

for my Muztagh-Ata excursion, which if to be made at all must be made within the next few days! I used the short interval when the rain stopped in the evening for a visit to the Beg's Yürt. He seemed to appreciate the compliment, and whatever doubts he may feel as to the results of any assistance he may render me, they did not interfere with a display of cordial hospitality. In the middle of the Yürt a big cauldron ('Kazan') of milk was boiling over the fire. One of the Beg's wives, no longer young, but of a pleasing expression and cleanly dressed, was attending to the fire of dwarf juniper ('Teresken').

"While the dish was getting ready, I had time to look about and to examine the homestead. Comfortable it looked in contrast to the misty, grey plain outside. The wicker-work sides and the spherical top of the Yürt are covered with coloured felts, which are held in position by broad bands of neatly-embroidered wool. All round the foot of the circular wall lie bundles of felt rugs and bags of spare clothes, evidently stored for a more rigorous season. A screen of reeds, covered with woollen thread worked in delicate colours and bold but pleasing pattern, separated a little segment of the Yürt apparently reserved for the lady of the house, who again and again dived into it, to return with cups and other more precious implements. The floor all round, except in the centre where the fire blazed, was covered with felts and thick rugs made of yak's hair; for my special accommodation a gay-coloured Andijan carpet was spread on one side. The warm milk, which was offered from the cauldron by the presiding matron, tasted sweet and rich. I had it presented in a large Chinese cup, while the rest of the company, which comprised over a dozen of the Beg's male relatives and neighbours, helped themselves from a number of bowls in wood and iron. Milk is a staple article of food with the Kirghiz, and the healthy look of the men around me, young and old, showed how well it agrees with them.