

CHAPTER VII

THROUGH DESOLATED ARMENIA

THE road from Erzerum to Bayazid is considered very unsafe, owing to robber bands of Kurdish race, and Nazim Pasha had, therefore, increased my escort from two to six men. One of them was the chief of the cavalcade and followed my drosky with four troopers, while the sixth accompanied the baggage, a division appropriate rather to a guard of honour than suited for protection. At Hassankale the men were relieved for the first time, and the commandant wished to increase their number to eight, to which I objected. Our driving and mounted company is arranged so that a trooper accompanies each waggon, two ride in front of my drosky, and two behind. They are mounted on handsome horses, of which some are amblers which do not jolt their riders in the least, even when they are going at a smart pace; but one of my outriders has a heavy trotter which pounds along so that his Mauser rifle swings and beats the rider on the back at every step. Some of them carry their rifles across their knees or hang them over the saddlebow. Four men are horse soldiers, two gendarmes; it is a diversion to watch them during the long hours of the journey. M. Srabyan warned me not to lose sight of my escort. I must always have at least one man near at hand, for in these districts one can never feel secure.

In Erzerum better horses are to be found than on the coast, and the surrounding country has an old-established reputation for good horses, which are still sought after in the neighbouring lands. The nine horses I now had were