

The day of rest was very necessary, for we decided to try and procure a larger supply of hay and straw, which was to be brought from Kala-no and other villages in the neighbourhood, and could not arrive before evening. We should find the advantage of it later on, and so the day was not lost, for we had every prospect of soon finding ourselves in country where the soil yielded no nourishment for camels. Good sweet water was also fetched from a spring half a farsakh off, in two large *meshks* and four sheepskins swelled out like drum-skins, making two solid camels' loads.

As for myself I spent a large part of the day as a guest in the house of the ketkhoda, our nearest neighbour. The house is a low, long rectangle of mud, and over each room rises a cupola-shaped roof of sun-dried bricks, for here at the margin of the desert there is no timber to make a flat roof. This hive-shaped roof is characteristic of all the villages we shall visit farther east, and it affords a very practical solution of the problem of turning to account the most convenient building material to be found on the spot. Moreover, the thick vaulted clay roof has the great advantage of keeping the interior of the cottage cool during the dry and burning summer.

In the middle of the living-room, where the mistress was clearing up when I entered, stands a table a foot high covered by a cloth which hangs low down on all sides. Beneath the table the ground is dugged out, and in the hollow stands a mangal with burning fuel. The people take their seats round the table, draw the cloth over their knees and tuck it in at the sides, and thus all the lower part of the body is kept nice and warm while they sit and eat, occupy themselves with some handiwork, talk, or let their beards grow grey in idleness.

Under a broken cupola a kitchen department was installed, and here stood an elderly woman baking bread. She kneaded a lump of dough, laid it on a flat, round stone, sprinkled dry flour over it and rolled out the lump with a cylindrical roller till the dough was as thin as felt. By deft manipulations in the air, patting the sheet of dough with the hands and roller, she reduced it to the thinness