

plain with their yurts and cattle. — The weather was fine and the sun scorching, so that we rode without furs. Nothing relieved the monotony of the road. For a time during its latter half it follows a stream or little river. After about 14 miles we noticed a slight undulation in the ground which continued until, after 21 miles, we reached Gilan, a tumble-down hovel of a sarai, near which a yurt belonging to the Government postal station had been put up in my honour. It was clean and not very large, two good points that you appreciate on a cold night.

After a cold night in the yurt we started betimes to wade across the Tekes before the water rose owing to the snow melting. We reached the river about two miles N of Gilan at a spot, where it encircles a small strip of land. It flows in two arms here, the northern one being quite insignificant. The southern or main arm is about 20 fathoms wide and looked imposing in the cold morning with plenty of pieces of ice on its rapid surface. A group of travellers, some with asses, had built a fire and were camping round it — waiting for some passing caravan, in the hope of getting to the other bank dry-shod on the back of a horse either for payment or as a favour. There was a band of ice along the banks of the river which made the approach difficult. After tackling these bands of ice with axes we rode across to the other bank, or rather, were carried westward to the strip of land encircled by the branches of the S arm and thence at an angle across the main arm of the river in a NE direction. The bottom was firm. Speed of the water 5—6 metres per second. The Qarakeshes earned a small tip by piloting a good many of the travellers across the river. Kalpin, the dog, too, had to make the crossing on a horse's back, as he showed a decided objection to the cold water. The crossing and the preparations for it had, however, occupied a couple of hours and it was past 9.30 before we could continue our journey.

The road goes at first in a NE direction, but tends more and more to the N in the course of the day. At first it follows the left bank of the river with slight intervals, but after two miles it finally separates from it. During this time it crosses a couple of small rivers that supply water to the Tekes from the N. The ground is a plain with luxuriant grass, seeming to merge into hills and low mountains far to the N. After riding for about 7 miles we came to a chain of hills running SW—NE. For a short time the road runs along their foot. From this point the ground is slightly broken and goes in large undulations and depressions of soft outline. About two-thirds of a mile beyond, the road is intersected by four small rivers flowing next to each other, all NW—SE. The undulations in the ground become more pronounced, though there are no difficult ascents or descents. On the left we passed a hill and soon after we again crossed a small river flowing from NW to SE like the others and accompanied by a pronounced ridge on the right. Immediately afterwards we crossed another river and turned to the left from the road to reach the Kalmuk camp at Khargontu in a NNW direction, where I had been invited to stay the night in the yurt of my host at Shatâ. His younger brother, the subaltern, had accompanied me the whole way, and the elder one, the chief of the post, caught us up as soon as we had crossed the Tekes.

My anxiety to see a large Kalmuk camp made me accept the invitation with pleasure.