

three days' rumbling of the train, the sounds which I heard now—detached voices, and the dragging and pushing of boxes—touched the nerves like a pause of solemn expectant silence; whilst the gleam of the harbour lights, the sway of the still waters, the huddled, mysterious houses of the unfamiliar town, all brought home to me, with a sudden and pleasant sharpness, the thought that I was now on the verge of the Western world, and was soon to be floating off from it into the hollow darkness beyond. The imagination, with one of its many passing flatteries, was breathing a sense into me of personal loneliness and adventure when, passing a group of men, I heard my own name called out to me; and I presently recognised in the speaker a certain well-known Life-Guardsman, whom I had last seen with a gardenia, at supper in a London ball-room. I then began to put names to his companions—all of them men of much the same stamp, whose talk seemed, when I joined them, to have been of cigars and rifles. This meeting at first I found rather prosaic and disappointing; but when we began to compare notes as to where we each were going, and found that one was bound for the Soudan, one for Australia, one for Burmah, and two for the deserts beyond Damascus, a common thought slowly stole over all of us. Here were four or five lives—four or five out of millions—so often and so closely touching each other in England, united now by chance under the stars in the south of Italy, and soon again to be separated