

whole of its length the ledge of the southern bank is cut up by dry river beds, crevices and water channels, which greatly impedes traffic along the bank. The mountain is also cut by a couple of dry water channels. There seemed to be no roads leading up to it and our guide assured me that there were none. Nevertheless, the mountain did not look inaccessible and it is by no means impossible that there may be some mountain paths. In its course to the NE the river again departs more and more from the mountain, forming a plain with a lot of salt deposits on the surface between itself and the mountain. The following villages lie on the northern bank: Kichik and Chung Aral with about 500 houses together, Shaktura with 60, Merket with 30, Chugulun with 15 and Qara Döbe djeneal melessi with about 100 houses. The tilled land on both banks displays the same character — a narrow band of houses and fields bounded by a barren plain of gravel and stones, running parallel to the river bed beyond the strip of tilled land. There are no roads generally used for traffic here, though the country is passable for anyone not afraid of a shortage of water and fodder. We saw large flocks of geese going north.

A wonderfully hospitable country! You come and instal yourself in almost any house you choose, and the owners put the best face on it they can. To-day Ismail chose a wealthy, commodious house, the owner of which, the widow of a Beg, had gone with her daughter and son-in-law to a »tomasha» feast. Without further ado we established ourselves in the two best rooms, and when the old woman, a typical mother-in-law, came home late at night riding an ox, followed by her daughter on horseback and her, to say the least of it, unassuming son-in-law on an ass, she seemed to think it quite natural that the family should be relegated to the worst corners of the house. It was only on their return that I discovered that the house had been occupied in the absence of the owner and I was aghast when I saw them come in.

After taking touching leave of »mother-in-law», who proudly refused the money I offered for our lodging with one hand, but not only accepted it with the other, but turned away and checked it, we started in an E direction. We made an attempt to cross two arms of the river close to the village, but had to give it up, as the water came up to our saddles before we were halfway across. Half-an-hour further east near a mazar-like memorial at the northern extremity of the Patlama tagh, called Kiyik tagh here, erected in memory of the Mohammedans who had fallen in the battles with the Kalmuks, we forded the river that flows here in an arm about 20—22 fathoms broad. The greatest depth was 1 m 10 cm., the bottom was firm and the current swift. In contrast to the previous days, when marshy places only occurred exceptionally in some slight depressions on the bank, the northern bank showed obvious signs of marshiness to-day, and judging by the care with which our guide negotiated such doubtful places, we could conclude that in places morasses prevent traffic between the two banks of the river. The Patlama tagh forms slightly hilly ground close to the bank with hillocks of gravel and sand that succeed each other with no regular sequence. The river follows this eminence for 1 or 2 miles on its course and then, describing a large curve, it withdraws from it to a distance of $\frac{2}{3}$ —1 mile, almost touches the ledge of the bank again after about 2 miles and once more moves away for about 2 miles. When

March 2nd.

Aqsu.