

more rounded forms, and it is the new Russian road that runs up to the flat-arched pass, at the summit of which the station-house of Yam is built. Near it stands the village of the same name with its irrigation canals winding among poplars and willows. A broad open valley, skirted on the left hand by a rough reddish ridge, leads us to another of the solidly built caravanserais which were erected by the great Shah Abbas to develop and guard the trade-route to Asia Minor and Caucasia, and which, therefore, still bear his name, Shah Abbasi. This also is built of burnt bricks, and has a cupola over the portal; but the inn is half ruined, and the exigencies of modern times and the changes in the direction of trade-routes have long since silenced the echo of caravan bells in its deserted and time-fissured walls.

We follow a brook that descends gently to Seivan, and a bridge of six arches spans its river. We go farther along its valley; now it is broad, now it contracts again. Every turn of the wheel takes me a little farther into the heart of Asia, and the revolutions follow one another more rapidly now that the road slopes down. English telegraph lines, Russian roads, Belgian customs officers—Europe stretches its tentacles and its rapacious forceps into the old worn-out, decaying Persia. We often come across the new road, and in many places the work of construction is proceeding; small white tents are signs of the presence of overseers who will not let spades and pick-axes rest. A stone bridge in four spans takes us over to the left bank. The road is hard, even, and dry, and in some places better than the new, where the stones for macadamizing the track still encumber the surface. At convenient recesses young Tatars sit breaking stones and piling them up into heaps beside the road.

Beyond the town Sufian, where we change horses and drivers, we emerge on to an exceedingly extensive plain; to the south-west, in particular, nothing intervenes between a far distant horizon, and the eye roams over the flat shore of the great Urmia lake, but the sheet of water is not visible, for the shore is twenty-five miles off. Bedel-karesi is a small rest-house on a purling brook, where we halt a moment to buy grapes. To the south in the endless flat and dreary