

northerly storm, but that was impossible when the weather was as calm as now. In a week all might be got ready, but I would have the vessel cleared of vermin, set up a tent on the after-deck, and sail smoothly towards the sunset.

We glided into the harbour of Batum, where many vessels lay idle, and the town was bathed in sunlight, and looked peaceful and contented. How long should I have to stay there? Under ordinary circumstances one of the Austrian Lloyd's boats calls on Thursdays, and starts again on Friday evening, but now I learned that during the strike most foreign vessels did not come beyond Trebizond, and I should have to wait at Batum till Monday week, eleven days in all, when a Russian boat started for Constantinople. An agent came on board and reported that the workmen had proclaimed an implacable strike because troops had been concentrated at Batum. No work was to be recommenced until they were removed. It was demanded that the guards should be removed from the banks, that the fort should be evacuated, nay, more, a general massacre of the citizens of Batum was threatened if the men did not get their way. It was said that the citizens meditated an escape to the Turkish coast on an English steamer. All the hotels were closed—a pleasant outlook—one could not move about the streets, and I was just wondering whether I should take up my quarters at Nobel's office or apply to the Governor, when the *Alexei* swept gently past an Austrian vessel, the *Saturno*, and the Greek merchant, recognising the Austrian Lloyd's agent on the deck, called out to him as we passed by, "When do you sail, and whither?"

"In two hours, for Trebizond."

These words affected me like an electric shock. I must at any price travel with it; and I had no passport for Turkey. I rushed on foot—of course there were no droskies—to the Austrian consulate, to the police station, where I obtained a Russian visa for my passport, to the Russian steamboat office, to the Austrian Lloyd's office, where the information overwhelmed me like a cold douche that, according to a Russian police regulation, the *Saturno* was not allowed to take passengers. I adjured the agent,