

decorated in gold and covered with chased silver cups and other objects in honour of the burkhuns placed above it. On the right there was a throne-like bed with a canopy embroidered with Chinese dragons. In front of it a couple of seats made of hard, double cushions with small benches that served as tables. The lady seated herself on one of them, sitting sideways, in a half European, half oriental posture, while the other was occupied by a little snubnosed Pekinese. She offered me a seat on the left of the entrance and tea, prepared with butter and salt, was served in graceful silver cups. Our conversation was the most commonplace talk imaginable. I presented her with a watch and a mirror, besides a dagger each for her absent daughter and son. I told her that I had a revolver for the Khan which I would give him when we met on the way to Peiping. The watch and mirror seemed to amuse her. When I asked, if I might photograph her, I was told that, if Our Lord allowed me to visit their camp again, she would give her permission. I pretended that I did not understand this polite refusal and calmly began, to the horror of the court officials, to prepare my camera, explaining through my interpreter that the photograph would be charming and that I would send a copy from Urumchi. My determination decided the matter and all the jokes that I made my interpreter translate aroused much mirth. Though protesting a good deal, she posed very readily, both sitting and standing, for three pictures. Some time after my return her card was brought to me with a message that her ladyship had been taken ill again and was deprived of the opportunity of returning my call. Soon after, two sheep, a bag of flour and a square of »brick tea« were brought to me.

The camp consists of about a hundred yurts spread over half a mile square on a triangular plain bounded by the river Baga Yulduz and high mountains on the opposite bank NE—SW, Kharsala ulu, as the Kalmuks call the chain of mountains with the Dagit dawan ENE—WSW and Bain Bulaq ulu, a chain of smaller hills projecting from the Baga Yulduz, E—W. On the summit of the highest of the Bain Bulaq mountains a Kalmuk praying site was visible, indicated by a mass of sticks and coloured ribbons. The biggest yurts are occupied by the Princess, her second son and daughter and lama temples. No less than twenty large yurts are occupied by the latter. Each temple consists of two yurts that form an entrance-hall and a room for the burkhuns. The most important temples, like the yurts of the Khan's family, are marked by red cloth on the upper part. These temples are the holy of holies of the Torguts and the senior lama officiates in them supported by at least a hundred others. Their music, in which a muffled drum combines with deep, long-drawn trumpet sounds and the shrill notes of some other instruments, could be heard in my tent, testifying to the fact that constant prayers for the Khan and his family were ascending from these yurts to the burkhuns. It sounded mysterious and full of feeling in the distance.

I called on the senior lama (by permission of the Khansha), a fine old fellow with the head and dignity of a cardinal. The old man had heard of the flight of the Torguts from the banks of the Volga, but had no idea, what the cause was, nor how and when it happened. He mentioned that during the last few years the number of deaths considerably exceeded the number of births. He did not render any medical assistance himself, but many other