

## CHAPTER X

### TO NAKICHEVAN, THE GRAVE OF NOAH

BEFORE a table in the open air pressed crowds of Armenians, Tatars, and Caucasians, standing and waiting to get their luggage registered for the journey to Naki-chevan; and the potentate who had the oversight of the goods department issued his orders like an Asiatic despot. At Echmiadzin I had heard, too late, that the stationmaster there performed his duty only in return for coin, but wise by experience, and to avoid the crush among the mob, I slipped a new ten-rouble piece into the hand of his colleague in Ullu-khanlu, and at once received all manner of attention and respect. Two men were ordered to weigh my baggage and pile it up in the van, and when I had seen this closed by its doors and bolts, I returned to the compartment where I had passed the night and took my place with two travelling bags in a corner.

There were six places in the compartment, but I could not get a side to myself as I had hoped. A Russian engineer was my brother in misfortune in the opposite corner, and then the carriage was filled up by Armenians and other worthies with women and children. When the train at length started an hour and a half late, tickets had been sold for twice as many passengers as there were vacant seats. Fresh passengers came constantly, tumbling in neck and crop, the time-table was only a specious pretence, and even an hour after the time the ticket-office was besieged by men of more than doubtful aspect and women of Caucasian and Mongolian race.

We were well off for people: three old women were