

other nine. She had the worse part of the way before her, I the easier. And then she vanished again, like a mirage, in a cloud of dust, and again the stillness of the desert spread all around. The only reminder of civilization near us, after the whiff of it which had just sped past, was the English telegraph line, along which deep secrets fly from India. I longed to get away from these never-ending posts, marks of the net which the commonplace European civilization has spun around the known world, and I wanted to reach untrodden paths where the murmuring wires are not to be seen. Day after day I was rolling along south-eastwards over Asiatic soil, as though I were rolling out a map of hither Asia of full size, and I eagerly looked forward to regions of which no map had been compiled.

Some scattered fields, but no farms or villages; trees only on the left bank of the river. We drive again in the river channel, and our wheels receive an unavoidable and very necessary washing. More parties of soldiers in blue uniforms and red facings, brass buttons, and cockades on their black lambskin caps, come dragging their legs along the highway. They are as ragged and shabby as the others, and they are unarmed, for their weapons are deposited in the arsenals of Teheran when the men have completed their term of service and return home.

After the coachman had quarrelled with the stable-boy, who had hitherto always sat beside him on the box, and was now sent off in the middle of the journey, we came to the *kavekhaneh* of Aliabad, and rested a while to boil eggs in a samovar, drink tea, and eat delicious fresh wheaten bread. And then it was not far to the *mehmankhaneh* or inn of Nikbei, where all the huts and kennels were full of soldiers, who civilly offered to prepare me a place for the night. I had latterly been without an escort, but now it was announced that the Vezir-i-Humayun, Governor of Senjan, had sent five horsemen westwards to meet me. They must have been very short-sighted not to discover my carriages on the road, but probably they were lying asleep in some caravanserai.

On the morning of December 10 the dismissed stable-boy Seid turned up again and made up his quarrel with