

In the evening, our Khirghiz village was in perfect order. Ten or fifteen kubitkas were scattered on a fair green slope between the steep gray cliffs. On one side, hundreds of stupid sheep were trying to push their way into the centre of the flock; on the other, herds of neighing, kicking horses, fat mares, and frisky colts were interspersed with stolid cattle and with camels — awkward two-humped beasts, strangely out of place among the lofty mountains, and ridiculous in felt coats put on to keep them warm and, especially, dry. In the morning, the village was in dire confusion. Kubitkas were lying in pieces on the ground with household goods strewn around them. A migration was to take place, and men, women, and children were busily making preparations. The slow-moving, pattering flocks of sheep had already been sent away at dawn, but the rest of the animals disported themselves among the ruins of the tents, waiting to be packed or ridden.

The men of the community were clad in big top-boots, black conical hats of heavy felt with brims of Astrakhan, and long quilted cotton gowns, which had been wet so often as to appear dark and oily. Their chief business seemed to be to load the animals, or to catch those which were still loose. When a horse was to be caught, a man seized a pole like a fishing-rod with a loop of rope at the end, and jumped bare-back on another horse which was already bridled. Violent kicking and lusty shouting started both horses into a fine gallop, and it was sometimes half an hour before the loop was thrown over the animal's head.

The women wore heavy boots and quilted gowns much like those of the men. Many, however, had taken off the