

the Kirghiz, with their vast herds and flocks, are pouring over the passes on to the rich pasture. There are no trees, no bushes, nothing but a world of grass sprinkled with beautiful wild flowers.

It is said that Mount Kaufmann is rarely free from its canopy of clouds, but we had a fine view of it during our first stay in the valley. From over the spur at Sari Tash it came in sight, a long mass of ridges and amphitheaters rising in groups one above the other, and above them great snow-fields mantling the cliffs. Here and there we could see a glacier starting in a group of cirques below the top, and pouring forth its snake-like river of ice to the very edge of the plain. It was a grand sight, this gigantic complex of ridges and snow-banks rising to the top

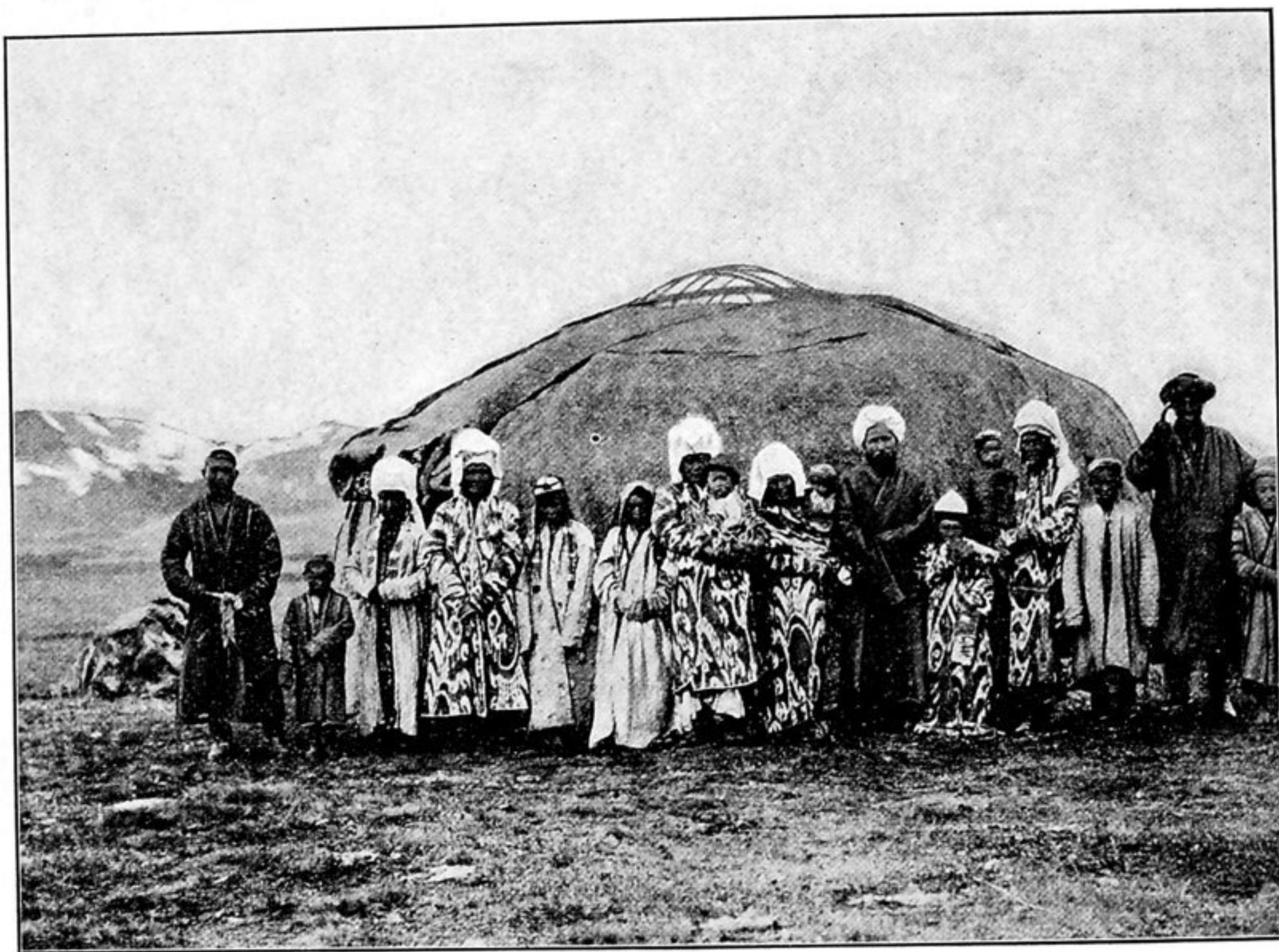


Fig. 88.—The Kirghiz in the Alai Valley.

peak of all, an ice-capped pyramid so high that it creates the clouds and directs the storms. For a long time we saw the clouds, blowing up from the northwest, split on Mount Kaufmann, part turning back to the northeast, collecting on the Alai range behind us, while the rest formed a horizontal stratum floating just below the high peaks of Mount Kaufmann and disappearing southwest over the Pamir.

By the end of the afternoon it began to thunder and hail on our side of the valley, but during the whole storm the sun shone brightly on the Trans-Alai Mountains, and we could see them sparkling through the hail. Temperature at 7 p. m., 39° F.

On July 6 our caravan crossed to Bor Daba, on the south side of the Alai Valley, and camped there over night. When we arose at 5 a. m. on the 7th it was 35° F., and the stream was sheeted over with ice. The sky was clear, the mountains