

CHAPTER VI

HIGHLANDS WHICH ARE DRAINED TO THREE SEAS

It is strange that the continental climate is so decidedly pronounced so near to the coast; the night is quite clear and mild, and when we set out at seven o'clock, having slept longer than usual, the thermometer marks 31.1°. Then light clouds hover over the earth and clothe themselves in their morning mantle of glittering gold, forming a brilliant background to a large caravan of Persian camels and dromedaries, all decked with pure white flecks of hoarfrost. The country also is covered with white, and the uppermost layer is frozen, but is so thin that we ride easily. We follow the Euphrates upstream on its left bank, after crossing the river by a bridge resting on stone piers. The river is here called the Kara-su, and carries down perhaps 175 cubic feet of water per second. There is no vegetation on the banks and all the hilly country is dreary and sterile. On the right bank is Yagdarish, a small village at the foot of a knoll, and higher up is another, Kara-büyük. Jinis-khan is a large fine caravanserai of stone. Ox-trains with chests and bales pass to the east; those which are making for the opposite direction carry hay, corn, and firewood. There is a reek of oxen in the cool of the morning.

We are again entangled in an endless caravan on the way to Persia; the animals are frightened by the rumble drawing nearer behind them, and start uneasily to one side. As far as the eye can see over the flat country the road is packed with camels and dromedaries; they seem to take entire possession of the landscape and diminish to small specks in the distance. It takes us a considerable time to