

men. Mirza walks as long as I do, mounts and dismounts at the same time, and follows me like a shadow when I am on foot, but Avul Kasim disregards all etiquette, and rides even when I walk. All seven have capital appetites, and drink tea as soon as the samovar boils, and pounce like wolves on their dinner. They eat a solid breakfast and an equally abundant supper, and at twelve o'clock one of them goes about among the others distributing pieces of bread and fetches out a jug of water.

In the evening Mirza reads aloud to the others a book of religious legends. And gathered round the fire, his hearers lie and sit in comfortable positions, smoke their pipes, and send the kalia round. Its bubbling sound is heard all the evening, even when every other noise is hushed in the camp. They find themselves in clover, and it is pleasant to know that they are contented.

The weather was still heavy and gloomy. A fine sprinkle of snow crystals fell from the dense fog, and the sky was so overcast that there was not the slightest gleam of moonshine. Light from the camel herd's fire fell over the red and white hillocks behind the camp; to the east the desert vanished in impenetrable darkness, and silently and solemnly night returned to the earth.