

stream. In such rough experiences the Khirghiz learns to be self-reliant, and his frequent meeting of strangers under all sorts of circumstances gives him an air of readiness and self-possession. The talk of the Khirghiz is full of roads and travels. If you ask a man how far it is to a certain place, he at once begins to tell you all the intermediate stages and their difficulties. These people have the knowledge of their plateau that comes from experience, but book knowledge is very rare. As my escort, a proud, influential Khirghiz, said one day, "Why should the Khirghiz learn to read? It is enough for us to know about sheep and horses and cattle. What more do we want?"

If there were no outside world with which to come in contact, such a view of life might perhaps be wise. As it is, the Khirghiz cannot stand against the hard realities of civilization. The coming of the Russians, who now rule most of the native tribes, has done them an immense amount of good in making the country peaceful and safe, and in providing good markets for the products of the flocks. It has also added to their happiness by making such luxuries as tea, sugar, bread, and cheap cotton cloth accessible to all, but it will harm them if it leads them to abandon the pastoral life for that of the day laborer. The delightfully gentle and gracious courtesy of the Khirghiz cannot offset their laziness, if that term can be properly applied to a quality which is a necessary outcome of the nomadic life. A nomad is justified in being often idle, for his great exertions at certain times compel him to rest at others, but the qualities so engendered are of no use when steady work is required day after day. Thus it comes to pass that those Khirghiz who