

men are needed to care for the flocks, and it would not be safe to leave the women and children far away in the valleys. Moreover, if they were left, they would have nothing to do, for there is practically no opportunity for agriculture, and the only work to be done in summer at the winter quarters is to cut a little grass for winter use. Some of the poorer families are sent down for a few weeks in July or August to do this. As a matter of fact, the shepherds move their dwellings much oftener than twice a year, for the best pasture is found close below the ever-shifting snow-line. It takes but a few weeks to eat up the finest grass near to the tents, and then, either the camp must be moved, or the flocks driven farther. Again, as the animals are brought close to the encampment at night, the ground soon becomes foul, especially during the rainy weather of summer, when there is no chance for it to dry. Thus, by force of physical environment, nomadism is the only condition under which human occupation of most of the Tian Shan plateau is possible.

This being so, it is easy to see that the necessity for frequent migrations becomes the main fact in the lives of the Khirghiz, and determines all manner of habits and customs. For instance, dwellings must be such that they can be easily carried from place to place. All men, whether rich or poor, must move equally often, and even the richest cannot have a very large or ostentatious habitation. The materials for houses are willow sticks and woolen cloth, because these are the most easily available. The round tent is thick and tight, in order to withstand heavy rain and snow. It has in the roof a large round hole, capable of being covered with