

Trebizond, according to information received from Dr. Martin at our embassy in Constantinople, was now, in autumn, almost destroyed by rain, snow, and swollen rivers, and the Persian ambassador Mirza Riza Khan, formerly Minister in Stockholm, also advised me not to take the long laborious journey over the mountains of Asia Minor. Therefore, and also to save time, I chose the road through Erivan, by which I should travel in five days from Batum to Tabriz and in two weeks to Teheran. But fate decided otherwise, and instead of making a short journey to the residence of the Shah, I lost half a month on the coast of Colchis.

The *St. Nicholas* stayed a day, and then returned with all its cargo to Odessa, and the same fate befell all the vessels which came in afterwards, whether they were from Russia or elsewhere, and the losses arising hence may be estimated in millions.

We passed the night in the robbers' den of the "Versal," which was open to wind and weather, and therefore both host and guests ran the risk of being treated as strike-breakers. But early next morning I changed my quarters to the hotel "Frantsia," to get a proper roof over my head. The hotel was barred and bolted, the window-shutters were closed, all the servants had left, and only the landlord and two lads remained at their posts. A room, indeed, was given me, but for the rest I had to provide for myself as best I could. The supply of provisions was scanty, wine and bread and cold sturgeon several days old. Food could not be got for love or money, to make a fire was forbidden, and only the samovar was lighted morning and evening. There was not even water for washing; all the *suchis*, who usually carry water round in the town, had gone on strike like the other men, and I washed myself in mineral water. Here drought prevailed as in a desert, though the sea raved in front.

At the "Frantsia" a Georgian prince was living; we became very good friends the first evening and supped together. He promised on his honour and conscience to lead me safe and sound through the forests of Georgia and over the Suram Pass to Tiflis. Evidently, however, he