

to reach Senjan in five days, that it will take at least seven; but I know these gentlemen of old, and that only a tuman note is needed to make him take a totally different view of life and make a smaller estimate of distances. And so he is in a hurry to mount the box again, and on we go over good road to Shible, where the steep village street is blocked with tightly packed asses, and where an old caravanserai of the time of Shah Abbas still remains. All day long there has been small rain, but now thick heavy drops fall, and the dust, plastered together, turns into mud, smooth and slippery. A small stream of rain-water comes dancing down the middle of the street, and the horses flounder in the slush.

Immediately beyond the village begins the rise up to the Shible pass, which is low and easy, and scarcely noticeable by a mounted man; but for a vehicle it is no joke, for the road mounts up by nasty awkward zigzags, with a winding ravine on the right. The rain pours down, it is dark and gloomy, the road becomes softer and softer and more treacherous, the horses stumble, the wheels slip in the soft mire towards the slope, and at times the position is so hazardous that one would rather go on foot. Small obstinate asses add to the difficulties, but all goes on well, and when we come to the summit of the pass the heavens open their floodgates and the rain pours down in bucketsful.

From the pass we descend rapidly, and here, too, there are breakneck hills. The rain beats against the hood, which is a dangerous contrivance, for it prevents me from hopping out at the right moment if the carriage shoots down a slippery hill. My driver and his young colleague go on foot, shouting, and brandishing the whip before the horses to make them struggle up again with all their strength when they slip and stumble in the mud. But soon the descent becomes less steep; they can sit up on the box and drive along while the rainwater drips from their clothes. The donkey drivers we are always meeting have thrown over their heads all the empty sacks and rags they have at hand.

At the southern shore of the small lake Guru-köl,