

of a canal—strange that anything edible can be extracted from the soil! But the district seems to be poor. Everything is in bad condition, and ruins and fallen-in canals are frequent. The small villages seem to have a hard struggle for existence, beggars are very numerous, blind men sit crouching by walls and hold out their wizened hands. One is quite willing to give them a copper, poor miserable fellows. In Aliabad the villagers came out to gaze at us, and the women took stolen glances at us and followed barefoot for a while.

All these hamlets stand on an extraordinarily level plain, a flat basin which has been filled up by alluvium. Only where canals extend their ramifications are crops conjured out of the earth, and elsewhere the plain is as barren as the desert. Round about at a great distance is a ring of small ragged hills, seen only in outline, and their connections and configuration cannot be unravelled. Only Kuh-i-Shah rises prominently above the country.

The clay soon ceases, and the soil becomes sandy, and occasionally even small dunes appear. In the village Kerimabad the driftsand is heaped up to the top of the walls facing north-east, 6 feet and more above the ground. To the south-south-west there is an opening between two small hills, and the country beyond seems very flat. Round Kheirabad the fields are turning green, and this village boasts of two fruit trees—a rare sight. But we have not seen a palm since Naibend.

The sky is mostly overcast, but the sun looks through a single small break, and is hot. At times it is burning hot, but when the rift is filled up and the wind blows from the south the air is agreeably fresh. At one o'clock the temperature rises to  $60.1^{\circ}$ , after having been down to  $34^{\circ}$  in the night. The sky was indeed clear then, but it is unusual for the thermometer to fall almost to freezing-point at this season in Eastern Persia. Dark-blue rain curtains hang over the hills on both sides of our road, but we ourselves receive only a few refreshing showers, while yellow eddies are seen dancing over the dry plain.

In certain belts the driftsand is heaped up into very low dunes without vegetation. Abbasabad is a declining village