



*The bed of the river Terek avat between
Kelpin and Uch Turfan.*

again. At last we left this valley and wandered for a time from the foot of one mountain to another until we again got into a very narrow rain channel that had cut its way deep among the rocks and mountains. The mountains had again become overwhelmingly large, raising their walls a couple of fathoms from each other. In some places the rocks overhanging our heads assumed the most fantastic shapes. Here and there the piles of rock were so close together and in such chaotic disorder that the horses wormed their way between them like snakes. Frequently we had to lift our legs to avoid grazing them on the rocks. Intentionally we had long ago left behind us the two places where caravans usually stop, and had ridden a couple of paotai further than we had agreed in order to reach some kibitkas which, according to the statement of the only caravan we had met, had camped further along our road.

Darkness fell and forced me to give up map drawing after marking the place to which I must return to-morrow. We pressed on with our tired beasts which hustled along the narrow way, where a false step might be disastrous. At last the gorge grew wider and some low trees and tallish bushes indicated that the Kirghiz could not be far off. Immediately afterwards the barking of a dog was heard and shouts of joy went up. We were there. Two kibitkas, surrounded by large numbers of cattle, camels and sheep, stood on the steep slope of a high mountain. I peeped into one of them, from which a fire shone. Round a kettle over the fire in the middle of the circular tent, about 8—10 paces in diameter, sat