



Two Kirghiz musicians.

This morning I parted from my kind Kirghiz hosts, or rather from my hostess, after giving them samples of practically all the presents that I have among my baggage, from clocks to cheap brooches, mirrors, needles and thread etc. I would willingly have given them something better to show my gratitude for the good pack-horse they have forced me to accept. Unfortunately I had no spare rifle and affected not to understand the fairly broad hints they gave me.

*May 31st.
Camp at
the outlet of
the Aghias.*

Nasumbatoff, who had ridden over to an adjacent Kalmuk aul last night, sent an officer to say that he would catch me up a little later. On the quiet, however, I learnt that he had had such a drinking bout during the night that he was incapable of riding. I saw no more of him and my delicate compliment in starting on his burkhun horse was wasted.

We rode part of the way with a rich Russian Kirghiz, Turla Khodja, and his companions. They had spent a day with my hosts, whose three-year-old daughter is to marry the three-year-old son of the Russian Kirghiz some day. These marriage contracts for children, who are still in their cradles, which are observed and fulfilled when they grow up, are curious. Turla Khodja has to pay the Zangi 300 horses as a «kalym» for his daughter. This is equivalent to 6—9000 roubles. The kalym is not paid at once, but gradually as the son grows up. The girl's marriage portion is to consist of 10 camels, 30 carpets, 30 furs and various other things in similar quantities. If the father is rich, he usually allows his daughter part of his property. The 30 furs, 30 dresses etc. with which the daughter is equipped, are divided among the relatives of both families, so that each of them can wear a new fur or a new dress in honour of the young couple.

I halted at noon and refreshed myself with a cup of tea at one of the local officials' of the Kirghiz, the «elder» of 100 yurts. The old man had called on me the day before and invited me. He met me a short distance from his yurt with about a dozen Kirghiz, and when I left, I was escorted by the same group of horsemen. In such cases no sort of order is observed. Everyone rides where he likes and the guest of honour may easily be left to ride