

*August 22nd.* The season of bad weather has evidently set in. The night was cold,  $-4^{\circ}$ , and in the early morning and when we got up, it snowed a little and there was a high, piercing wind.

*Irkeshtam.* The hilly country and the pitch-black night enabled some of the horses to break loose unobserved and after a prolonged search we found 2, but 3 others had disappeared completely. All the efforts of my men and of the Kirghiz enlisted by Hassan Beg proved unavailing. The caravan started about 9 and I rode on ahead to Irkeshtam. Some eagles delayed me, but my attempts to shoot them failed, partly on account of the distance. The road, rising and falling incessantly, leads in an ESE direction with slight interruptions and is hard on the horses. It can be confidently asserted that it is impassable for wheeled traffic. The mountains it follows are a conglomerate and in some places you see obvious fossils. On the pinnacles you find large and small stones, which, deeply grooved by constant storms, have acquired the most fantastic shapes. The road leads across 4 or 5 river beds with very little water, full of large round stones that make the going difficult for the horses and probably roll unceasingly when the river is in spate. The water in these arms of the river is coloured brick-red by the surrounding red clay. They are arms or tributaries of the Qizil Su («The Red River») or Kashgar darya as it is called in its lower course, a river that runs through a swamp into the Yarkand darya, the main artery of Kashgaria. — Having ridden about 18 miles I arrived at Irkeshtam, the last Russian post before crossing into Chinese territory. The commander of the platoon of Cossacks stationed here, sub-essaoul Bek Tchurin, had placed a room at my disposal and begged me to consider myself his guest. A large khibitka was at once made ready for the men.

*August 23rd.* What a strange life for a man in this little fort, shut in between high mountains, with the training of about 30 Cossacks as his sole occupation. My host told me that he had had to act as midwife five months ago, when his wife presented him with twins. He was to be relieved in a fortnight and had the prospect of making the anything but easy journey across the mountains with the babies cradled in cases on the back of a pack-horse. The fort is of no importance for purposes of defence; it is merely a small battlemented brick tower with loopholes for rifles. At the foot of the steep bank lies the Customhouse, quite close to the bed of the river. Here the telegraph line ends. On the opposite side of the cleft in front of the fort stands a stone pillar that marks the frontier between Europe and Asia, between Russia and China, those two great powers so full of contrasts and yet in many ways reminiscent of each other. — In the afternoon the caravan set off with the exception of our own pack-horses, in order to await us at Naghara-chaldi, a place with good pasturage, where Yaqub Beg had a frontier post at one time. — In Irkeshtam my horses, that had had to be content with meagre rations for the last 5 days, were able to fill their bellies with hay that I bought for 80 copecks a pood (36 lbs) and I was able to replenish my stock of corn for the rest of the journey. Between Osh and Kashgar no corn is to be bought and it is only in a few places that even inferior hay can be had. If you do not want to starve your horses, you must have plenty of corn on their backs.

A mountain goat and buck hunt to which I had been looking forward had to be abandoned, because the Kirghiz brought the news that the game had vanished. Instead I en-