

was himself a robber chief in league with the agitators. But I declined, thanking him for his kindness, and was congratulated by my two Russian fellow-travellers, who took it for granted that I should soon have been stripped to the skin if I had accepted the offer. No; here there was no resource but patience—"Patience!" whispered the palms and magnolias in the strand boulevard; "Patience!" sang the surge on the sea—yea, an angel's patience was needed to extricate me from this wretched Batum.

On the first day, the last of October, we obtained a fairly clear idea of the situation, and it was evident that it was not of the nature of an ordinary strike easily to be suppressed by strict discipline and vigour, but a political insurrection of a very serious character. The town lay in a deep, deathlike trance, and, except for shots from fire-arms, all was silent and empty in the tiresome streets of cobbles, where the rumble of carriages and waggons usually is heard among the ugly monotonous rows of houses. All shops and business premises were closed with shutters, bars, and locks. A Georgian, who sold provisions secretly to his customers at a back door, received a written notice from the strike committee that he was condemned to death, and would be shot on the following day. By such threats, followed up by bloody deeds, exemplary obedience was ensured. The citizens remained in their houses, and only vagabonds, the scum of various nationalities, and spies were about; women were not to be seen, or only such as belonged to the dregs of society. Meetings and assemblies were forbidden, and only small groups of workmen appeared here and there. One looked in vain for a laden horse, an ass loaded with grapes, a fruit-seller or vegetable dealer, such as usually crowd the streets and lanes in Oriental towns, and at every five steps cry and praise their wares. If a carriage came along the driver was a soldier with his rifle ready to hand, and the passengers were officers. If horse-hoofs resounded on the stones, the riders were Cossacks armed to the teeth. All the public buildings were guarded by soldiers, and strong watches were posted both inside and outside the bank doors. When I asked the Georgian porter why the door of the hotel was