

I now contemplated it is a decided advantage to hire caravan animals instead of buying them. True, it comes dearer to hire them; but that is outweighed by the freedom from all responsibility in connection with them. You may safely leave it to the owners' own interest to look after them as conscientiously as possible. It also rests with them to provide forage and to seek for suitable camping-places with grazing. All we had to do was to accompany them; we could safely trust the Ladakis and their local knowledge.

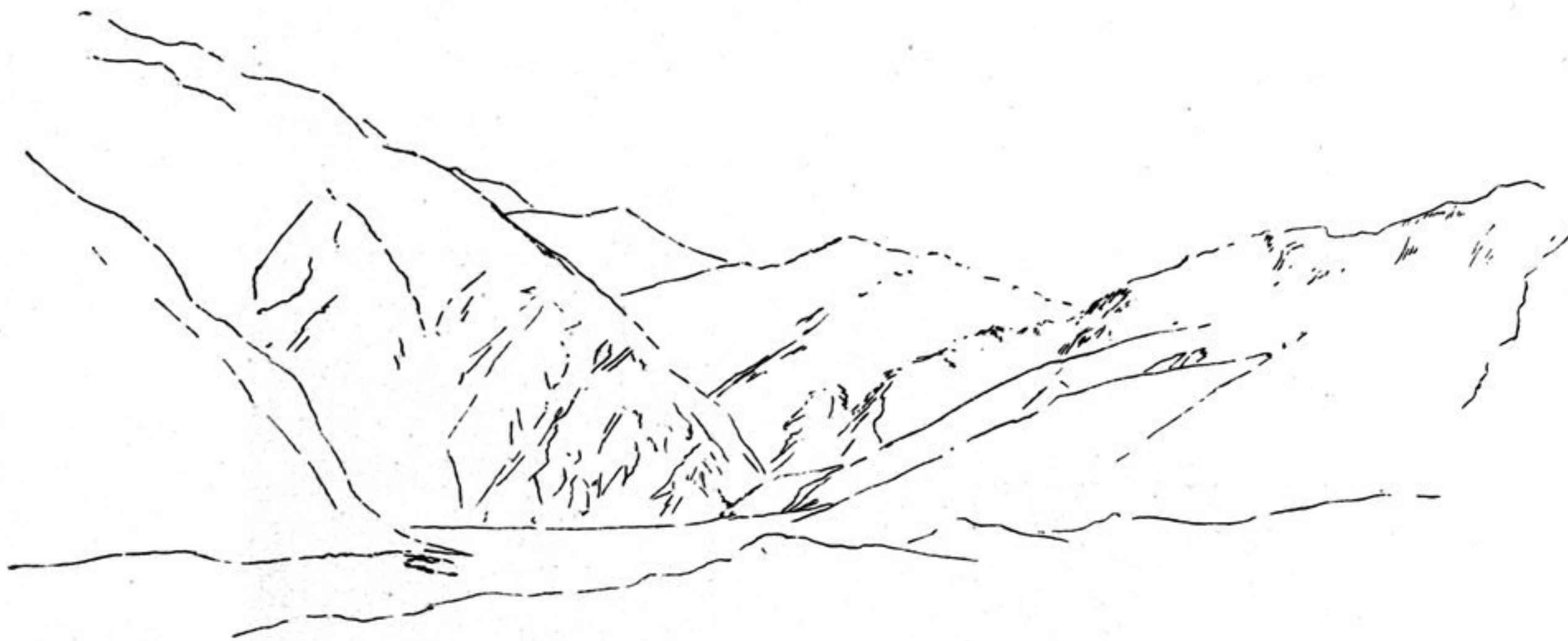


Fig. 321. VIEW UP THE VALLEY OF SCHEJOK FROM THE VILLAGE OF SCHEJOK.

We began our actual march up to the pass of Kara-korum on the 13th April; this was the highest pass of all those that I essayed on the Tibetan highlands. The weather was not particularly inviting for such a venture, for there was reason to believe that with each succeeding day we should advance into severer and colder regions. The sky was heavy with dark and threatening clouds, which trailed along the mountain-sides and drifted down the glen like gigantic pendent tufts of wool. The wind blew and fine snow was falling. With the view of sparing our horses for the exertions that lay in front of them, for the first few days we packed all the baggage upon yaks, which were afterwards to return. Turning our backs, then, upon Schejok, the last little inhabited outpost in the north of Ladak, we plunged in amongst the barren, uninhabited mountains. We travelled at first towards the south-east, crossing over the hills on which Schejok is built. But these we soon left behind us, and then descended into the bottom of the valley, where, to begin with, we crossed over the stream of Drugub, just above its confluence with the Schejok. Shortly after that we forded the principal stream also and subsequently kept along its right bank. Its volume amounted, I dare say, to about 7 cub. m., as compared with 2 cub.m. in the Drugub, and the water was perfectly clear. The bottom of the valley is littered with grey granite detritus, and is broad and flat, so that the fording of the river was a very easy matter. At the foot of the mountains on the right side of the valley is a strikingly developed terraced escarpment, the work of erosion, with an abrupt and sharply defined edge, while the left side is occupied by the