

Alexandria—this seemed certain—was the first point to make for. But how from Alexandria to get across to Cyprus—by what line of steamers, or on what days the steamers sailed—no one in London was able to tell me confidently. I was obliged, therefore, to rest content in the faith that I should learn particulars on board the boat at Brindisi, and in the hope that I should not—as I learnt was perfectly possible—have to wait at Alexandria for the best part of a week.

I had taken my ticket a fortnight only in advance, just in time to secure the last berth in the sleeping-car which runs to Brindisi every Friday from Calais; and during that fortnight I found it hard to believe in the reality of the future which I had now definitely prepared for myself. In fact, as so often happens when once a decisive step has been taken, I began to regret what I had done and listlessly to avoid thinking of it. The date of my departure was to be the last Friday in December. I spent Christmas and the preceding days in Devonshire; and the season of goodwill was appropriately enlivened in my neighbourhood by the rival meetings of two Parliamentary patriots, both of whom I knew, and one of whom I assisted. On both sides we wielded the usual phrases; we breathed polite and yet profound distrust of each other, and profound trust in all the rest of the nation. We drew cheers by resounding and reverential allusions to the Integrity of the Empire, to Truth, to Consistency, and to Justice—indeed, to almost everything not a vice that could be spelt with a capital