

that is, there was remarkably little fine gravel. It was only on the south side of the pass that the green crystalline schist cropped out in ribs barely a foot high, and dipping  $60^{\circ}$  towards the S.  $53^{\circ}$  W.

That we were not the first human beings to visit these silent, peaceful solitudes was proved by the fragment of an iron cooking-pot (see fig. 336). Its shape shows that it is not of Mussulman, but of Mongol, workmanship. This discovery too strengthens greatly the probability that at some time or other a Mongol pilgrim road really did run this way, although it is amazing that travellers ever should have chosen to traverse these parts of Tibet when there exists the easier, though it may be longer, route to Lhasa via Temirlik and Tsajdam.

On 21st June we covered a distance of 32.3 km. towards the south-south-west, and ascended another 200 m. We left on the right the little lake with its white and soft sheet of ice, which, strange to say, although it was the middle of summer, was still strong enough to bear a man. From the south-east the lake receives a couple of dry torrents, while a third, which enters at its southern extremity, brought some water.

The surface south of the lake slopes upwards at an extremely gentle angle, and although soft, it nevertheless bore. The grass thinned and practically gave out altogether. On the left we passed a little pool. Some kilometers south-west of it we rode over a river which carried 7 or 8 cub.m. in the second, the water being almost perfectly clear. At the ford the bottom was so soft that we had to exercise the utmost caution. The stream is however very superficial, and its banks are not very accentuated. It receives numerous tributaries from several directions, but its actual main channel comes down from the north side of the Arka-tagh. At the point where we forded it, it changed its direction from south-south-

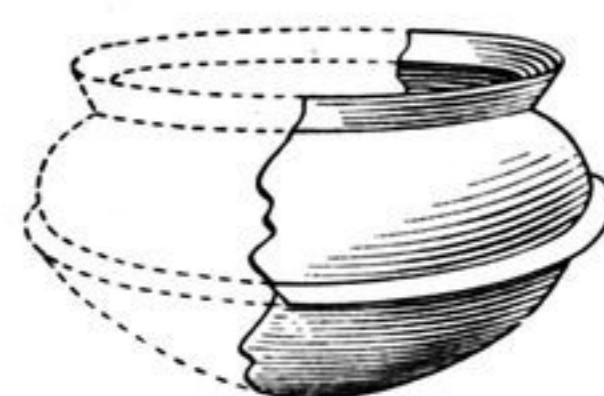


Fig. 336.



Fig. 337. APPROACHING THE ARKA-TAGH.