

CHAPTER LX

TO THE END OF THE JOURNEY

THICK clouds covered the sky during the night and prevented radiation, and therefore the suffocating heat remained lying over the earth. But on the morning of May 12 the sky was clear again, and we looked forward to the 29 miles before us with some uneasiness. The hills to the south were now quite close to us. From Dalbendin the country has no appearance of desert, but is steppe where the grass shines green in the broad, open, longitudinal valley. Here numerous dromedaries and sheep graze and deep irrigation canals run, an unusual sight.

Here, also, the grasshoppers are in clouds, whizzing and rattling over the road, lighting on the dromedaries and riders, and interfering with our progress. Alijo is the name of a fresh-water spring, which breaks forth in a hollow below the road, and forms a brook of almost standing water. Thousands of yellow grasshoppers find it best to swim over this obstacle; they could very well hop over, but probably they like a bath.

Barren country with salt hollows, hills, and mounds, and then steppe again, and when we pass Kuchik-i-cha, where a small bungalow is erected, we know that we have travelled 13 miles and have 16 more. No one who is not obliged stops here. The locality has a bad repute for the abundance of its gnats. We pass on, therefore, with tamarisks on our left, and dark, hilly projections on our right.

In the bungalow of Mal (2943 feet) I received in the