

in these airy dwellings, where mothers nurse their naked children, while others turn handmills, churn butter, prepare sour milk, spin thread or sew clothes. A small withered hag sat huddled up in a corner, and looked as though she were a hundred years old. She was stone blind, could not walk, and sat crouching on her bed on the ground, a nest of vermin. The younger women were good to look at, were unveiled and inquisitive, brown and dirty, and lightly clothed in rags. They had dark-brown eyes, large noses, thick lips, with down on the upper. They wore simple ornaments round the neck and a coloured bandage round the head, but all were barefooted.

In one or two of the huts hung a long clumsy gun; they are generally used for swans. In front of two dwellings stood looms of the simplest construction; very coarse cotton cloth is woven in them. Russian cotton cloth in gaudy colours, imported from Meshed, also finds a ready sale at the Hamun.

It was very amusing to go and look about among these singular communities, which live on cattle-breeding, fowling, and fishing, and where everything vividly reminded me of Abdal and Kum-chapgan. One would think that this people must be better off in all respects than the poor peasants in Eastern Persia, who depend on the harvest they can coax out of the niggard earth; but the people of the Hamun themselves assured me that they were very poor, each hut owning not more than six or ten cows. To judge by the large herds one sees, the average per hut must be larger. It was also admitted that there are households which own as many as a hundred cows, but these were all from Seistan. A man from Meshed was now staying here to buy cattle, and had already obtained 49 head, for which he had paid 25 to 30 tuman. He said that he was going to take them to Meshed in 35 days, and that he made a profit of 3 kran on each cow. In reality his gain was much greater, but he would not let it be known when sellers were standing round listening, for then he would have had to pay more next time.

Later in the day, when the wind was falling, I returned once more to the huts to take photographs. The inmates