

basin being met by a latitudinal valley from the east. The orographical structure in this region is thus rather peculiar, for two parallel ranges, with a lofty latitudinal valley between them, take turns about in functioning as the range that is pierced. First, the range on the right is breached so as to admit of drainage taking place to Tsajdam, and shortly after that another breach is made in the left-hand range in order to allow the water access to the Desert of Gobi. Thus it is first the left-hand range, and after that the right-hand range, which acts as the definitive water-divide.

Of the five transverse glens on the left the first is the most accentuated, being deeply trenched between bare black schists. It is stated to belong to the glen of Lap-schi-tschen, that is to say it enters its lowest part from the right down near the Kakir valley; this last appears to narrow towards the east and finally to come to an end. The other four transverse glens, on the other hand, have their upper parts directed towards the N. 20° W., and are said to belong to the glen of Ku-schui-cha, entering it from the left. This latter glen is joined on the right by none but insignificant »moribund» side-glens, which issue out of the lower-

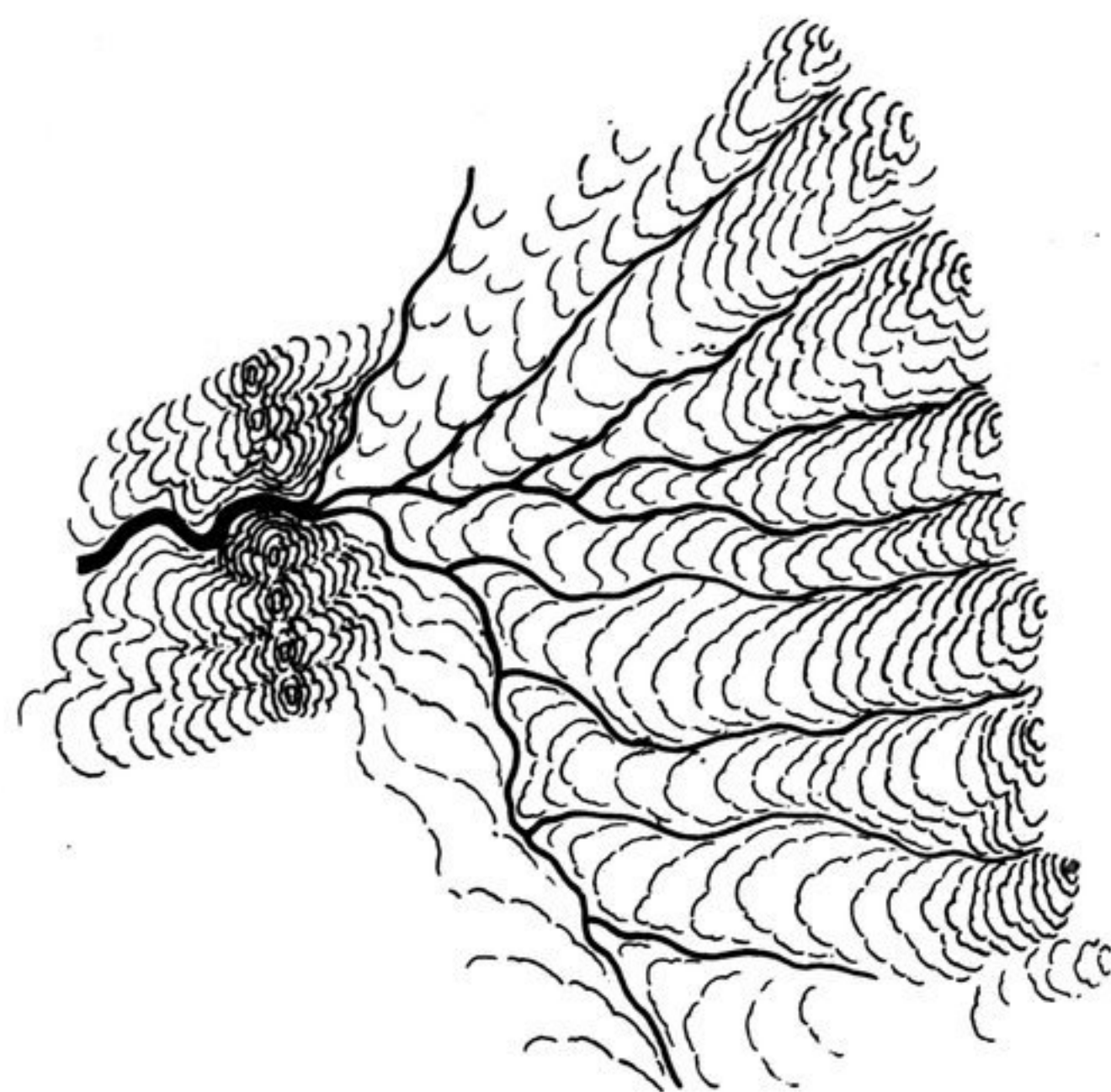


Fig. 254. A VALLEY BREAKING THROUGH THE RANGE.

lying mountain regions, whereas the side-glens that join it on the left originate under the main crest and water-divide of the Astin-tagh. In consequence of this the lowest part of the latitudinal valley runs along the southern foot of the range that is pierced through, and from it the country ascends rather energetically towards the northern foot of the main range. The two annexed illustrations (fig. 253 and 254) will make the situation clear. Seen from our latitudinal valley, which in this locality was quite narrow, not more than a couple of hundred meters across, though previously its breadth had been one to two kilometers — seen from our valley, the pierced range appeared to be infinitely small as compared with the main range, the vast rocky masses of which dominate the scene. The consummating crest of the former does not rise particularly far above the bottom of the latitudinal valley. On the other hand the chain of foot-hills which we had previously seen from the spring of Lap-schi-tschen now showed itself at the opening of each transverse glen on the north; it turned out to be of considerable size, a wild craggy, denticulated, jagged crest, with bare precipitous flanks. It makes an incomparably more imposing impression than the pierced chain, which notwithstanding forms a higher step in the swelling of the Astin-tagh system. This system constitutes a dividing-wall between the Desert of Gobi and the basin of Tsajdam, lying at a considerably higher altitude. The peaks of even the lower range appeared to be a good deal higher than the not very conspicuous culminating emi-