

After changing horses at Tanksi, we rode on down the broad valley, keeping beside the river, which has high scarped banks, that on the left being the more powerfully developed. On the way we passed several houses and steadings, cultivated fields, canals, and peasants. We were now amongst a different people, the Ladakis. All the way down *manes*, or religious stone kists, were common, some of them as much as 80 m. long. They are built up as cyclopean walls, and form long, narrow oblong spaces, filled with gravel and clay, the top of which is somewhat arched or broken. Upon these rest the sculptured stone slabs, the sacred inscriptions on which are often executed with extraordinary skill and taste.

After passing the villages of Pungpung and Lakang, we at length reached Drugub, where we crossed the river by a picturesque bridge, made of long tree-trunks resting on stone kists, the interspaces being filled in with flat slabs. The village itself is a wretched place, but owing to its situation is not without importance, for from it a road starts for

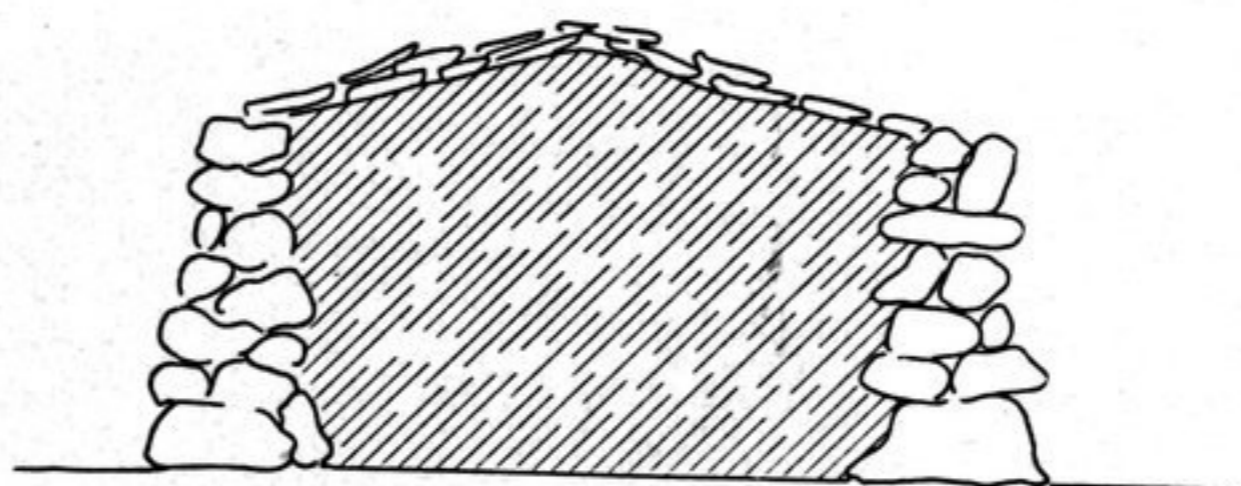


Fig. 273.

East Turkestan. Here, pretty high up on the left side of the valley is a simple station-house, which commands an imposing view of this magnificent region. The altitude above sea-level is 3900 m., but the station stands fully 50 m. above the bottom of the valley.

On the 18th December, accompanied by two attendants, I rode over the lofty and very toilsome pass of Tschang-la. In the early morning the valley of Tanksi, at any rate its lower end near Drugub, was closely wrapped in mist, and magnificent and sublime though the valley was, the icy coldness of the air chilled us to the bone. The weather however continued first-rate, and in no way interfered with our climb over the pass. Except for about an hour when the pass was enveloped in threatening snow-clouds, the sky was bright.

From the station-house of Drugub we took a shortcut, very steep, up the slopes on the left side of the valley so as to cross over the sharpened spur which separates the valley of Tanksi from the glen that leads down from the pass. At first we picked our way through deep ravines, fissures, and watercourses, choked with stones, and having difficult gravelly bottoms, and when we at length got clear of their labyrinths, we emerged upon slopes which were not only less steep, but also less gravelly, and in part covered with soft soil. For a while we had the stream of Drugub far down below us, but after that it was screened from our sight. Once we had surmounted the culminating point of this bold headland, we found at our feet the deeply carved, tunnel-like gorge that leads down from the pass. It too is choked with gravel and stones. At length we reached the bottom of the new glen, striking it at a place called Tschang-la-dogbo, where a group of stone-walls on the left-hand side betrayed the presence of cultivated fields. There too the bottom of the glen was entirely occupied with large sheets of ice, which came from a spring close by. Below that point the glen is said to be impassable, owing to fragments of rock and the narrowness of the passage-way. The brook down from the pass unites with that from