



*Kirghiz family with its yurt
on its way north to
Qaratay.*

ating us from that place without equipment, looking forward to some good shooting there. The road proceeds southward through fertile fields and a valley covered with lush grass. A couple of small mounds of earth resembling kurgans (kurgan = large mound of earth more or less conical in shape, found in European Russia) aroused my curiosity, but no explanation of them was forthcoming.

Far ahead of us a group of high, bright mountains rises up and, as it were, bars our way. About a mile from the foot of the mountains lies a Russian settler's farm, where we were refreshed by a bowl of cool curds. Immediately beyond, the way turns eastward and ascends the mountain along a comparatively good, though in some places very steep road, suitable for wheeled traffic. After 2 1/2 miles' climbing, often in a zigzag, the top of the mountain, the Chigirchiq Pass, is reached and a wonderful view is disclosed. The mountains, decked in the evening light in dark green velvet of varying hues, descend abruptly into a deep and narrow valley bounded in the distance to the south-east by stately, snow-capped peaks. Even the Cossacks could not restrain cries of delight and we tore ourselves away with difficulty from the wonderful picture and began the descent. To give our horses a well earned rest we descended on foot, cutting off corners now and then down steep slopes. Darkness fell and we should never have found Hassan Beg's two large yurts, if I had not induced a Kirghiz to show us the way. We arrived at about 9 p.m., having ridden approximately 27 miles across country that was hard on the horses. Our guide hurried on ahead to prepare the Kirghiz for our arrival, and as I approached, some female shadows could be seen hurrying out of one of the large khibitkas. A young man introduced himself as Hassan Beg's son and welcomed me, saying that his father had ridden to Gulcha to meet me there. The spacious yurt, decked inside with beautiful carpets and colourful hangings, looked inviting. Carpets were laid on the floor and a couple of bright silken quilts with cushions, leaving a square of fresh, green grass at the entrance. At the very back there were 4 beautiful saddles with a large number of soft, padded silken quilts,