

Farghana Valley. Through carefully cultivated fields and substantially built villages, where there was much to indicate the beneficial results of a well-ordered European administration combined with great natural resources, I rode that evening into Osh, the prettily situated headquarters of the district. Its cantonment, founded by General Skobelev on the conquest of Farghana only some twenty-five years before, looked, with its clean streets of Russian houses and its fine park along the broad, tossing river, like a favoured spot of Eastern Europe. Yet at the same time I was curiously reminded by many a pleasant feature of Indian "stations" I knew well along the foot of the Himalayas.

Colonel Zaytseff, the Chief of the District, and an officer of distinguished attainments, received me with the greatest kindness. His office, with picturesque Ming-bashis and Kirghiz headmen in attendance outside, still suggested the "Cutchery" of an Indian Frontier District. But at the charming villa where I enjoyed his hospitality, together with a glorious view of the snow-covered Alai range in the distance, everything breathed the air of Europe. The telegraph, which enabled me here to get into touch with home, still further strengthened the illusion that I had reached the confines of the West.

A short halt at Osh gave much-needed rest. I here discharged Sadak Akhun, whose open-air kitchen arrangements had aroused as much interest in the Russian household of my host, the local postmaster, as if they had been carried on in the back garden of a London suburb. I also disposed there of my remaining Indian camp furniture. I had reason to compliment myself on the lucky inspiration which prompted this last step. For when, after a four-hours' drive by the well-shaded road that traverses the open fertile plain towards Andijan, I reached this great town and with it the terminus of the Trans-Caspian Railway, I found myself in full Europe for all practical purposes. In the comfortable hostelry of the "Moskwiya Numer" my camp-bed and camp-chair would have been as much out of place as if set up in the inn of an English country town.