



Entrance to the Allai valley. In the background a chain of snow-capped peaks closing the Allai valley from the south.

by the Government. The country we rode across was more mountainous than before, excepting the road over the Chigirchiq Pass. The gradients were at times very steep and hard on the horses. In some places the road is impassable for wheeled traffic. On the slopes, so steep that a man can scarcely stand on them and must cling to their slight projections to preserve his balance, you see not only sheep, but even horses grazing. Small plateaux high up on the mountains are tilled, in an extremely primitive way, indeed, and the very modest crop is brought home along breakneck paths. — The river winds among the mountains, hurled hither and thither, and our road follows it faithfully, taking us from the right bank to the left and back again. The latter consists of hills and mountains, where the granite does not protrude from a covering of clay, gravel and sand, but on the right bank granite rocks are visible quite close to the bank, though they are often replaced by clay hills. Snow-capped peaks now appear quite near on either side of the river.

We have seen large numbers of a kind of reddish-yellow rodent with black markings on the head, the biggest of these animals being about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a yard long and fat. They peep out everywhere from their burrows and sometimes allow you to approach without showing any signs of fear. I shot a couple, one a very large one. Trees abound — resembling the juniper at a distance, but with pulpy foliage like that of the cypress. Of flowers there are a few blue ones, similar to cornflowers, and some carnation-like flowers in white and mauve. We met 4 caravans of merchandise, two of which certainly carried local articles of wool, and some Kirghiz families with their cattle. No dwellings anywhere, not even in the form of kbitkas. The imposing scenery would be even wilder and more deserted, if a meagre strip of oats or barley here and there did not reveal that invisible inhabitants make use of the soil even here. After riding about 17 miles we came to a little white iron-roofed house, next to which two kbitkas had been put up in anticipation of our arrival. The cook was in good form, mutton soup with rice was boiling in the kettle and we dismounted with pleasure to put our camp in order and do our work. There are a couple of men here belonging to a regiment stationed in Marghelan to bake bread for