

The clang of the bells seems to wake an echo from the densely falling snow, it rings so shrilly its everlasting *pambedaneh-kah-kah*.

It begins to blow gently from the south-east, and the snow which is partially melted on my clothes freezes into a crackling cuirass. On the windward side the camels are covered with snowflakes which freeze hard on their wool; fresh snow finds an easier hold, and the animals look strange, white amidst the white perfectly level landscape. Icicles two feet long hang down from the dark stallion, and as he is, besides, buried in snow he has all the appearance of a winter camel, a monument of snow and ice.

An erosion furrow runs eastwards, and we cross smaller tributary furrows a foot in depth. We have covered $15\frac{1}{2}$ miles when the ketkhoda halts and says that we are at Baba Hamet (2733 feet), where there is good grazing for camels. And, frozen as we are, we have no objection to dismount, shake the snow off our clothes, and light a huge fire of dry crackly steppe shrubs. The snow is cleared with a wooden shovel from the spot where the Cossacks set up my tent, while Mirza shakes the snow from my rugs and cushions and furnishes the tent in the usual style, and so I am at home again. There is talking, and giving of orders all about the camp, and the men hasten to raise a shelter over their heads after turning out the camels to graze, but dusk is near and then our humpbacked bearers are collected round the first sacks of chopped straw. I hear the grease fizzling in the frying-pan for my dinner, and the samovar sings while the snow beats with a swishing sound against the tent and weighs down its roof.

At night I make a round of the camp with Abbas as guide. Our men have erected a ring-fence of the heavy baggage, within which they mean to sleep under their cloaks, round a blazing fire. Outside, the camels are closely packed together in two circles to keep one another warm, and in their midst straw is piled up on a piece of sacking. They are already covered with snow, which also helps to keep them warm. The ketkhoda and his servants have their own ring-fence, where they sit with their mantles over their heads smoking pipes. The other