

in a long queue before the luggage van. But as there were no carts to carry baggage I left my boxes behind, and mounted the only carriage left and drove a mile into the town along an uncomfortable dusty road. The last stretch ascended steeply, and as the coachman kindly informed me that the Hotel Europa was the first in the town, we pulled up at its gate. I learned afterwards that the rogue received a certain commission from the proprietor for all the innocent travellers he caught in his drosky and drove to this the most miserable of all the dens on earth.

The landlord declared that all the rooms were engaged, but that, as I was comparatively neatly dressed and had a rather creditable appearance, he would give up to me room No. 1, which was usually granted only to more distinguished travellers. After a much-needed bath I came to the conclusion that it would not be much out of the way to look up the commander of the town, the *uyesdni nachalnik*, or district chief, for otherwise I might not so easily get out safely from the Russian Empire with all my boxes intact. Here thieves lurked in every corner, and quite recently this very district had been the scene of blood-curdling atrocities. And to expose myself to pillage when I had only one day's journey to the Persian town of Julfa seemed needless.

So I made a lad from the hotel show me the way to the house of the commander of the district, the entrance to which was guarded by two soldiers who marched to and fro with rifles on their shoulders.

"No one enters here," called out one of the warriors.

"I must speak with the *uyesdni nachalnik*."

"He does not receive at this time of day, at night."

"Tell him that I am a traveller and must speak with him."

After several hums and haws the man was induced to go in, and I soon heard a hurried step in the house, and a small gentleman, with the marks of a lieutenant-colonel's rank on his uniform, politely bade me enter, led me to his study, where a lamp burned on a writing-table, and excused himself for a moment; he had some important business to talk over with an officer in another room. Meanwhile, I