



*Kirghiz racehorses
paraded before the races
(Allai valley).*

This game is, if possible, more exciting than polo or football in Europe. It differs from polo chiefly by there being less galloping; and it must be confessed the large number of players and the wet carcass of the goat make it perhaps more a matter of wrestling on horseback than a race with skilful turns and strokes as in polo. The struggle itself is a jumble of, perhaps, about 30 horses, driven towards each other by means of hard blows of the nagaika. The nagaika plays a part up to the last moment, either to urge on your own horse or to ward off a neighbour's. At the moment, when the rider is so close that he can reach the goat, he places the nagaika between his teeth and seizes the goat with both hands, next instant, perhaps, making the blows of the nagaika fall faster than ever in order to get his horse out of the *melée*. The pressure during the struggle is great, but is relieved by the thick padded *khalats* of the Kirghiz that are wrapped round the knees and sharp points of the body. It is impossible to describe their expressions and, unfortunately, to photograph them at sufficiently close range. Very frequently someone takes a toss. The Kirghiz bring several horses to the festival, saddling them as required. The man who succeeds in carrying off the goat and casting it at the feet of the spectators is rewarded by their cries of joy and a sum in silver. The game is watched keenly. The spectators, a number of greybeards with wrinkled faces, are mounted and gallop from one side of the field to the other. They will dash wildly across the bed of a river to follow the game, getting drenched from head to foot and many horses and riders being brought down in the crush. Sometimes a string of horses and foals tethered together is surrounded by the combatants and swept along with them irresistibly.— This particular game ended on the opposite side of the river Allai, which is a very modest stream here with brick-red water, and the father of the bridegroom invited us into his *kibitka* for a rest and refreshment in the shape of *kumyss*, lumps of sugar and «cakes» made of flour and a little egg and fried in mutton fat which tasted well. The women, arrayed in their holiday best,