

The ground consists of soft yellow loam, and the road becomes worse and worse. There is, indeed, a roller standing at the road-side, but apparently it cannot contend with the rough metal intended to strengthen and repair the road, for this lies in a hard ridge in the middle which is avoided by both caravans and vehicles. One must drive carefully over these holes, ridges, and ruts, where the mud gives way under the wheels. Passing through the large village Balakhor we come to Osduck, where we rest a couple of hours and again exchange a soldier. The horses are fed with barley; it is well that they are not obliged to fast in Ramazan.

Then we pass, on the left hand, the Armenian village of Varsehan, with two churches in ruins and another newly built. We overtake an old officer of Kurdish militia, but otherwise the road is deserted now in the later hours of the day. We cross an open hilly valley and have the river Chorok, which we have just passed over, for a long distance on our left, in which direction the mountains are sprinkled with snow. Horned cattle, buffaloes, and sheep feed here and there, and sometimes peasants are seen ploughing their wheatfields. Up and down we go through this country, which closely resembles certain parts of North Tibet; we happen to be just in the transitional zone between the coast land, cut up by valleys and erosion furrows, and the plateau country which stretches on and on to Iran.

A Turkish family is travelling eastwards in a cart drawn by four oxen. They are moving with their goods and chattels, and up on the top of boxes, sacks, bed-clothes, cushions, coverlets, kettles, and other household utensils sits the wife like a hen on a rubbish heap, and nurses her baby. She jealously conceals her beauty, covered all over with a red wrap. The man drives, and his eldest boy walks alongside, and with a switch wakes up the oxen, which are almost asleep.

The horses take us up to the summit of a hill, and we see as through a portal the town of Baiburt and its large barracks in the valley bottom, with a long descent before we reach it. Here we are suddenly in the midst of life