

The breeding of camels, in the domestic economy of the Turkomans, furnishes principally milk and wool; the flesh is not willingly eaten. The principal use of the camel is for the transportation of goods, but among agricultural natives it aids also in field-work.

The breeding of asses stands in connection with that of the camel, since in the shorter journeys the leader of the caravan is always mounted upon an ass, whose short trot adapts it to the pace of the train.

The breeding of horses lies mostly in the hands of the Kirghiz of the Mangishlak district. Their small animals, gifted with great powers of endurance, are kept on the steppe in herds through the whole year and form among these people an important object of commerce. The Turkoman, on the other hand, breeds rather for his own use than for sale. The Turkoman horse is also much taller and more noble than that of the Kirghiz and, therefore, requires more careful treatment.



Fig. 492.—Natives Mounted on Cattle and Horses. From the Badminton Magazine.

Under the conditions in which the Turkomans formerly lived the possession of an enduring fast horse was of great importance, for on it depended the success of the alamans or the slave-hunting raids in Persia. Since the Russian conquest put an end to this, horse-breeding has fallen to a great extent. It is preserved only from complete decay by the passionate love of the Turkoman for very fast riding and for organized races.

The least position in the animal industries of Transcaspia is occupied by cattle-breeding, which under the existing climatic conditions is not adapted to the nomadic life. In the agricultural oases, also, cattle are bred only to a small extent, and principally to produce work-animals (fig. 492). The use of beef is avoided by the Mohammedans. The care extended to the cattle is most defective. It is only in winters abounding in snow that they receive sufficient fodder to barely protect them from starvation. At other times they are dependent wholly upon the