



*The caravan in the Palas  
Qaragai valley.*

tioning the grand scenery they pass through, but the views themselves, unfolding before the traveller's eyes, beggar description. The road runs along the gorge of the Togra-su, now called Shata Musur su, between the two mountain ranges that have enclosed it since Mus dawan. The mountain on the left has an uninterrupted, broad, dark-green band of tall firs; on the mountain on the right they only grow here and there, in crevices, along which they creep high up the slope in long, narrow tongues. Now and then the road is intersected by a grove of trees, crossing from one mountain to the other by a stony hillside. The grassy valley gets narrower and narrower and the ground becomes more uneven and stony as the road proceeds either along the steep slope of one of the mountains or along the bed of the rapid little river. At times we crossed small tributaries that supply the Togra-su with water from some deep cleft or we rode over a frozen place lower down. The ice was so slippery under the loose covering of snow that the horses slipped and could scarcely keep their feet. Sometimes we had to dismount and lead our horses that walked as if they were on roller-skates. In our big felt boots we were not much better off ourselves. The slopes we crossed were stony and fairly steep with large blocks of stone round which the road wound. Otherwise it was good on the whole. The mountains and valley, which are at first named after the sarai, take the name of Palas Qaragai half-an-hour later. For about an hour and a half the road sticks to the E bank of the river, running for some time along the slope of the mountain. The river is crossed by one of the bridges which, in spite of all their shortcomings, render good service in this country, where so infinitely little is demanded. The frontier between Ili (the province) and Kashgaria passes here. On the western bank of the river we saw the first Kalmuk yurt, outwardly quite like those of the Kirghiz, only the roof is in straight lines, not semicircular like that of the latter. The