

exceptions to this as occurred seemed to be due to local dislocations on a small scale. It is owing to this soft, perishable material that the modelling energy of the water is attended by such clearly defined results, and indeed the relief is in a high degree wild and strongly marked. On both sides of the glen there are endless small lateral glens and ravines, very often not exceeding 1 m. in width at their lower extremities. Glancing up one of these rocky portals, we had generally a pretty distant view of the side-glen, joined in its turn by an endless number of miniature »glenlets», the head of the side-glen itself being closed by a lofty part



Fig. 210.

of the mountains, the backbone of the spurs which jut out on that side of the Akato-tagh. Everything was dead and desolate, not a sign of either animal or plant; even the ravens, which were generally wont to keep company with the caravan, failed to find their way in here. The region was perfectly still and peaceful. How different is Nature in the glens of the Akato-tagh as compared with those of the Tschimen valley, near though the latter is to the former! In the Tschimen valley we had fresh brooks, abundant vegetation, and animal life, including wild-yaks and kulans, wild sheep, antelopes, wolves, and marmots. Here on the other hand, not so much as a fly, not a single drop of water! No glen on the moon's surface could be more dreary! And yet it is rather a picturesque and attractive region, sketched in bold, strong-featured outlines.

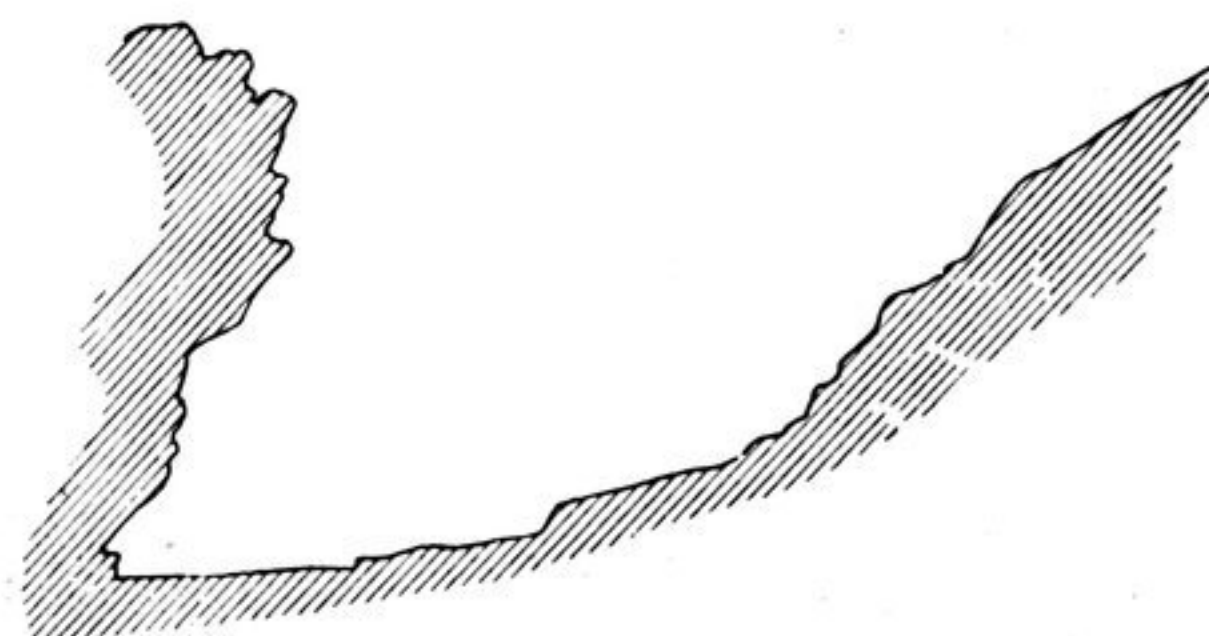


Fig. 211. OVERHANGING PART IN THE GLEN.

The side-walls are often vertical; indeed they sometimes overhang at the inner angles of the bends, where erosion has eaten its way into the clay, so much so that in places there actually are grottoes and caves. In these localities the bottom of the glen is sometimes choked with stones of every conceivable form: cubes, spheres, squares, and thin plates lay there as warnings, while other fragments clinging to the walls above looked as if they only needed a single shower to bring them down too. In some places the opposing elbows approached so close that we had to keep a sharp look-out lest the camels' loads should knock against them, and so cause a fatal land-slide from above.

The bottom of the glen as seen in cross-section is a perfectly straight line. When it contains water, this glen must be inconceivably slippery, and it would be impossible to traverse it with camels. At that time however there was not the slightest sign of moisture, and the surface was so hard that even the iron shoes of the horses left but a faint impress upon the clay, the camels making scarce any mark at all.

On the whole the glen winds very considerably, first north, then north-north-east, north-east, east-north-east, north, north-north-west, and north-west, indeed