

some and trying journey; but to me coming as I did from the desolate, wild, and inhospitable regions of Tibet, the road down to Srinagar appeared to be the height of luxury.

The first station on the route to Srinagar is Niemo. At first the road runs south-west down to the Indus, the ground sloping very appreciably and the slopes being thickly strewn with granite fragments and detritus; but a track about 3 m. broad is kept relatively level between two rows of stones. Thence to its broad outlet the valley is barren and desolate. At the point where we struck the river we passed on the left a small detached knoll, with a temple on the top. According to the English map the place is called Pittuk. After that the road runs west-north-west alongside the river, though this soon becomes lost to sight in a deep gorge and at the same time keeps a more westerly course. The road meanwhile follows the foot of the mountains on the right side of the valley, the surface being undulating, gravelly, and barren, with only one or two inhabited localities. Out of the side-glens issues an occasional brook, in every case spanned by a bridge of logs on stones. At these places there is generally a small orchard. The water from

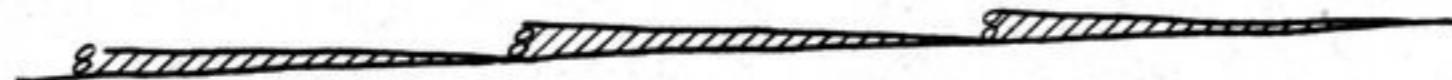


Fig. 286.

these brooks was then frozen into large ice-sheets, though there was always an open current running through the middle of them. Then we rode upwards for a good distance until we reached a little threshold in the continuation of an offshoot of the mountains. Over on the west side we went down through a steep, wild ravine or gorge, carved in gravel-and-shingle of immense thickness, and terminating in a fresh side-glen, with a brook at the bottom of a deep watercourse. Stone kists and *tschortens* were common here also, though in point of size not to be compared with those which we had encountered on the Tibetan side of Leh. After that we came to the orchards and fields of Niemo, situated quite close to the right bank of the Indus. It is there that the large tributary of Zaskar joins the Indus. At this part the principal valley is somewhat narrower than hitherto. Its scenery is decidedly grand, and one cannot but be amazed at the vast energy with which the incessantly active stream has wrought in excavating its bed. The ancient scarped terraces are of enormous dimensions, and often show on the crests of the mountains behind them. Not infrequently however these great scarps are pierced by the outlets of the glens or interrupted by gravelly screes working their way out of fissures in the mountainsides. Owing to the steep slope of the valley towards the west the fields are also to some extent arranged in terrace fashion. A piece of cultivated ground that runs for 100 m. in the direction of the river may at its lower end be only 2 or 3 m. above the bottom of the valley. It is held up by a stone wall, inside which the earth is banked up, this arrangement being necessary in order to distribute the irrigation water over the fields. During the course of the day we observed antelopes, partridges, and wild-duck. At Leh there was no snow at all, but around Niemo it