

assurance and of a sheep led to the slaughter. But he was always willing and attentive and behaved like a good fellow.

Immediately outside the eastern gate of the Consulate's courtyard we come out into the desert, where no furrows are formed because of the continual changes of the delta and the sediment which levels every part. The soil is impregnated with salt, which can be felt on the lips in the wind, the little steppe vegetation there is, is meagre and dried up, the horizon is as level as a sea, and only in the distance is sometimes seen the outline of a village. Such is Bunjar to the left, of ill repute, for it was from there that the attack on the Consulate originated; men from Bunjar came into Husseinabad, and with this reinforcement the people advanced to the assault. Now the plague had visited the village, and it was quiet. Otherwise the country in front of us to the east was untouched by plague.

On the path we meet two men with asses, laden with tamarisks and other steppe plants, but no other living thing. Large sheets of water cover the flat land, and send out ramifications in every direction. We cross a belt of sandhills and two canals with wretched bridges of twigs and branches dipping in the water. One of them runs to Husseinabad and the villages to the south of it. The weather is fine, not warmer than  $72.7^{\circ}$ , and the fresh breeze keeps mosquitos and gadflies at a distance.

We ride among the wheatfields of Yalais, like green lakes among the everlasting grey, lumpy, and uneven ground. A few willows and fruit trees rise above the horizon, and we seem to be a long time in coming up to them. Here all seems calm and peaceful, and children play outside the huts.

Flooded areas, fields, which always lie in hollows, small belts of dunes a foot or two high, desolate tracts, flourishing copses of tamarisk, here and there black tents with flocks of sheep around them—such is the country we cross until we come again to a group of scattered villages. One of them, Khamak, is half buried in sand, a curious mixture of small wretched mud cabins and sandhills. Dunes rise up between the houses in the centre of the village, and houses stand up out of the dunes. Some of the cabins are actually