

We put our camp folding-table in commission again, stretched our legs, all four of them, in defiance of phlebitis, and voted the world a merry one. Then we were off, following the stately camels, not to be warm again for a week or more; but there was food a-plenty and action a-plenty. We were bound for Sasar, several days' march beyond the junction with the Yarkand-Leh caravan route. There we must change camels for yaks, thus to get over the great glacier on which pad-feet would slip and ingloriously sprawl the humped majesty of Asia.

In the week's hard march we passed one habitation, a single Kirghiz tent, whose owner's cattle struggled for existence in as dismal a loneliness as hermit could desire. We stopped there while our attendants gathered a few small sticks from the furze-growth. The men of the family were absent, but we were permitted to sit by the scant fire and watch the household life of the women. One of the daughters wore the matron's turban; her sisters, comely girls, were not yet mated. One of them, however, was the *fiancée* of a young man in our caravan. It was a pretty play of hide-and-seek we witnessed. When his voice was heard approaching the tent, she bustled quickly behind a screen, where she must remain while he warmed his fingers. Surrounding nature's severity is thus reflected in their customs. He must not see her during the year of their engagement, then, with guise of swift violence, he will seize her away to some lonely neighbouring tent, distant fifty miles or more. Does the picture please you, O Araminta? No matter: there are deep reasons for it, which I could better explain to