

Mist lies dense and heavy over the flat, dreary land, hiding the view and producing the illusion of a vast plain, as on the shore of the Lake of Aral. But beyond the grey town walls of Shujes and its *guristan*, or graveyard, with singular monuments and rings of stone round its grave mounds, the white wisps of damp mist begin to move and roll like smoke down the Araxes valley. It grows lighter, the nearest mountains come into view, and here and there the blue sky peeps out through vertical shafts. The moisture from the heavy rain of yesterday is now rising up, and the whole country seems to smoke and steam. When the sun pierces its veil it will feel burning hot.

A party of Armenians come riding along conveying their goods on horses, and sometimes we meet small local caravans. Farther on, where the narrow pebbly road leads us to the mouth of the Deredis valley, dense mist is again seen in front of us, and we soon come up to it and are surrounded by chilly air. We cross again the Russian road, here strengthened by a stone breastwork, macadamized, and with small arches of stone to give outlet to rivulets from even the smallest ravines. The Persian road becomes still worse at the bottom of the erosion furrow which, encumbered with detritus and boulders, leads us up between low hills. At the foot of the right flank of the valley rises a terrace of pebbles perhaps fifty feet high. The higher we rise the narrower the valley becomes, the more bestrewn with fallen rubbish, and we cross the little brook time after time among the boulders. Here the new road, after the first experiences, has been solidly built up two or three yards above the valley bottom and with a rise as regular as a railway. The station-house of Deredis, also a Russian building, is so firmly and solidly constructed that one looks forward to seeing, some day, a railway waiting-room accommodated in it. At one point where the road crosses the brook a bridge of two arches is erected and strengthened by buttresses to be able to withstand the pressure of the water. At certain sections, where the new road encroaches on the ground of the old, it is permissible to make use of the former, but not elsewhere.