

the march we reached a Kirghiz encampment of twenty-two tents. Here were the first Kirghiz I had met; but most of the men were with their flocks and herds, higher up on the mountain-sides, and it was only the very old and the very young that were left down below with what might be called the heavy camp equipage. Having no tent of my own, and there being no public inn, I was obliged to do as the people of the country do, and seek the hospitality of the inhabitants of the tents. This was, as usual, readily given. We rode up to a tent, and Rahmat-ula-Khan went in, said we were travelling to Kashgar, and asked for accommodation for the night. In this way I found myself quartered in a tent with four very old ladies, one of whom was a great-grandmother, and the youngest a grandmother. They were very hospitable old ladies, and we took a mutual interest in each other. The tent was similar in construction to the yurts of the Mongols, but these Kirghiz seemed much better off than any of the Mongols I had met, or than the Kirghiz we afterwards saw on the Pamirs. They were well clothed in long loose robes of stout cotton cloth—generally striped—of Russian manufacture. Round the tents were piles of clothes and bedding for the winter—good stout felts and warm quilts; and rows of boxes to contain the household goods and treasures. A small portion of the tent was always partitioned off, and there were kept all the supplies of milk, cream, and curds, which form the staple food of the Kirghiz. On the whole, the tents were very clean and comfortable, and by living *en famille* with these Kirghiz, I got to see a great deal more of their customs and habits than I otherwise should have done.

Meanwhile, while I was looking round the tent, my hostesses were examining all my kit, and showing great interest in it. I had to take off my boots and socks, and it so happened that my socks had holes. This immediately appealed to the feminine instinct; they were whisked away,