

## CHAPTER I

### BATUM DURING A STRIKE

How stormy, dark, and tumultuous the billows of the Black Sea appeared when, at the end of October 1905, I traversed it in a Russian vessel from Constantinople, passing Sebastopol, Yalta, Kerch, Novorossisk, and Poti, to Batum; and yet how peaceful, hospitable, and friendly compared to the turmoil that raged with senseless and hateful madness in the sea of human beings which forms a semicircle round the northern and eastern coasts of the Black Sea.

The *Svatoi Nikolai*, or *St. Nicholas*, which, besides myself and a few other passengers, carried a heavy cargo to Batum, rocked like a nutshell on mountains of violently agitated water—I could hardly have believed that the Kara Denis of the Turks and the Chernoye More of the Russians could have been so rough, or hillocky, to use a topographical expression. We parted with some of our passengers in the Crimea, and beyond Novorossisk only three were left in the first class, Colonel Ileshenko from Van on the Persian frontier, the Consul Akimovich on his way to his new post at Bayazid, and the author. During the latter part of the voyage we saw little of one another—the sea was too rough, and only an acrobat could have made his way to the saloon, so we preferred a recumbent position in our cabins. My port-hole was on the lee side; at every roll it dipped five or six feet under water, but between the plunges I could see the coast-line at a distance of a couple of cable-lengths, and the forest-clad crests of the Caucasus, already partly covered with snow and gleaming white and cold in the sunshine.