

growth. Owing to the junction of the routes from Kārgil and Skardu on the one hand and from Srinagar on the other, the traffic was becoming more lively.

On the 7th January we travelled up to Dras. At first we kept to the right bank, though afterwards to the left. Almost the whole of the way we marched more or less high above the glen, and only very seldom in its bottom, except higher up where the relative altitudes are less. The conifers soon ceased again; thus there are but few, at all events in this locality, that have been able to get beyond the climatic and vegetable boundary set by the Sodschi-la. Down beside the river there is occasionally a bush or two. By this the snow was so universal and so deep that everything was white, except solitary stones and the perpendicular

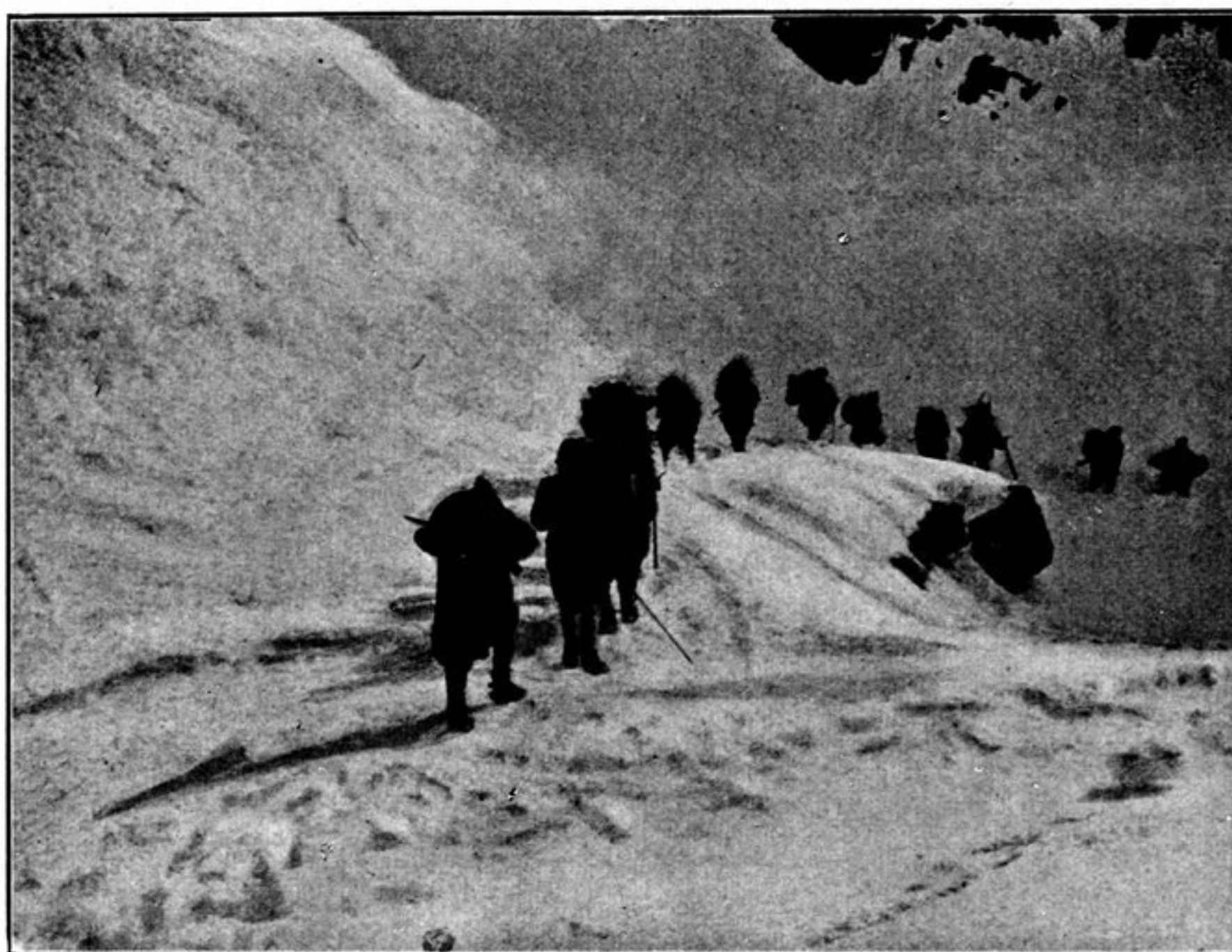


Fig. 293. UP TO THE SODSCHI-LA, MARCH 1902.

faces of the cliffs. At the same time the quantity of ice in the river increased, though the monotonous murmur of the stream was always audible. In several places in the river-bed there were picturesque ice formations; and the water flowed on over the bottom ice between the stones as bright as crystal and of a light green tint. Generally however the ice stretched across from stone to stone, forming roofs and tabular masses, under which the stream poured with a metallic bubbling echo. In some of the open reaches the river actually smoked, steam rising from it as from warm water. Possibly this was due to relatively warm springs, possibly also to the very cold current of air which we felt all day descending the glen. By 9 p.m. the temperature had fallen very nearly to 20° below zero C., and at that level it remained almost unchanged all night, the minimum reached being only -22° . It had not been so cold since we left the eastern part of the Tso-ngombo.

From the village of Dras the road ascends the glen of that name. This in the morning above the village was entirely filled with mist, caused by the steam