

which we leave on the left hand, many hundreds of ducks are seen; no villages are in sight, but there are tilled fields.

With the rain becoming less heavy we splash through the clayey mud, over flat open country, skirted at a distance by mountains. By a decaying bridge, of which only one arch has withstood the attacks of time, while the others are half in ruins, we cross the river Haji Agha-su, and on the farther side halt for a while at the village of the same name. Some women on camels, and seated in the covered wooden cages with curtains which are called *kajevah*, were just setting out for Tabriz; probably they belonged to the harem of some important nobleman.

Now appear here and there small grey villages, among them Dash-chasan, and to the north-east a transverse valley whither the water collects from every direction. The road, which here is irreproachable, runs over a flat rise in the longitudinal valley, and on the other side the land falls gently, while a cold piercing south-east wind blows in our faces. At the village Tikme-dash there is a *chapar-khaneh* or rest-house for travellers with post-horses, where we arrive in a darkness but slightly relieved by the moon, and hasten to light a fire and dry our rain-soaked clothing.

When we prepare to start again on December 7, the soldiers of the escort declare that their horses are tired, and that therefore they will return to Tabriz; but when I remind them that they are under the orders of the Governor-General they mount with surly looks and follow us. In this part of the country there has been little rain, and there is not a trace of mud on the road, which, nevertheless, is difficult to travel, owing to the innumerable ravines and erosion furrows where there are no bridges. The ground is white with hoar-frost, and an unusually dense haze lies over the country; it feels damp and clammy, and hides the view, and at length blue sky can only be seen occasionally in the zenith. A brick caravan-serai is called, as usual, a Shah Abbasi. The ground is a series of spoon-shaped eminences or spurs separated from one another by deep channels. We go down steeply to