

We reached Torugát Bela (the brown horse's back) on the fifth day. This is a grassy plain, 13 miles from the Torugát Pass, leading over the southern crest of the Thian-Shán range. We passed through an old crater, which was pointed out by Dr. Stoliczka as verifying his previously expressed belief in the existence of an old volcano in this direction. On leaving the road and wandering over the grass covered undulating hills and long sloping flats to the west, we saw several flocks of ovis poli, but were not fortunate enough to secure any. The Torugát Bela ground was occupied by Kára Kirghiz and Kazáks from the Nárín Valley with great herds of ponies, but they were moved some distance off to make way for our party. We saw about 800 of their horses being driven off as we approached our camp.

We halted on the 5th to try our fortune after ovis poli. Large flocks were seen, but none were bagged by us. A black ibex was also seen. We went about 12 miles to the west, passing along extensive valleys and over flat-topped spurs and rounded hills, all covered with grass. On our way back to camp the Kirghiz were despatched in several directions and brought in two fine male and one female ovis poli. The country to the east of the pass appears of the same character. Laden animals can pass from Torugát Bela to the foot of the Terek pass, 25 or 30 miles to the east, by paths over the pasture grounds. The pasture, even in the depth of winter, is excellent; dry, but nutritious, as shown by the good condition of the ponies which feed entirely on it. In summer it must be very rich and abundant. We were told in the evening that the arrangements would only admit of another day's stay before returning to Chakmák, and a visit to the Chádir Kúl (the Sheet Lake) was planned. Accordingly on the following day, the 6th, we rode to the lake and back, 32 miles. We crossed the pass at 13 miles from Torugát Bela, and proceeded to a ridge 3 miles beyond, from which a splendid view of the lake, plateau, and surrounding mountains was obtained. The day fortunately was remarkably clear. There was no snow on the southern, and very little on the northern, side of the pass. The lake was entirely frozen over, and thinly covered with snow. A considerable amount of snow lay on the Tásh-Róbát range and the mountains to the west. The Tásh-Róbát pass leading to Nárín, three days' march from Chádir Kúl, was however perfectly open, as we met four or five travellers who had crossed the previous day, and halted for the night at Chádir Kúl. Several parties of Kazáks and Kára Kirghiz were seen on the pass attending their herds of ponies grazing on the slopes. The Kirghiz Yúzbáshi, who accompanied us, appeared to be on the best terms possible with them all. We were told that Nárín Kazáks and Kára Kirghiz come over annually with about 5,000 ponies for winter pasture in the Amír's territories, paying revenue to His Highness. The ponies are stout and well made. Both they and the men look enduring and active, and they must be hardy to a degree to stand as they do the cold of these heights in mid-winter. In the sheltered, Torugát Bela ground the thermometer sank to 26° below zero outside, and 8½° below zero inside our felt tent. The wind at this season on the heights is cutting in the extreme. Of this one of our party had very uncomfortable proof when in his intense eagerness to be the envied "first" to bag an ovis poli he undertook a long and slow "stalk" round the summit of a ridge about 14,000 feet and was frost-bitten on the fingers from contact with the rifle barrel before he got a shot. In the whole way from Káshghar there is literally no "hill ascent" till within a few hundred yards of the summit of the pass, and there it is easy and gradual. Grass is obtainable throughout, being particularly abundant between Chakmák and the pass. There is no scarcity of firewood to within 25 miles of the pass, and then a good substitute is always obtainable in the stunted furze and dry horse droppings to be found in the water-courses and on the pasture grounds. Baron Kaulbars, in his description of the road, makes a strange error in saying that for 67 miles from Chádir Kúl towards Káshghar no fodder is procurable.

We returned to the Chakmák Fort on the 7th, 26 miles. On the way we saw Kirghiz loading camels with blocks of ice cut in the Toyun for transport up a side valley, where they were located with their flocks, their supply of water being thus obtained till the approach of warm weather releases the frost-bound springs.

We halted on the 8th. We were shown at Chakmák the frozen carcasses of about 50 ovis poli and black ibex, stored as part of the winter meat supply for the garrison. The Toksabai presented us with nine splendid male specimens. All had been shot by the Kirghiz troops,