

raise ourselves to stretch our legs, and then sink down again into our places. The engine pants and puffs; it burns *mazut*, the excellent fuel that remains after the distillation of raw petroleum; its smell is suffocating, and helps to pollute the air in our rolling house. The Armenians make preparations for their mid-day meal, and bring out bread, hard-boiled eggs, and bottles of milk from their stores, and egg-shells are added to the other sweepings on the floor. The railway creeps along the river, following its windings; here the banks are dreary and barren, a couple of ox-carts move like snails along a weary road, a couple of yellowish-grey camels graze among thistles in the solitude; how dreary and deserted, how bare and naked compared with the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea! A frontier post on the other side of the river is Persian. Here and there the river is divided by a holm or an islet of mud, and the current is very slow. Still more desolate and more like a desert is the land to the east, calling to mind the great flats on the lower Kura.

We rejoice over every station we leave behind. The fifth is called Shah-takhti; here a very large caravan is marching eastwards. The railway traffic does not yet seem to be in full swing, but we know that wherever the tracks extend their twin ribands of iron through the steppes, the death-knell is rung unmercifully of the picturesque and all-pervading caravan life. Trains travel more quickly and trade is extended; but in the East people are never in a hurry, and it is a pity to see camels pushed out and driven from the stage.

Now the sun sinks and darkness spreads over the silent steppe. Low hills stand on the Persian side of the Araxes. After a sound siesta the Armenians wake up again and light fresh cigarettes, the children are tired and fractious, and long to get home to their wretched beds in Nakichevan. At last this long day approaches its end. Yonder on a height are seen the houses of the little town, church towers and trees, the engine sounds its whistle, the train slackens its pace, and at last halts at the station, which is nothing but an uncovered platform. There is no goods warehouse, and the passengers get their belongings by waiting patiently