



*A railway station near
Ashkhabad.*

board the «Admiral Korniloff», an old paddle-wheeler. The roads lie far out in the Caspian — sky and an endless expanse of water. About 100 ships and floating offices were anchored here. In the darkness their lights and their reflection in the water made a fine show.

July 14th. A rough passage to Petrovsk, a little, white bathing resort shut in between the mountains of the Caucasus and the Caspian. Poor and empty. A lovely beach with its rough sand and large waves. A refreshing bathe in the sea, the waves tumbling me over and massaging me pleasantly.

July 15th. Towards evening on the following day we reached Baku, the oil town, with its open roadstead. The town forms an amphitheatre on the eastern slope of the hills. Lights peep out from far and near, surrounded by the mysterious shapes of the hills, and illuminate endless rows of oil derricks that appear out of the dark earth like an army of ghostly creatures. Two hours after my arrival I sailed on the «General Kuropatkin» under the command of a red-bearded countryman of mine, Baron Rehbinder, from Korsnäs. The steamer was comfortable and quick. The crossing to Krasnovodsk took 15 1/2 hours. Good cuisine, a large and comfortable dining saloon, with Kuropatkin in full-dress uniform gazing down calmly and phlegmatically on a motley crowd typical of the Russian border.

July 16th. On Monday morning we reached Krasnovodsk, a small, prettily situated town on the barren, rocky shore of the Caspian. The harbour was deserted, the houses small, one-storeyed with flat roofs. No trees, no bushes - tropical heat and enormous masses of dust. The town is surrounded by high, barren hills. After about 7 months in Europe I was on Asiatic soil once more. A refreshing bathe in the clear green waters of the Caspian gave me strength to bear the heat that at first seemed overpowering. All the porters are Persians, known as «ambals». As strong as animals, they lift and balance astonishing weights on a rope cushion fastened on to their backs. A train was standing at the station, some of the dusty carriages painted white. A filthy kitchen, an improvised, shaky dining-car on 4