

balghun bushes now ceased entirely; we saw the last at Sultan-tschukur, where also a little grass was growing. The rock was still predominantly granite, together with a fine-grained, black rock, either diabase or diorite. The bottom of the glen was littered with loose gravel, which tired us, for it was merely here and there that it was consolidated or replaced by strips of sand. The gullies cut through this material showed by their size and their sharp edges that in summer the volume even thus high up must be very considerable. The glen was on the whole of the same breadth as hitherto, except that at the bends it often widened out considerably. Sultan-tschukur is one of these wider localities. Every now and again a big subsidiary glen would join our glen now from the one side, now from the other. The snow lay thinner and thinner on the mountains, though there was not so much as a trace in the bottom of the glen. The spot where we encamped bears no name. By that we had reached an altitude of 4414 m. The country was perfectly barren; plant-life was confined exclusively to a few scattered teresken plants.

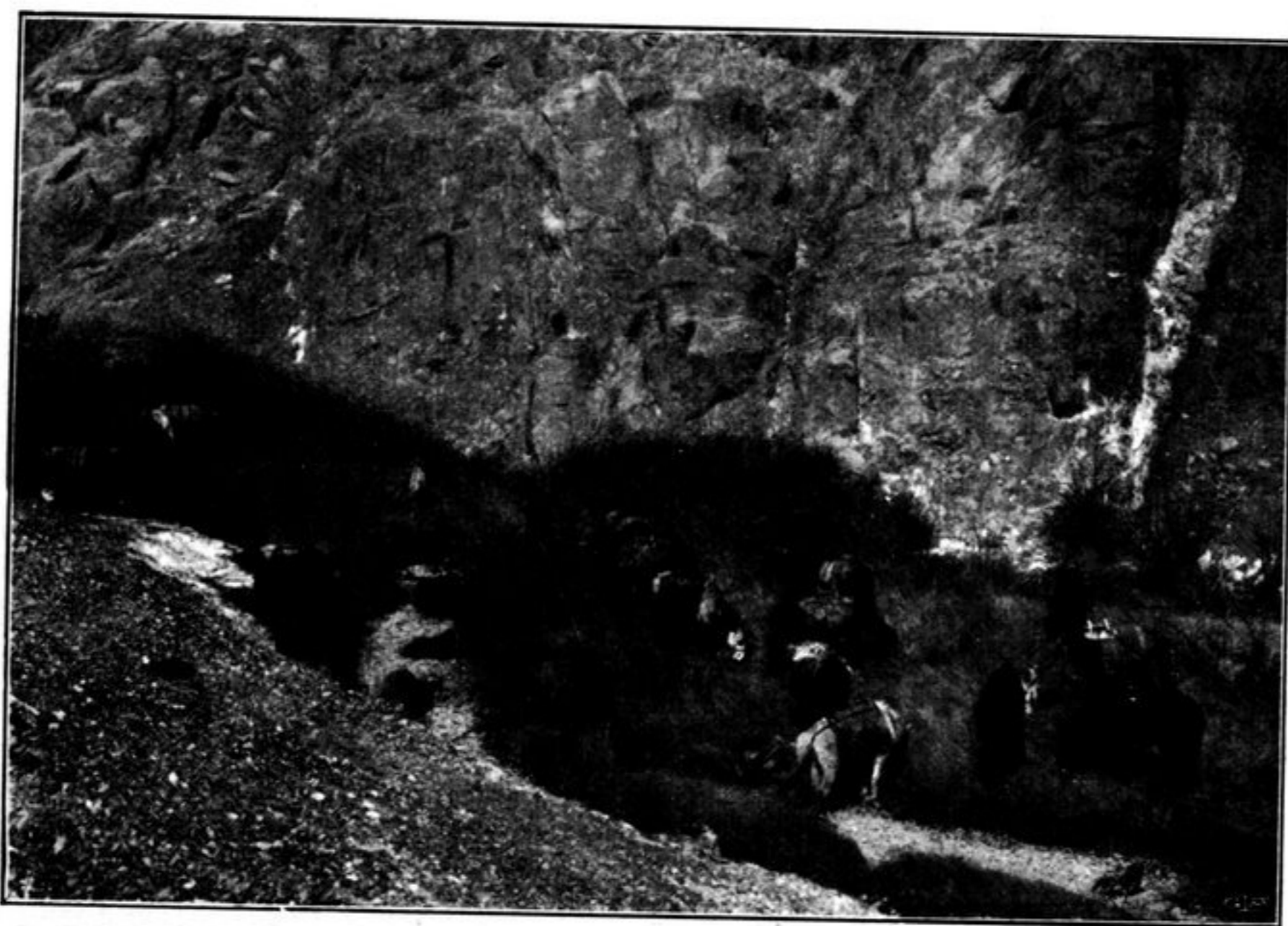


Fig. 330. IN THE DEPRESSION OF MANDARLIK.

The caravan animals selected for crossing over the Kara-korum are nearly always horses, sometimes mules, but seldom camels, and then of course only such camels as are accustomed to travelling amongst mountains. On the little patch of vegetation that we found at Sultan-tschukur we observed any quantity of camel-dung, apparently a year old. Owing to the loss of baggage-animals which it entails this difficult route has never been favourable for trade between India and East Turkestan, nor does it ever seem likely to come much into vogue for that purpose. Still it is used by merchants from Jarkent; but when they travel with camels they are wont to leave them behind at Sultan-tschukur and carry their wares the rest of the way to Leh on horses. The difficult glen between Schejok and Drugub, as also the pass of Tschang-la, are reputed to be fatal to camels.