



*The valley of the river
Togra-su and the Arghyal
tagh mountains.*

mountain and a little later we reached two hovels built of logs. Darkness had fallen long since and the time was 8.30 p.m. Both horses and men looked exhausted. Rakhimjanoff's pulse was 124 and he could scarcely stand.

The sarai was full of people and fires burned in every corner, tired wanderers camping round them after an exhausting day. Many were stripped to the waist and sat in the cold night, stretching out their bare arms to the fire with their furs thrown over their backs. Owing to the storms the sarai must lean over more than the tower of Pisa. The walls and roof are so thin that you might suppose the chinks had been made on purpose. No doors, windows or stoves. You build a fire wherever you choose. The whole courtyard, not only the house, was full of smoke. The soot hung in large flakes from the roof and walls. Ljo and the yigit collected everything necessary for a pälaw, rice from one man, meat from another and mutton fat from a third. The dandjan (the keeper of the sarai) undertook the role of cook and soon the fat was frizzling in the pot.

While waiting for the caravan I took a walk outside to keep warm. In the bright moonshine the narrow valley with its high, white walls and black groves going up the slopes looked fairylike. A couple of Sarts had taken out their horses »to graze» and stood watching them. This is probably the only fodder these untiring animals get, they certainly get no other green fodder than the little they find during the night or on the way over the plain. Pity is a quality the Sart is not acquainted with. He will give a bit of bread or a log of wood to a beggar, who comes to his farm, but this is, no doubt, more due to tradition than sympathy, for, if the moment is not suitable, he is capable of driving away a far more unfortunate person with threats, shouts and curses. For a pull (5 cop.) two Sarts are ready to cut each other's throats. They will enforce a claim against a poor peasant with the utmost harshness, and their begs, aksakals and yuzbashis and other persons invested with