

CHAPTER IV

A DRIVE OF 800 MILES

WITH whistles and clicks of the tongue the driver urges his horses up the winding road through the valley, where the river flows in several arms through the flat gravelly bottom, with a few willows on the bank and green hillocks on the sides. The traffic is lively; we meet horse caravans carrying charcoal to the town, peasants with horses and asses, beggars, travellers, riders, soldiers, veiled women in large-blue-and-white-spotted gowns; a party of *hammals* in rags are on their way to their native villages after having saved up their earnings as porters in Constantinople. Here and there we whiz past an open fruit-booth where apples, pears, and grapes are offered for sale, or a *kavekhaneh*, or coffee-house, where the weary traveller can rest and take refreshments. The valley becomes more contracted; on the right side a steep path runs up to solitary huts hanging like storks' nests over the valley. At Haji Mehemed a wooden bridge spans the river. The road rises more and more above the valley bottom and its roaring stream, which carries down somewhere about 200 cubic feet per second. In a drosky we meet an Armenian priest riding with his wife and child. The country opens out a little, the view becomes more extensive, and in a gap in front of us appears the first snow-clad ridge. Where a bend in the river threatens to undermine the road a stone breastwork is constructed, and where debris may fall from the slopes above the road is protected by walls. Here and there workmen are engaged in repairs and improvements—evidently everything is done to keep