

their luck on the route through Novorossisk. I went on board in the dusk and made acquaintance with the only passengers on the vessel: a colonel of Don Cossacks of huge dimensions—according to his own statement he weighed $9\frac{1}{2}$ pud ($24\frac{1}{2}$ stones), nearly half the weight of my baggage; and a Greek merchant who had had twelve truckful of goods stolen on the way from Poti to Tiflis. At the same time we heard that a fresh strike had broken out at Batum, and that the state of affairs was worse than ever. The Governor had put the fortress in a state of defence, and the garrison was raised to its full strength when the insurgents threatened to proceed to extremities. Several salvos had been discharged seawards to show that all was ready for the worst. Riots and murders in the streets were of daily occurrence, and no one was safe.

November 9. At length the hour of release had struck, and I was to leave Russian territory and betake myself to more peaceful surroundings, among Turks, Armenians, and Persians. The signal of departure woke me, the engines began to work, and Poti disappeared behind us. For a second time I was on my way southwards to Batum, without a notion how and when I could leave this wasps' nest. The captain suggested that I should try to hire some foreign vessel lying up at Batum, and he took upon himself with pleasure the task of sending me on. He expected that the expenses would mount up to 500 roubles (about £50), and I considered it a moderate price for getting safely out of Russian harbours. It would at any rate be a new experience to sail my own vessel on the Black Sea, and I had already made up my mind to invite any one who would like to go with me,—Turks and Armenians eager to go home, Europeans wishing to get away, vagabonds, robbers, and rogues,—it was to be a voyage of a motley crew of Argonauts on the Colchis coast. I should be able to get hold of some small Turkish coasting steamer, or at worst an open boat under the Turkish flag, of the kind which transports, at low fares, goods and passengers, who have plenty of time to spare, from town to town along the coast of Asia Minor to the west of Anatolia. Such a voyage may be dangerous in a