

now covered throughout with a thin sheet of ice, except at intervals, where an open »lane» betrayed the presence of springs underneath. The panorama which unfolded itself on the south side of the lake was in truth magnificent and imposing. Directly opposite to us there rose as it were from the water's edge the bifurcation of a mountain-spur, which, as we saw it foreshortened, had the appearance of a column or pyramid, separating two large and strongly defined glen outlets. Each debouches upon a broad flat beach, plentifully studded with bushes. Pretty high up in each of these glens we saw patches of white; there were without doubt springs near them. At the head of the glens were mountains with a slight sprinkling of snow.

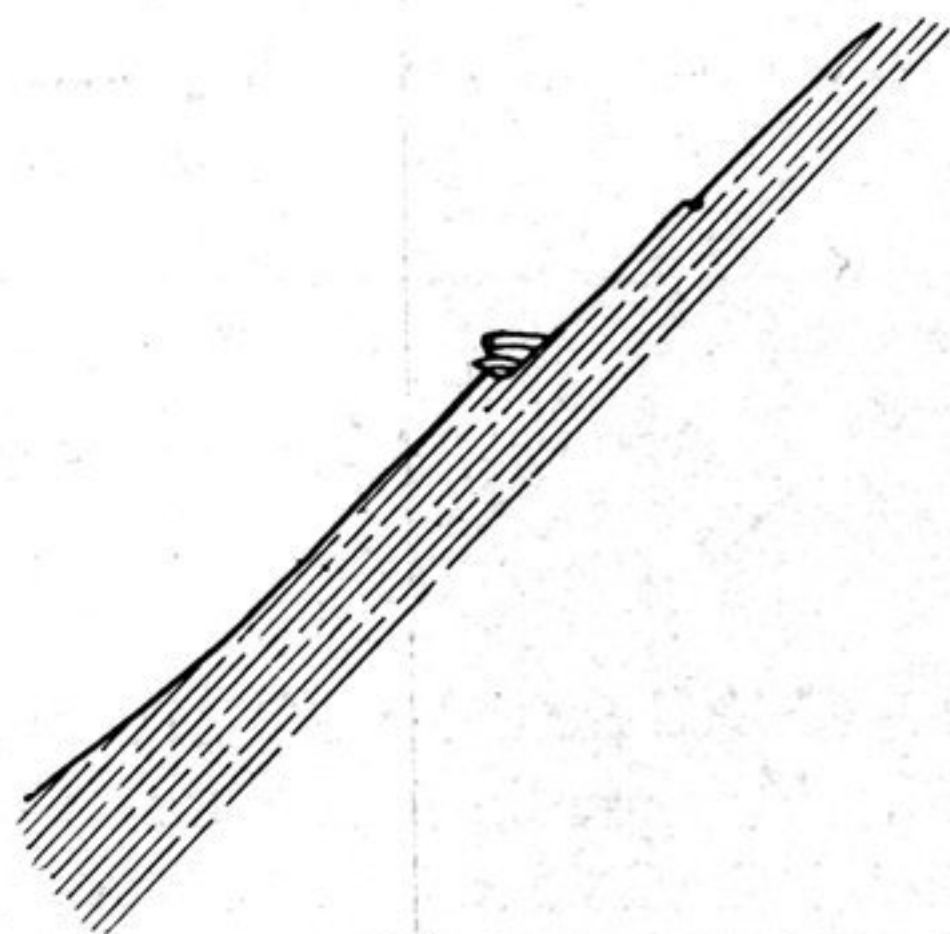


Fig. 200.

On the east of the impeding promontory the flat beach is only a couple of meters broad, but possesses the usual characteristic earthen rampart, formed by the ice. Upon investigation this rocky obstacle proved to be absolutely impassable for camels. A makeshift »path», which runs along it at only a couple of meters above the level of the water, was equally impassable; it could only be used by the agile and sure-footed sheep, by yaks, and by men on foot. This path is regarded, and with justice, as being more difficult than the road which runs along the face of the cliffs higher up. Briefly this latter climbs up from the camp by an endless number of short, steep, abrupt zigzags until it reaches the top. In several places the track rests on small pillars and walls, made up of flat slabs and pieces of timber, and these are too frequently placed on slippery, sloping ground to be at all safe; such fragile and precarious structures would under no circumstances bear the weight of a heavy and clumsy beast like the camel. Where the acclivity is too steep or the nature of the mountain side does not provide sufficient space for zigzags the path runs straight up like stairs, the »treads» being high and difficult even for a man on foot. After reaching the summit of the cliff, a good 60 m. above the level of the lake, you descend for a short space almost precipitously; and here again it would be impossible to get camels down, even if they were to be let down gradually with ropes. Then however there follows a natural shelf, affording a broad and excellent track, with loose gravel; but it soon gives place again to bare rock. The schists dipped here 43° towards the S. 60° W., and the severed heads of the outcropping strata form a level cornice or hollow track in the way shown in the accompanying profile (fig. 200). This path has moreover been mended with slabs of stone; nevertheless it is dangerous for all other animals except yaks and sheep. The heads of the strata are generally so narrow that the slabs when laid upon them hang over on both sides, and a single slip would be enough to send you to your doom at the bottom of the precipice. The photograph of this path shown on Pl. 51 was taken from the lake at the moment when our yak caravan was travelling along it. It is a perilous path for even those sure-footed creatures owing to their habit of pushing forward in a clump and trying to march two or three abreast. For this