

of the second. I perceive that my fellows have come to an agreement to ride by turns after we have left the intricate lanes of the village behind us, and I leave them to make their own arrangements. Only the camel-drivers still travel all three on foot, for they have to lead the animals like tugs drawing a line of barges after them, and there is no need to pity them, for they are quite accustomed to it, and it is part of their occupation to go on foot. Mirza, the literate, is too grand a person to walk, and he sits on the top of a load jolting all day long. Avul Kasim is lulled to sleep by the regular movement and the ring of the bells, and seems as though he were in danger of losing his head, but he holds himself together, has a firm foothold to support him. There is no more talking, the landscape does not change its aspect, the train moves on slowly towards the margin of the desert.

Now the summit of Demavend shines white as chalk—the air in the higher layers is purer than near the earth's surface. Sixty-five camels are grazing in a slight hollow to the left of our road—a caravan is resting there. Hassar-guli is a very insignificant hamlet on the opposite side. The road is less and less worn, and is a couple of lighter paths in the yellow ground; we are nearing the place where it will thin out to a fine point and merge into the desert.

We pass on the left seven *siah-chader* or black tents, inhabited by *iliats* or nomads of Turkish or Persian origin. Once nomads of Arab race are said to have dwelt here, but they have moved up northwards to the Meshed road. The tents are like those of the Tanguts on Kuku-nor, black like them, but closed all round. The inmates are half-wild, ragged, and unkempt, but yet picturesque. They appear suspicious, and are not easy to approach. The women are not veiled and wear clothes that once were red. They are soon behind us with their poverty and their free roving life, which is better than the precarious riches that are acquired in Teheran.

Before us surges the desert, immense and fascinating, and we march onwards between the outermost reefs. Beyond the nearest hill to the right comes into sight the