

land we can just make out Tabriz as a dark shade on the yellowish-brown expanse. The mountains on the left break up into partly isolated groups and heights. The more distant, higher mountains are enveloped in clouds. Now the great road lies far away to the right, small protuberances in the ground hide the town, here and there terraced rims and dikes are traces of fields which have not been cultivated for a long time. At Sinek an old arched bridge spans a brook which, like all the other water in the country, flows south-westwards to the Urmia lake.

The desolation here, near the focus of Azerbaijan and the most populous town in Persia, is astonishing, no traffic to speak of, only a few travellers. The plain, the endless plain, stretches in every direction, seemingly impossible to cross, the horses are almost running away, but we have still more than seven miles to go. Over the Aji-chai, the "bitter river," is a long arched bridge, adorned with ornamental turrets. We dash past a customs station with the Persian arms over the door; our horses' bells jingle clearly and pleasantly in a long street between grey mud walls, gardens stretch along both sides, we penetrate into the town, the traffic increases from corner to corner, and trains of small obstinate asses sometimes block our way; they seem as numerous in Tabriz as human beings. Now we pass through a bazaar, and a street half blocked by millstones presents itself. On the other side of a high-arched bridge we enter a confusion of uniform grey mud houses, where there is brisk movement at sunset, and my coachman drives so fast that I am seriously disturbed on account of the small children at play who thoughtlessly jump in our way. The women of Tabriz are out of doors, wearing their inconspicuous dark-blue sack-like costumes, with white yashmaks in front. Sometimes they lift their veils to see better, but their features are not visible. It is dusk when we drive under the vault of a bazaar arcade, where the trade is brisk, and it is wonderful that we get through without the wheels passing over the feet of idle loiterers. We are out again in a large street; to the right shines the façade of a blue and handsome mosque, and after a while we draw up at the door of the house inhabited by the chief of the customs in