

The 26th April was one of the hardest days that I have experienced in Asia. Our immediate object was to surmount the pass of Suget, a much more difficult one than that of Kara-korum. Under the existing conditions, I would rather cross over the Kara-korum five times than climb over the Suget once; and yet when we crossed over the former it was in a blinding snowstorm, while when we faced the latter the sun was shining brilliantly, though at the same time there was a stinging wind from the north, which blew directly in our faces, chilling us to the bone, so that we sat in our saddles like apathetic and insensitive automata. Owing to the stupendous altitude it was not possible to warm ourselves by getting off and walking occasionally; at least it was not possible for me, for no sooner did I attempt to walk, even down a slope, than I experienced the greatest difficulty in drawing my breath. I was lost in admiration of the Ladakis, who trudged along on foot all the way, lively and with snatches of song on their lips; but then they have of course grown up amongst mountains, and both their lungs and their chest are adapted to breathe the rarefied mountain air. They also appear to be insensitive to the cold, for they used to sleep out of doors without any tent, merely rolled up in their sheepskins; you would expect them to freeze to death, at any rate to get their limbs frost-bitten. In regard to hardships of this kind different people naturally possess different degrees of endurance. My Siberian Cossacks, for instance, never felt any inconvenience from the cold, and once they were accustomed to it they never after 1900 experienced any difficulties from the rarefaction of the atmosphere. But when I took one of them with me down into India, he was nearly killed by fever in the hot climate of the lowlands. From about the time we left the pass of Kara-korum I myself suffered more from the rarefaction of the atmosphere than I had ever done before; probably this was because I had shortly before spent some time down in India, only very little above the sea-level. Those of my men and the other Cossacks who had passed the winter in Leh were less sensitive on this score than I was. When I was at Kaschgar in the winter of 1890—91 I saw a Hindu, who had crossed over the Kara-korum in November, and the journey had cost him both his feet; for they had got frost-bitten and had to be amputated. His weak physique, accustomed to a tropical climate, had been unable to withstand the severe cold.

As a consequence of the vivid sunshine which we then had, we also suffered a good deal from the glare of the snows. The facets of the tiny snow crystals sparkled like diamonds in the intensely bright sunshine, and even though I put on two pairs of tinted glasses, I nevertheless felt my eyes painful. Although not very sensitive in this respect, even our Ladakis had to protect their eyes. A few of them wore darkened spectacles; others put on a kind of woven horsehair eye-covering; while yet others contented themselves with sticking a bunch of horsehair in under their hats, thus making a shade or protection for the eyes. Most of them however were satisfied with simply pulling their caps as far down over their eyes as possible. In a similar case the Kara-kirgis (Kirghiz) of the Pamir are wont to modify the sun-glare by wearing spectacles made of a thin plate of wood with a horizontal chink cut in the middle. Another, and original, device which I also saw employed on the Pamir was to blacken the nose and the skin round about the eyes with soot or charcoal, which to some extent tempers the rays that are reflected from the face it-