

descried a couple of horsemen trotting towards us, and as they drew near we saw that they were unmistakably Cossacks. Neither of us had seen a mounted Cossack before; but their resemblance to all the pictures one sees of them in illustrated papers and books was evidence enough who they were. There was the same rough, shaggy-looking grey sheepskin cap, long overcoats, high boots, whip, and rifle slung over the back, that we knew so well from pictures. They saluted, and gave Mr. James a letter from Colonel Sokolowski, who commanded the Russian post. The colonel said he would be most happy to allow us to cross the frontier, and that he hoped that we would visit his post and "accept the cordial but frugal hospitality of a Cossack." We rode on, therefore, and at about three miles from the frontier came across the Russian station of Swanka, situated among some low rather bare hills. There were stationed here at the time of our visit about three hundred Cossacks. Some low rough barracks had just been constructed for them, and small cottages for the officers were dotted about all round. The colonel's house was larger and better built, but all of them were of the rough simple description one would expect to find at a distant frontier outpost.

Here we were most cordially received by the Russian colonel. Russians never err in want of cordiality—to Englishmen especially—and in this remotest part of Asia, thousands of miles from either St. Petersburg or London, we met, uninvited guests as we were, with real warmth of reception. The colonel's house had about it no superfluity of luxury. It had glass windows and a stove—which are luxuries the Russian would not have met with if he had visited my own head-quarters in the Chitral frontier during last year—but the walls and the floors were quite bare, and the furniture of the very simplest. There was only one room, a part of which was partitioned off into a bedroom and dressing-room, and