

another, and the sound follows us faithfully on the road through the desert. Every step removes us farther from country blessed with water and productiveness, the land of Ormuzd, and takes us a step nearer to the God-forgotten domain of Ahriman, where drought and desolation reign.

Before us is seen a spot which gradually grows larger—a mule caravan from Khave carrying chopped straw in network bags to Teheran. It is followed by a flock of black sheep on their way to the shambles of the capital, and then comes a train of twenty camels laden with hay, striding heavily and slowly northwards. A little hamlet stands here and there to left or right, consisting of a couple of tiny huts and a few trees, but there is not a single human being visible to be asked the name of the place. Two long banks of earth seem to be the last fragments of a fort, and beyond, to the left, the ground is slightly undulating. At length we march quietly by a man who is ploughing his field with a pair of oxen—a sign of life at any rate; he takes no notice of us, and perhaps is wondering whether a small offshoot from the nearest canal will ever reach his arable plot. The ploughed strip is greyish yellow, just like the rest of the soil. Here water only is needed to convert the whole country into a continuous garden, here and there interspersed with arable fields. There is great wealth buried in this slumbering land, but there is not enough water, and it is certainly doubtful if it could be conducted in sufficient quantities from the mountains so far away.

Only the bells ringing harshly and monotonously in our ears break the silence of the wilderness. We again meet a dozen camels with straw, and again a ploughman drives his ploughshare through the niggard soil; one cannot help noticing such appearances, they are so rare. And yet here and there small lonely hamlets are still seen beside the road, but they are apparently uninhabited, deserted. We come to the village Tejere, with round cupola roofs above its mud cabins, yellow walls and trees and vineyards and a water-tank with a roof in steps. Our way runs right through the village, following one of its lanes. At a canal in which some ducks are dabbling stand two