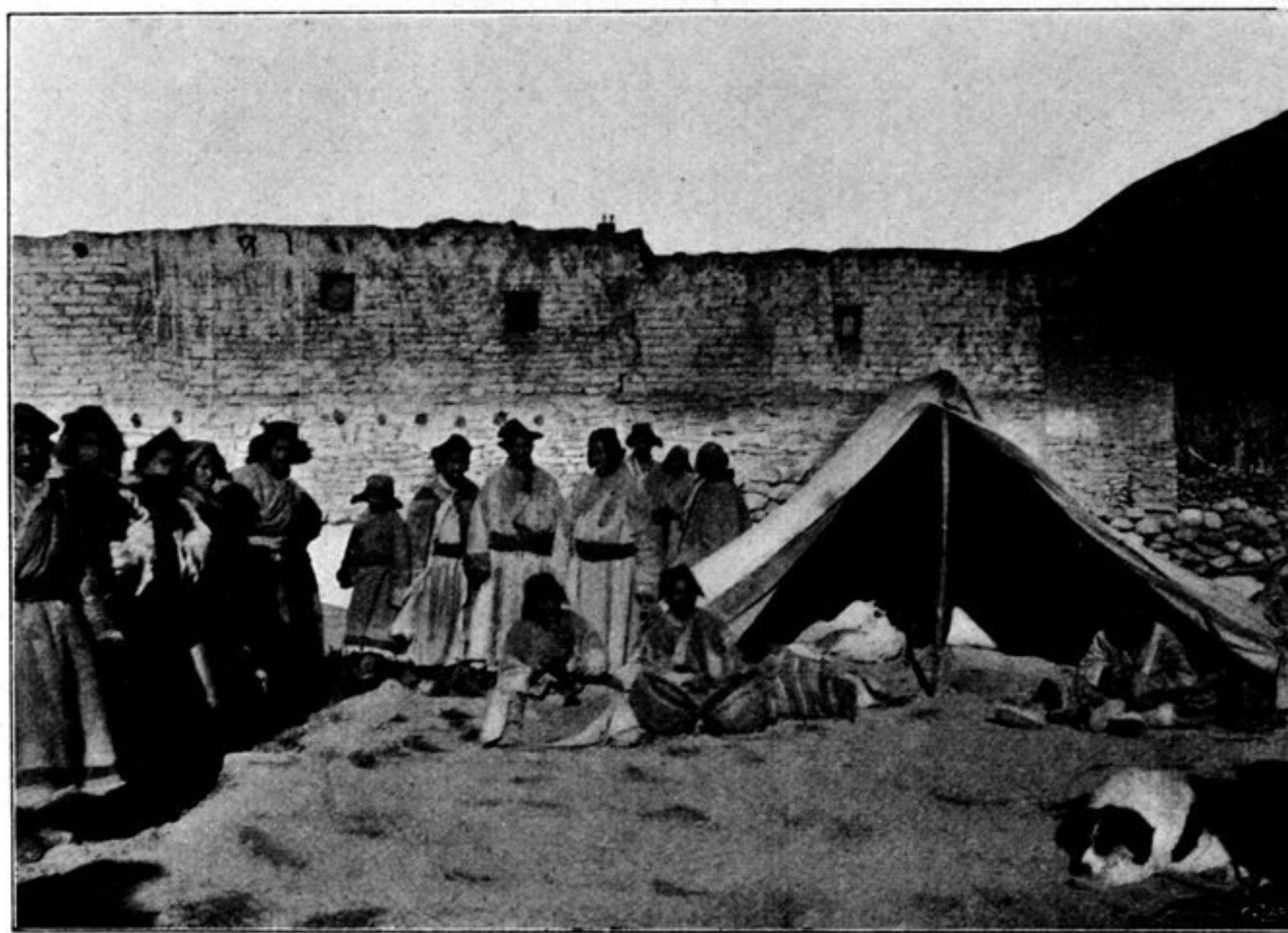


Fig. 311. A HOUSE AT DRUGUB.

On the 9th April I crossed over the Tschang-la for the second time. In the evening it had again snowed smartly, but in the morning the sky was perfectly clear, except that a few vaporous clouds like mist formed a fantastic and ragged corona round the rising sun. All the way to Singrul we followed the path on the right side of the glen, that on the left, which we had used in December, being impassable owing to the snow. As the latter side was in the shade, the snow not only accumulated there in greater quantity, but it also remained a longer time proof against thawing. The road on the right also partook less of a break-neck character than that on the left, this being in no slight degree the effect of the snow in levelling up inequalities, and by its uniform softness and whiteness masking the harsher features of the vertical relief. The day was all that could be desired for a journey across this lofty pass: not a breath of air moved, not a speck of cloud to be seen in the sky. For a couple of hours in the morning however delicate, buoyant spicules of ice were floating about in the atmosphere, though without impairing the effects of the sun's power. Very soon after the sun rose, we felt it warm, and it grew increasingly warmer as the day wore on and we ascended, until at noon the heat was more intense than I ever remember it to have been; indeed during the greater part of the day it might quite correctly have been described as painful and oppressive. We had to throw off our overcoats, the sun shone fiercely in our faces, and we longed, but longed in vain, for a refreshing breeze or a cloud to moderate the