

from a pass at the very foot of Taldik, where it has its source. We followed a valley covered with lush grass and about $\frac{1}{3}$ of a mile wide, between picturesque mountains of which those to the north were especially beautiful. Having descended gradually for a few miles the road turns SE. The valley grows wider and broadens out by degrees into a wide plateau bounded in the south at a distance of $3\frac{1}{2}$ —4 miles by a lofty chain of mountains, their peaks shimmering under their covering of perpetual snow. One can scarcely tear oneself away from this imposing sight. Along the Khatun Art valley, framed in grey granite rocks, one's gaze wanders across the emerald green Allai valley, divided by a terracotta coloured river, upward to the mighty snow-covered chain of mountains whose bold peaks stand out high up in the clouds. Kibitkas and tents, put up in anticipation of our arrival, were waiting at the entrance to the Allai valley and I was warmly greeted by friendly and courteous Hassan Beg, son of the last independent ruler of the Allai valley. — On the way we saw many rodents of the same kind as those I shot yesterday, even less shy here. A couple of hawks and a few doves were the only game. Some Kirghiz families with a lot of cattle, yak oxen in larger numbers, and a couple of small trading caravans were all we met during the day. A flower that is reminiscent of our daisy grows on the mountain slopes, though it is mauve instead of white, also a yellow flower like a buttercup, a mauve stock-like flower and a flower similar to a violet in colour and shape, but with its head in one piece. Our camping place still goes by the name of Khatun Art. Not far off, where the telegraph line again joined our road, there were a couple of kibitkas, a small infantry detachment from Marghelan giving the regimental horses pasturage. In the evening I had a visit from the officer in charge of the detachment and an architect, Deregoffsky by name, who was on his way to St. Petersburg from Kucha, where he and his brother had been occupied for a long time in making archaeological investigations.

The first day we spent on the Allai plateau coincided with an important Kirghiz wedding and the traditional competitions in horsemanship connected with it. When I rode out this morning at 10, I found a group of a few dozen Kirghiz assembled on horseback. The games or competitions began almost at once, consisting in lifting a goat, slain for the purpose, from the ground, the animal being supposed to represent a girl, and making off with it at a smart gallop. As fast as their horses would go the rest pursued the holder of the goat (or girl) at a wild gallop and fought as if for their lives to tear the prey from his arms. Should the heavy and slippery carcass of the goat slide out of the arms of one of the Kirghiz, a hand-to-hand struggle ensues as to who will succeed in swinging the goat on to his saddle with a strong pull, and getting away with it. The crowd of struggling Kirghiz grows larger and larger, the blows of nagaikas (whips) resound, savage passion is reflected in faces until this strange struggle of some dozens of expert horsemen is interrupted once more by one of them, with the goat on his saddle, breaking through the crowd and converting the fight for a time into a race. At one moment you see two horsemen in full gallop leaning as far over as possible and tearing the carcass of the goat between them; at the next a single horseman who has succeeded in gaining some ground makes sure of his prey by swinging both his legs over the goat, exposing himself to the risk of being torn from the saddle when next the prey is pulled away from him in this heated struggle.