

the Tschertschen-darja. Beyond this point our guides had no knowledge of any other old watercourse on the left of the Tschertschen-darja. It was now snowing again quite briskly.

On 3rd February we followed for a short distance the road on the left bank, travelling amongst bush, poplars, and fields of thick kamisch. Here the new-fallen snow did not lie upon the ground, but formed a layer 1 to 3 dm. above the surface of the ground, being supported by the leaves and stalks, and as this hollow crust kept breaking under our horses' hoofs it made the ride very irksome.



Fig. 339. CROSSING THE SNOW-COVERED ICE-SHEET OF THE TSCHERTSCHEN-DARJA.

At length we reached Darja-kosch, a place on the right bank where a konadarja branches off. The name denotes, properly speaking, the contrary, that is to say, a point of junction; but in these matters the natives are not very accurate. During the rest of the day's journey this old bed ran parallel to the existing river, proving that the latter does not everywhere turn to the right, but on the contrary, along this stretch at all events, travels towards the north. Two of the forest-tracts are known as Toghri-jangal and Jaslak. We now crossed the level snow-sheet which covered the frozen river. Both banks are clothed with thick kamisch, and backed by tamarisk-mounds, and sand-dunes which appear to be in a state of transition into mounds, for there cannot exist the least doubt that it is in this way these formations, which are so characteristic of the whole of East Turkestan, do also originate. A small tamarisk bush serves as the beginning of a small dune, and this increases as time goes on, and as it does so the bush continues to grow bigger in its endeavour to keep above the surface. This holds the dune fast, making it sta-