

river, with a floor entirely of sand and pebbles, and here we twice cross the river, which may now carry down about 190 cubic feet of water per second. Over the mounds on the right bank runs a path for pedestrians which in one or two places seems a capital practising-ground for acrobats. A man with a sack on his back is walking along at the very edge, and two others are preparing to wade the stream barefooted.

Barren and desolate, dry and bare—only where an irrigation canal or a brook crosses the road small bogs occur. Tasa-kent or the “new town” has a tavern at the side of the road. The human element is now more frequent in the scene, for we meet many small parties of Persian soldiers returning to their homes and farms in Tabriz after having served their term in Teheran, and carrying their belongings on camels or asses. Poor, unkempt, and neglected appear these defenders of their fatherland, as they trudge along the road in dusty shoes, torn trousers, and tattered coats; their uniforms are worse than disreputable, seldom adorned with a fragment of facings, or with a worn cockade on the cap where the lion and the sun swagger among rags.

Sometimes, too, the monotony of the landscape is broken by a flock of sheep grazing, but on the whole one has a foretaste of the great Persian desert in the east; the flat open country, desolate, barren, and grey, which is but seldom broken by a fruitful spot,—an oasis. But now came, at any rate, an unusual interruption, as two carriages rattled along at a bend in the road. The first was packed with as many people as it could hold—two ladies, two men-servants, two children, and a tiger behind. In one of the ladies I easily recognised a European, though she was well muffled up in her bashlik. We had, however, some anticipation that this meeting might take place somewhere between Tabriz and Teheran, for Madame Avers' husband had just arrived at Tabriz when I left the town, and he was to take M. Mornard's place. His wife was of course charming, sweet, and delightful in every respect, and we stood for ten minutes in the middle of the road, introducing ourselves in the first minute and conversing for the