

rising from the river, which is there open for a space. Higher up, above the locality in which the springs appeared to be situated, it was entirely frozen over and buried under snow, though its rippling could still be heard. The ascent is very gentle, and the glen opens out, at the same time becoming flatter. In places the road still runs along the side-hills, though not very far above the bottom of the glen. The springs which issue there in the bottom of the glen had given rise to big, light green sheets of ice, generally swept clean of snow. Every now and again we crossed the stream by a fresh bridge. The quantity of snow then increased so considerably that the road was like a deep trough running across it, its bottom hard and slippery owing to the trampling of horses' hoofs and travellers' feet, which made the ride both difficult and tiring. After passing the insignificant little village of Matajun, consisting of a few simple huts, we soon reached Matschui, a solid, well-built guest-house quite close to the pass, a great boon to travellers journeying along that route in winter, for they can there await a favourable opportunity for crossing over the dangerous pass of Sodschi-la. For my own part, I had nothing to complain of in this respect: I was favoured with excellent weather, a bright sky, and no wind.



Fig. 294. A REST.

On the 9th January I crossed over the pass, and found it far simpler than from the descriptions I had been led to expect, this being a consequence of the slight fall of snow that year and of the favourable weather that was then prevailing. We travelled of course the whole way on foot. You cannot cross with horses; to attempt to ride down the precipitous slope with its frozen path would have been utterly impossible. Round about the water-divide the snow lay at least 1 m. deep, and the track was trampled along the top of it. In some places the crust was sufficiently hard to bear a man on foot, but in other places the snow was so loose that we