

The mist becomes thinner; now we can perceive six telegraph posts at a time along the road. On the top of a donkey-load a turkey-hen sits swaying; she will be tender, poor thing, before she reaches her journey's end. A caravan of young dromedaries is travelling in the same direction as ourselves; frightened by the bell-ringing the long-legged animals begin to prance, lose their loads, and get entangled in the ropes. The ground is difficult and exceedingly hillocky, and the road goes up and down, soft soil is everywhere, and only two small banks of solid rock are seen. In a very deeply excavated valley stands the village Kara-chemen with its river. We make a halt outside its little *kavekhaneh*, and feed the horses with loaves of barley meal.

In the next valley, where there is also a stream, a camel caravan is resting, its drivers sitting in a group smoking and chatting. It is useless to attempt to reckon up all these drainage valleys, for we go up and down all day long, and generally can drive only at a walking pace; the coachman goes on foot uphill, and at the following descent he puts on the brake. All the larger valleys have names, which I note down in passing. From the top of every hill there is an extensive view to the east and west, and from every valley bottom one can see a short way towards the south, in which direction the land falls. Sometimes the road has been worn down into a ditch by the traffic, and the carriage struggles along the bottom, while I have continually to assist in keeping the balance, now on one side, now on the other. A dead camel lies on a hill near a camp fire, where his owner had, no doubt, waited to see if he could be saved. Rain pours over a dark range to the north from densely packed clouds, and southwards, too, the sky is threatening; but the sun sheds its warmth over the road as the mist continues to clear.

The village Gerib-dost, with its river, lies at the bottom of a valley, begirt with poplars. Nestling in the depth of the valley where the water flows, these villages look like oases in the desert. The next in order is called Turkman-chai, the largest we pass in the day's journey, and we drive slowly and carefully through its narrow