

We tramp on south-eastwards over this fearfully desolate land, seeing occasionally a shepherd with his flock start out of the yellow mist, or the outline of a nomad's tent beside the road. Chabok is an old ruined caravanserai, with an outlook tower, at the edge of a large erosion furrow.

Again an hour passes and we hear the thunder rumbling nearer and louder than ever. It becomes calm for a moment and then we hear a noise behind us, for the wind has veered round, and again the yellow banks of dust come rolling in a great flood over the steppe. In a couple of minutes a westerly storm is raging, the air becomes cold, yellow, and thick, even the nearest hills are wiped out, the dust races in clouds on both sides of the caravan, the wind pushes on behind, so that the camels can travel more easily. The strength of the wind increases, the camels begin to stagger, and all the country seems to be in motion and rushing about us. The wind tears up the soil and we are almost giddy in this playground of wild, variable, and capricious spring winds. The clouds also are riven in pieces and the shreds trail out in the wind like tattered flags. In some places it looks as if a gigantic besom had passed over the clouds in quick straight sweeps. Only the east seems to be untouched by the wind. There the fine rounded forms remain in light shades of bluish-grey with white edges, strange and translucent as ice, bright as though lighted from within by electric lamps. The heavy rain-clouds have taken possession of Shah-kuh, and come into sight again when the yellow columns of dust have swept by. The moan of the wind is accompanied by the heavy solemn clang of our bells. They are now ringing their last peal, and in a few days their work will be over. They are worn smooth inside by their clappers. What a number of times they have beaten since the day we left Teheran! I listen as usual to the ring of the bell on my faithful and trusty riding camel, and calculate that its clapper has struck the metal at least five million times.

If we thought that the atmosphere would now become calm again we deceived ourselves. At four o'clock a