

irregularities of the surface worth mentioning. The grass was in places good, but grew less promising the nearer we approached to the river-mouth. The neighbourhood was remarkably destitute of animal life; the only wild animals we saw at all were some kulans at our camp at nightfall. These creatures were less shy than those of northern Tibet, the reason being that they are never molested. We nowhere saw any nomads on the banks; their tents stood at the foot of the mountains where the grazing was probably better. At Camp LXXIII the river again contracted, and deep places occurred; there the current was hardly perceptible, except as it swirled around the masses of earth which had fallen in from the banks. At 3 o'clock a violent wind sprang up from the south-west, sweeping before it clouds of fine drifting dust off the steppes beside the river, so that the entire country became enveloped in an impenetrable haze. Evidently then the ground had here dried all over after the last rain. As the stream was flowing south-west, that is in the teeth of the wind, its surface was whipped into high foam-tipped waves.

September 5th. Below our camp the river grew increasingly narrower, the breadth being seldom as much as 100 m., while the *jar* terraces were higher, shutting out the view on both sides, and at the same time the alluvial patches were less and less frequently exposed and as narrow as could be, though still separated from the bank by thin strips of water. At five separate places in this constricted passage the river made

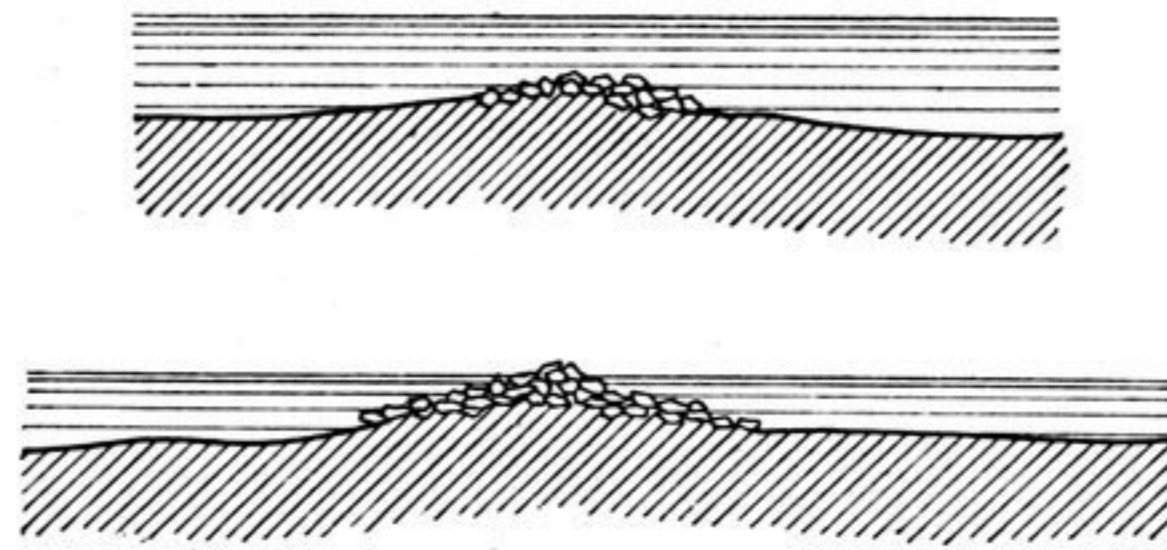


Fig. 10. THRESHOLDS IN THE RIVER-BED.

its way down little cataracts, formed by thresholds across its bed, and jutting out first from the one bank and then from the other, and sometimes slanting right across the river. Upon a closer examination of these thresholds, I found that they did not consist of hard rock as they did in the vicinity of Camp LXXII, but of friable slabs of sandstone, built up into broad, flat ridges that project above the sediment in the river-bed. In places they form little shallows or islets, which reached a few centimeters above the then existing level. It is close to these that the velocity is always greatest, because of the slightness of the depth. Nevertheless the depth was nowhere so great as it was at Camp LXXII. Still in this respect the river changes a good deal, not because of any variation in its fall, but simply as a consequence of the characteristics of its bottom. Where that is hard and consists of the last surviving ruins of sandstone ridges, the river is narrow, shallow, and swift; but where the stream flows entirely over alluvial clays, it is broader, and its current deep and sluggish.

At length the river alters its course abruptly from the south-west to the east-south-east, making a very sharp and peculiar angle. There it is joined from the right by a species of temporary tributary, or rather by a gully deeply and energetically carved through the fine, yellow clay. This appeared to proceed from the mountain-mass F_2 to the $N. 11^\circ W.$, and pretty certainly carries water during the rainy season only. This gully again is joined just above its mouth by a smaller similar gully coming from the west. The latter was then perfectly dry, but in the