

We drive along at a round pace ; the coachman smacks his whip, clicks, and shouts ; and when some Armenians riding on asses do not manage to draw off to one side he drives calmly into the middle of them, with the consequence that one of them, with his four-legged companion, becomes entangled in a pair of our horses and tumbles head over heels between their hoofs. Fortunately, the coachman pulls up his horses before he has driven over the man, who stands with his comrades on the road scolding and threatening, as we hastily make off from the so shamefully treated party.

Now the valley expands, and over the gently-rounded mounds of yellow loam we come up to more plateau-like heights, where we repeatedly drive across the new road, while the mist again closes in and hides the view. Up here stands the village Ariandebi, of stone and mud houses thatched with straw, as in the Kurdish villages of the Erzerum vilayet, and with a caravanserai, a grey quadrangular wall with a gateway, and benches built against the walls in the entrance, as well as a *balakhaneh* above, properly "over-house," balcony, with closed window openings. Ariandebi is a *mensil*, station or posting-house, and here both drivers and horses are changed. Immediately after me two phaetons arrived packed with Armenians, who tried to induce the postmaster to let them have the best horses in the stables, but they did not succeed.

After half an hour's rest we continued our journey in bright sunshine and mild summer weather, and I was glad to be in this fortunate Iran, though in this Tatar province, which also swarms with Armenians and Kurds. Of the six coachmen and drivers who served me this day only one understood Persian.

In the open, slightly undulating country, surrounded on all sides by low hills, those in the south partially hidden by heavy clouds, is Kara-bulak, a village, and a Shah Abbasi, a quadrangular caravanserai wall of burned bricks on a base of large blocks of red sandstone. In the middle of the façade stands a *pishtak* or pointed portal, once of great beauty, adorned in front with blue tiles, now partially fallen off, and surrounded by four round solid towers.