

And now comes the question — how much, O gentle, general reader, do you want of detail about a journey across the Alaï Mountains, from Osh, in Russian Turkestan, to Kashgar, in Chinese Turkestan? Half a dozen Russian telegraph-engineers, two small garrisons in Russian Turkestan, one small garrison in Chinese Turkestan,—so much for the evidences of fixed civilisation along the two hundred miles of caravan route between the suburban villages of Osh and those of Kashgar. The Chinese frontier officer was more polished, less forceful, than the Russian post commanders. The only native inhabitants seen were Kirghiz, perhaps a half-dozen groups of tents, three or four in a group. We slept at times in these *yurtes*, smoky and smelly enough to make us prefer open-air beds except at most freezing elevations. The pasturage near the caravan route seemed not to be used to its full capacity. Joseph was told by the Sart that the Kirghiz complained of being forced by Russian soldiers to sell sheep for less than their proper value. Hence, he said, they had retired to secluded valleys. We passed many caravans, chiefly those bearing diminutive bales of raw cotton, trifles hoisted over the mountains by a toss of the horns of bulls rampant in New York and New Orleans—for surely nothing less than fifteen cents per pound could pay such toilsome transportation.

At the top of the Taldyk Pass, 11,800 feet above sea, we gave thanks to the Russian engineer who had smoothed the zigzag route, and memorialised himself in stone at the dizzy top. Here the complacent and prophetic Slav may widely gaze