

Su. A small Chinese «impanj», marked on the Russian maps as a ruin, is called Igen or Dijigen. Next to it a bare dozen of Kirghiz kikitkas. The vegetation reappears in the valley of the Qara Terek. Narrow pastures with a clump or two of trees extend along the river. I shot a small hawk and missed a majestic eagle. The road we travelled to-day is bad and nothing is done to improve it. Sometimes, when the Qizil Su can be forded, a shorter, but even more difficult road is used leading, without the détour to Igen, along the right bank of the river straight to Naghara-chaldi. — In Naghara-chaldi we found lush pasturage and clean river water — all that is necessary to make a bivouac pleasant on a beautiful evening. A Chinese soldier came to forbid us to let our horses graze, a command to which obviously little attention could be paid, as there was no hay to be bought.

*August 25th.* We started in fine, penetrating rain. Wherever the thick layer of stones did not make the ground sufficiently firm, the road was wet and slippery. The character of the landscape and structure of the mountains are the same as yesterday. Very bad road. Crossing the river was easy, as there was very little water. Slight vegetation appears in the Qizil Su valley, otherwise the country is bare. Near the Chinese frontier fort, Ulugh-chat, we followed the road — a footpath that winds far above the river, intersecting the steep slope of very clayey hills. The horses kept stumbling on the soaking, slippery ground. A false step on this path would send both horse and rider crashing into the rushing river some fathoms below. I tried to lead my horse on foot, but it was so slippery that I slid backwards as though I were on glass and there was nothing for it but to try to lead the horses down to the river on a slippery slope of clay and go on along the bed of the river. From below we saw that the path on which I had ridden had given way further on and I should not have been able to move either backwards or forwards. From a bend in the river we caught sight of a verdant valley with the greyish-yellow mud walls of the fort of Ulugh-chat standing out against the hills beyond. The fort is built in the shape of a square with 4 turrets, loopholes and battlements, but with no moat. It houses the commander and about 50 men instead of the prescribed 130. The Mauser rifles are presumably kept by the commander, training being done with old muzzleloaders. The commander is a man of 50 or 60, withered by opium smoking, half of the men are Kirghiz, the rest from the interior of China, many of them also opium smokers. — We were well received and were given two rooms. We spent the day reading and chatting with the Chinese. It was very pleasant, after living in tents in the Allai mountains, to be in China again with its familiar mud houses and warm ledges (kang'), however inadequate they may appear to a traveller accustomed to European comfort. — During the day I shot a small eagle.

*August 26th.* To-day we had a long and tiring march. After crossing the Qizil Su near Ulugh-chat the road proceeds for about a dozen miles along the left bank of the river. The ford is difficult, the river rapid, water up to the saddle. For a considerable distance it goes along a steep and slippery slope of clay on which the horses often stumbled and almost fell into the river. From SE the road turns E, leaving the river bank and taking us into bare clay