

becoming coated with ice and icicles a foot long hanging from his sides and constantly lengthening. Some of them adhere to the leaks in the sacks, which thereby are stopped to a certain degree, for the dropping gradually becomes less frequent. Under other circumstances it would have been sad to see the sap of life running away drop by drop and moistening the dry ground. Now I take the matter calmly, for we have only four days' journey to a place where we are certain to find water.

We approach the hill of the Twelve Imams obliquely, and direct our course to its most projecting point. The middle summit of the little ridge is called Kuh-lenk or lame hill, probably because its eastern slope is much steeper than the western. A score of camels are grazing on the steppe to the right of our route, but the forage is scanty, and the dry shrubs grow 15 or 30 feet from one another.

Quietly and solemnly our heavy train moves along on its way to the desert. The beats of the bells, regulated by the heavy stride of the camels, combine into a monotonous melody such as I heard exactly ten years ago in the woods of the Keriya-darya. Now it seems to ring to the words *pambedaneh-kah-kah* ("cottonseed and straw, straw"), and as if the metal of the bells expressed a longing for rest and food. So they rang in a time which seemed dim antiquity to Cambyses; and while kingdoms flourished and decayed, religions and languages changed as in a kaleidoscope, the caravan bells rang a low continual accompaniment to life in the desert regions of Western Asia.

A darker belt of clouds floats in front of us with threatening aspect, draws nearer, and soon hides Demavend and all the Elburz range, but under the heavy curtains patches of snowfields still peep out. In the morning it had seemed as though there were snow in the air, and now, at ten o'clock, the first shower of round flakes seems to be advancing. Elburz vanishes altogether, the last village and the hills to the west are wiped out; only due east is seen a small isolated knoll called Kuh-i-gugird, or sulphur hill, like a last rock rising above the flat horizon of the desert sea. We can see the snow eddies sweep