

## CHAPTER V

### THE ANCIENT CARAVAN ROAD TO TABRIZ

Up again early on November 16. The darkness lay dense and heavy over the country, the sky looked threatening, there was a fine drizzle, and the mud on the road and the wet loads of the camels showed that it had been raining heavily. Immediately above the village we follow a shallow valley up between flat elevations, one on one side, the other on the other side of the valley. There is no vegetation except a few willows and knotty shrubs. We are again approaching a pass, and the villages we pass through, such as Kalejik, Ghechid-khanlari, Vavuk-dag-khanlari, and Gögerchi, consist of only a couple of houses. The traffic is lively on this night of Ramazan; buffalo and oxen carts creak and groan, laden with huge trunks on the way to Erzerum where there is no wood, and interminable camel caravans from Persia hurry past us in the darkness bearing a whole trainful of merchandise down to the coast and for further transport westwards. The camels are tied together and are hung over with bells, not dull and harsh as is often the case, but with a pure clear note ringing solemnly as in a religious procession to the step of the royal animal. I never weary of this same old monotonous sound with its unchanging rhythm, the ceaseless ding-ding and dong-dong which I have heard so many times before, and which always awakes a longing for the Sabbath peace of unknown deserts and adventures on untraversed paths; it seems to ring up old memories of my youthful years in vast Asia.

Unlike the mules the camels have the sense to get out