

keep a watchful eye lest you strike your head above. The accompanying profile (fig. 289) shows a typical portion of this road hewn out of the mountain-side, sometimes high above the bottom of the glen, sometimes quite low down. On the whole it resembles a cyclopean wall, which with a little support in this or the other fissure leans in towards the rocky precipice, and again and again you are amazed that the whole structure did not long ago tumble into the glen below. Higher up the rocky precipices are such that the construction of a similar road to this is impossible. If supporting walls were built low down near the bottom of the glen, they would be washed away by the summer floods, which evidently race down to the Indus through this glen with torrential violence; while higher up no road could be made without blasting the rock, a work that would entail great expense.

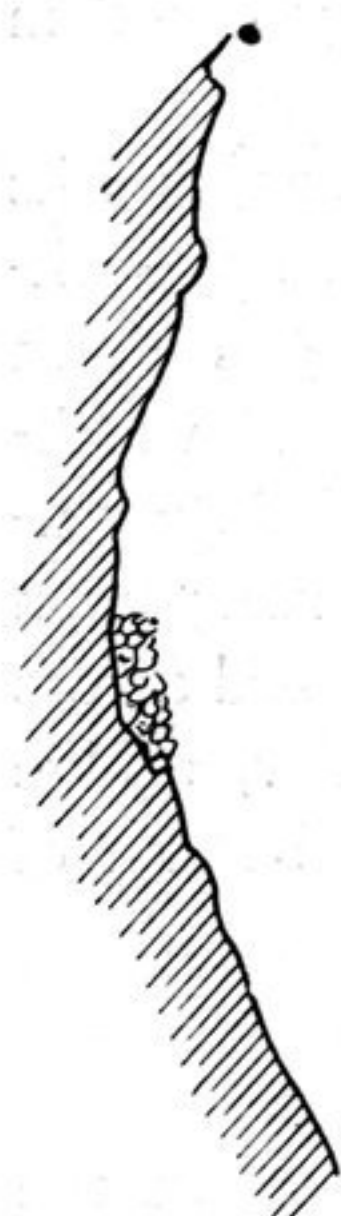


Fig. 289.

It is for this reason that the road crosses over the river four times on bridges placed quite close together. One of these was not considered safe, so that we preferred to ride across in the bed of the stream, where there was at that time no great quantity of water. Near the third bridge, Sampa-nesrak, there is a spring, which had given rise to a big lump of ice. At Sumdo the glen divides, that is to say, we turned out of the main glen to the right and proceeded up a side-glen, in which Lama-juru is situated. At the point of bifurcation a clump of poplars was growing. The scenery there is in the highest degree magnificent. The echoes rang against the vertical walls of rock, and we rode to the accompaniment of a hollow murmur from the stream. In fact, it was like riding through a magic temple, with walls of living stone.

In the side-glen up which we turned there was but a tiny muddy brook, though its bottom contained a great number of ice-sheets, mantled with snow. At this part the road grows very tiring, because not only does it take advantage of favourable buttresses of the cliffs, and so winds up to a considerable height above the bottom of the glen, but it also sinks down again to the water's edge, and we frequently crossed the brook on the ice. In two places, first on the left side of the glen, then on the right, we had to scramble up a steep zigzag to the heights above, owing to the glen being too narrow to admit of the passage of the road; besides which it is completely choked with gravel and stones that have fallen from above. The places from which these rock-slides started are distinctly visible fully 800 m. above the existing bottom of the glen. At the second of these two defiles the glen looks like a mere fissure with perpendicular walls, and it was perfectly obvious that even men on foot would not be able to advance along it in that part. After working our way up over the steep but more gently rounded heights on the left side of the valley, we reached the expansion of the glen in which the monastery of Lama-juru is situated. Its various buildings cluster like swallows' nests on the top of a precipitous terrace of gravel-and-shingle.

On the 4th January, I covered the stage to Mulbek, crossing on the way over two great spurs of the main range which overlooks the principal valley of the Indus on the south. The ascent from Lama-juru up to the first pass, Fotu-la, is not particularly steep, though you distinctly feel it. According to the English map the