



*My yigit, a Kalmuk of the
Surgan summun, mounted.*

It was a cold night, but luckily there was no snow. In the evening a splendid log fire was built, round which the Kalmuks and my men ate a huge pälaw. The sarai, which is falling to pieces, provided some of the fuel and goodness only knows when someone will have the bright idea of repairing this hovel which is the traveller's only protection from winter storms and snow in a plain of 35—40 miles in width. I treated Nasumbatoff and his brother to a bottle of cognac purchased in Qulja. The Kalmuks, whose appetites are amazing, asked after the pälaw, if they might boil their usual soup and I generously gave them the half of a sheep with which I had been presented. The geese and ducks that several of us including Numgan, had failed to hit, could be heard until late at night in a marsh close to the camp. It was a lovely evening and I sat up long after my usual time for retiring, chatting with my numerous Kalmuk companions.

*May 13th.
Kirghiz
camp at
Kharosun.*

We had a ride of only eight miles to a Kirghiz camp, the yurts of which are nearest to the Aghias gorge. These Kirghiz spend the winter in the gorge and migrate for the summer to the valley of the Tekes, the grazing grounds of which, E of the Musur su gorge, belong to them and to Kirghiz, who spend the winter further east in the mountains. My host, who is the judge among a population of 100 yurts, had put up a very well furnished kikitka for me. A huge dark-brown eagle, trained to hunt, had been placed at the entrance as a sentinel in my honour. My host said that he hunted wolves with this eagle. Tea was served from a large, nickel-plated samovar in his own kikitka, which was amply furnished with boxes with metal fittings and embroidered covers. On the way there we passed a couple of dozen Kirghiz yurts. Here they are called Khaza by the Chinese and Khazak by the rest of the population. The people are surprisingly clean and well dressed. The women wear coloured cotton dresses, often decorated with ribbons sewn on to the skirt, and over them black bodices of slightly shiny cotton cloth cut in the shape of a sleeveless coat. The traditional Mohammedan sash is knotted round the black bodice and over

*May 15th.
Camp at
Katsa-su.*