

visitors began to arrive, I took my seat in a large coach which I had hired to go as far as Veramin, and which, drawn by four horses, carried me forth through the streets of Teheran. Pursued by beggars the carriage rolled along the country road; to the left stood a small mountain group, where there is a coal-mine served by a narrow-gauge railway, and on the right the tomb-mosque of Shah Abdul Azim and the mausoleums of the Kajar Shahs vanished from sight.

Tastelessly and wretchedly restored stands the formerly beautiful tower in Rhagae (Rhages), this ancient town already mentioned in the book of Tobias, and which was sacked by Jenghis Khan at the commencement of the thirteenth century.

Then the country becomes yellower, desolate, and monotonous, and the irreproachable road runs between ruined mud cabins and walls. Husseinabad is a village which belongs to Shah-es-Saltaneh, one of the Shah's sons, and when Taghiabad has been left behind us we arrive in barely two hours at Firuzabad, where the caravan has already settled in a garden. Mirza has furnished my new tent as comfortably as possible, with the tent-bed along the inner wall, two boxes as a table, and a rug between the bed and the tent-pole. Outside lie the camels feeding in a circle, and the piled-up baggage is protected by a couple of rugs from the lightly-falling snow. We must keep a watch at night, for the district is reputed unsafe, owing to robbers. Firuzabad lies at a height of 3245 feet above sea-level.

Short though the day's journey was, yet it was full of significance, for it was the first definite step towards the desert, and I had left the last outpost of civilization behind me for a long time to come. I had certainly passed a pleasant time in Teheran, where the days flew rapidly in the midst of all kinds of occupations; but now I had torn myself away from all tenacious bonds that kept me idle, and now freedom lay before me and deep solitude in the heart of the desert. I commenced a new volume of my diary; the old one with my recollections of restless Batum, phases of life in Trebizond and the environs of the classic