

up in black felt and tied round with ropes. The corpses travelled in pairs on horses, the coffins being tied together and laid obliquely against the horses' flanks, with the heads near together and the feet diverging below. On one horse a living scarecrow sat bunched up between his dead fellow-travellers. It was all very well at this season, when the corpses did not smell, but I remember that, when I was travelling in the summer of 1886 between Kermanshah and Hamadan, the corpse caravans I met emitted an intolerable stench. The Shiites believe that the nearer they are interred to the grave of Imam Hussein the happier will be their lot after death, and that they will make their entry into Paradise led by the hand of the holy martyr. He, therefore, who has the means willingly leaves in his will a sum of money for the purchase of a grave in Kerbela, where the prices vary in the different concentric rings round the central point of salvation, besides an additional payment for transport. For the men who accompany the body on its last earthly journey are also well paid for their trouble. It seldom pays, however, to convey a single body for a long distance, so the corpses have to wait for one another, and only when a fairly large party is assembled do they set out through the abodes of the living.

We passed a caravanserai, where a dozen tall two-wheeled arabas from Kazvin made an interesting picture at the gate, while a dead mule with its mouth full of grass lay across the road. Now we have crossed the watershed of the long broad valley, an exceedingly flat threshold unnoticeable to the eye, and therewith have left the Senjan-chai behind us and have entered the catchment basin of the Abhers-rud, which dips towards the east. Tilled fields are more numerous than hitherto; but there must be a scarcity of fuel, for women and children collect dung from the road, just as in Northern China. We pass Nasrabad and halt for breakfast at Hidej.

The country seems to the eye perfectly level, and small dark patches are seen in the distance, gardens or villages. The weather is raw and chilly, and some sleet falls at times. Far, far off, along the route on the left hand, appears a prominent mountain spur which we must pass