

garden grazed up to their knees in water. The house was of one storey with a floor on a level with the ground, so that the rooms were damp, musty, and fusty. Now the rain gathered into rivulets, pools and marshes spread out between the houses, and it was impossible to take a walk. Without the *fiacres* with their round hoods one could not go out. Galoshes and umbrellas must have an extraordinary sale in this puddle of a town—poor men who are obliged to live in this muddle! The whole town of Poti is stupidly and unpractically arranged. It stands too far from the steamboat pier, which is exceedingly inconvenient for travellers who land at one o'clock in the morning, and still worse for those who have to embark. I must frankly confess that I cannot understand how they endure it. They have to encamp in the waiting-room amidst Caucasian ruffians, for the steamer waits only an hour when it has not a large cargo, and in the town no information is obtainable about the times of arrival and departure.

Between the town and the pier the Rion flows to the sea, divided into two swollen branches, which are crossed by two wooden bridges simply dangerous for both man and beast. Their planks are rotten and soft as cork, corroded as they are by sun and rain alternately. Here and there half a plank is wanting, and through the gap the river is seen rolling down its muddy water. It is a serious matter to put one's foot in such a hole when it is pitch dark, and, besides, one may fall through anywhere in this rotten structure. How our driver got safely over at night is inconceivable; the horses perhaps see the holes—but the wheels! The bridges are far better in China and India, but a great part of this wretched state of affairs may perhaps be ascribed to the strike.

We stayed four days in this infernal hole, in the company of rats as large as rabbits. We kept up our courage, and were in excellent spirits in spite of coarse fare. Now the Colonel and then the Consul succeeded in hunting up a box of sardines, a sausage, or a bottle of red wine, and we lived much as war correspondents in a campaign where they have to put up with anything they can get hold of. I had the advantage of again obtaining a good lesson in