

with respect and call him »the strong man» or »the forked big beard.» The cook who had been sent on ahead with one Cossack, had overridden the mark this time and it was only after long delay that we at last secured some hay for the horses and food for the men. The mistake is not surprising, as there is no human habitation in the neighbourhood. The rapid river enabled us to refresh ourselves by taking a cold bath. One of my pack-horses is badly chafed.

We have postponed our departure until to-morrow as one of the Cossacks has suddenly developed fever. My tent is pitched inside the ruins of some earthworks that are supposed to have been a Kalmuk fortification. Not far off across the road there are ruins of other earthworks of a much earlier date, also built in a closed rectangle. During the day a few drops of rain reminded us that we were entering a region in which rain can often be expected.

August
15th.

For the first time our start went smoothly. Saddling began at 7 and we were off by 8. The road goes SE, S, at times SW and even WSW. Bridges excellent and the road in good condition. Only one place would have been difficult for wheeled vehicles. Little traffic, not to be compared with that of the day before yesterday. In the course of the day we met only a couple of small caravans, but several Kirghiz families, very numerous as regards horses and cattle, the majority using camels as beasts of burden. Soon after leaving the Yangryk plateau the road leads through a narrow pass between almost perpendicular rocks. The road describes an S along the steep mountain wall and crosses first the river Gulcha and later one of its tributaries. This is unquestionably one of the most picturesque and lovely spots I have seen on this journey. The pass bears the same name as the plateau and it was for its possession that the Kirghiz and Russians fought. The former were under the command of Hassan Beg's brother, Abdulla Beg, and held the pass against 12,000 Russians under Skobelev, one of whose white horses was shot here. The brave Kirghiz, armed with old-fashioned rifles, could not hold out against the guns and modern rifles of the Russians and retreated to the Allai valley pursued by Skobelev. Hassan Beg himself held a small command during the battle.

August
16th.

Kurtuk Ata.

Seven miles south of Yangryk you cross the river bed, about 2/3 of a mile broad and covered with stones and gravel, where the Gulcha foams in several arms. The river and the road turn due west here and lead to a slight plateau protected on the west by the mountain Kuruk Taushqan. Here, it is said, the Kalmuks once surprised a brave Kirghiz leader, captured his wife and children and put him to death. Many Kalmuks are said to be buried at this spot, but no traces are now left. The river and the road turn south. On the opposite bank stands a small white building with an enclosure, erroneously given in the 10 verst map of the General Staff as Suffi Kurgan, a place that is probably 2 1/2 miles further south on the way to the Terek Dawan pass. Here the roads to that pass and the Taldik pass divide. The former runs in an easterly direction, the latter which we took, to the south and later to the south-west. We waded across the river again and continued along its right bank that we had left only a short time before. To the east, not far