

## XXXIX

### RACHID GOES HOME

WE were early astir in the morning—abroad in the cold air long before dawn—to oblige the gentlemanly quarantine officer, who had provided, when the dragoman's gold touched his palm, that the beasts which he had mistakenly suspected of affliction must nevertheless be outward bound toward the eastern desert before the break of day. When the caravan was ready to depart on the return journey to Jerusalem, Aboosh took Ali Mahmoud aside, to ease his own heart of an oppression which had long troubled him: it being a perilous thing, said he, for Christians to be outnumbered by Mohammedans on the desert road, or Mohammedans to be outnumbered by Christians.

"You are all Mohammedans but the cook and Elias," he entreated the big muleteer, "and I charge you to see that no harm befalls them—neither hunger nor thirst nor ill treatment," and Ali Mahmoud made the threefold Mohammedan oath to protect the shivering Christians in the event of catastrophe.

They went one by one—a gloomy, staggering cara-