



*Kirghiz women in their
camp at the foot of
Qizil Tagh.*

They use no percussion caps, but powder ignited by a long wick drawn through the hammer, the unused part being kept in a leather pocket fastened to the outside of the butt-end. A leather cover is also placed over the powder and removed at the critical moment. The hammer has no spring, the trigger working the hammer direct, so that the latter drops in proportion to the pressure on the trigger. The butt is small and as flat as a board. A forked stand, made of two crooked branches, is fixed to the front end of the wooden part of the gun and is folded along the barrel, when not in use, sticking out some distance beyond the end of the barrel. The professional marksmen earn their living with such antediluvian weapons. The hero of the day said that he shot 40 or 50 kiyiks a year, a very respectable figure, if you consider how shy these animals are. In the southern part of Chinese Turkestan the guns were of the same kind as here; in the Maral Bashi district hammers with springs and percussion caps have been adopted. The hunt is based mainly on a thorough knowledge of the ground and the habits of the game. As a rule the hunters lie in hiding on the plain, where there is a lot of grass or where the animals come to drink and so on. When there are several hunters, a couple of them round up the kiyiks, while one or two others lie in readiness on the opposite side.

It was a bright and warm morning, when we mounted at 7.30 to continue our journey. The Kirghiz camp looked very jolly, with about twenty camels, some dogs and plump sheep of different colours not yet led out to graze. The long valley with its imposing walls of mountain was wonderful in the morning light. We set off in advance with the cook and a pack-horse. I was more than usually anxious to keep an eye on him to-day, as I was afraid that the sheepskin coats of the rosy-cheeked Kirghiz women would not be strong enough armour to protect their hearts against the gaiety and attractive looks of my cook.

On the summit of the high and inaccessible Berber mountain across the valley opposite