



CHAPTER V

IN A FORGOTTEN CAPITAL

I HAD reached my present quarters in the most charming way possible, having been brought to them practically blindfold ; and I awoke next morning with the sense that I was lying in the middle of mystery. Of what the town was like, of what the people were like, or of what sort of sentiment I should find abroad in the air, I hardly knew more than I did when I left London. I lazily looked up at the sloping ceiling above me, which was formed of some fine matting, stretched upon beams of olive wood. My eyes wandered to the unpainted door, on which fanciful iron hinges branched into lean crescents. I glanced at the stone floor, with a thick Persian mat on it. The chest of drawers and the looking-glass I recognised as European.

Presently through the perfect stillness came a long-drawn lilting sound, something like a crow imitating a town crier. I turned towards the window, which was close beside my bed, and drew back from it the semitransparent curtains. The sight of the blue