

along a steep slope in a gorge. Off we went, head-foremost down towards the stony bottom of the gorge and I felt that I would have nothing to add to this diary. The horse made some vain efforts to break its fall, but my weight evidently hampered it. Luckily, I was able to seize a thick branch of a tree and hang on to it. The branch gave way, but so slowly that I was able to gain a foothold on the slope. My horse, once he was relieved of my weight, also succeeded in arresting his career and pulling up against a rise in the slope.

Yesterday was entirely wasted. We had decided to go shooting by ourselves in the morning and to surprise Numgan by producing an excellent «tekä», when he returned. The old fellow had set out on the previous evening to prove that it was not so difficult to get at the goats as I imagined. However, the whole morning and a good part of the afternoon were spent in an unexpected chase — in catching our horses which had been allowed, by my orders, to graze without being tethered. When we had at last caught eight of the twelve, by 2 o'clock, such a storm broke loose as I had not seen before. It was so severe that I expected our tents to be torn to shreds at any moment, although they were put up at the bottom of a gorge and stood at right angles to the direction of the wind. The thermometer dropped from $+14.6^{\circ}$ to -0.3° R. and a severe hailstorm gave way to a heavy snowstorm. All shooting was out of the question. We had even to give up our attempts to catch the other four horses. At about 5 p.m. Numgan returned after shooting «tekäs» for 25 hours. Evidently his pride was hurt that instead of a mountain goat he had only bagged a «kiyik» and a much smaller one than mine.

May 24th.

Camp at

Khaptkhau-su.

We had decided to try our luck for the last time this morning, but the storm was still so severe, though it had stopped snowing, that we had to abandon our scheme. I resolved instead to start back without further delay. A wintry landscape surrounded us this morning. The snow was quite an inch deep and a strong north wind made the change of scenery seem all the more natural. Halfway to our next camp, Khaptkhau-su, we caught sight of a flock of splendid goats high up on a mountain across the river. The caravan was told to go on to our camping place, while Numgan and I rode across the river with the intention of climbing the mountain. The goats, however, were already on the move and before we reached the foot of the mountain they had got to such an inaccessible place that Numgan pronounced it hopeless to follow them.

On coming to the camp the old fellow asked for permission to go out once more by himself. I had no wish to oppose him, but decided at the same time to go off in another direction. It would really have annoyed me if he had been able to brag about getting an ibex to comfort me for my vain efforts. I took the road up the Khaptkhau-su gorge which we had not yet tried. After a ride of about an hour my yigit and I discovered a small herd of goats grazing fairly low on a slope. We hid our horses and were able to creep along a spur of rock screened by a thin line of firs running out from the mountain to a place where the animals were between us and the wind. We were only separated by a projecting bit of rock. When we had climbed so high up the slope that I thought we must be slightly above them, I began to advance as cautiously as possible round the projecting spur of rock, at first in an upright position, then on all fours and finally flat on my stomach, which was