

of hot tea and were, of course, treated to a long story from the other Kalmuk as to how he had seen a flock of about 50 »tekä», ibexes, walking slowly from our mountain to the next while we were doing our utmost to reach the top. As if to scoff at us still more, a flock of 17 ibexes, of which I counted 12 with large horns, was seen walking high up on the slope on the opposite bank of the river. We were just about to saddle our horses and ride there, when a fresh buran-like storm with showers of rain forced us to give up the idea. A buran on the mountain tops has no definite direction, but blows from practically all sides, so that you cannot approach the animals, whose scent is finely developed.

My supply of rusks is diminishing at a disturbing pace. To-day I found the cook boiling soup with the sack of rusks, weighing fully 72 lbs, slung across his back. With a sly smile he explained that this was the only way of preventing the men from shoving their noses too far into the sack. I had it put into my tent, but this amusing incident induced me to send a pack-horse to Qulja for another 5 poods of rusks. By the time we return to the Kirghiz camp, where I left some things, it should have arrived.

*May 19th.* You must have first-class bones and muscles to stalk ibexes in the mountains. My knee that has been patched up twice, was not equal to the strain to which I put it. In the afternoon I felt a pain in both knees and towards evening they were swollen, probably owing to a slight bleeding in the knee-joint. Much as I had tried to spare my bad knee, the effort had been too great, and my sound knee which had had to do more than half the work, had also not stood the test. I put woollen bandages on them for the night and this morning at 4 I tried again to go out shooting. But this time I could not get along and had to turn back, bitterly disappointed. Numgan and Lukanin went on without me, but were not much more successful, for they returned after wounding an animal with three shots, in spite of which it escaped. A few hours later I rode to another mountain with Lukanin, hoping it would be easier to climb. We saw three flocks of ibexes there, 50 head in all. But here, too, I had to give up climbing. Lukanin, to whom I gave my Mauser, was also unable on this occasion to approach sufficiently close to the shy animals. He fired two shots at long range, but apparently they did not hit anything.

*May 20th.* Old Numgan carried on the chase for 13 hours and returned in a very bad humour, having fired a few shots without any result. To-day we left our delightful camping place near the junction of the Khaptkhau-su with the Aghias and moved about ten miles further east to a place, where, according to Numgan, it is possible to ascend the slopes on horse-back. It was a cold, raw day with a strong north-east wind and heavy squalls. I rode up a small hill with my yigit slightly in advance of the others, when to my amazement I cannoned into a huge wolf on the summit, coming at a good pace from the east with the wind behind it. My horse and the wolf very nearly collided. It scarcely took a moment for me to dismount and seize the rifle that was slung across my back, but the wolf, which was as much surprised as I, was already disappearing at full speed round a spur of the mountain on the left. We encamped by a small mountain river, Onu-su, which also carries water to the Aghias from the south. Some distance off we saw about 40 ibexes high up