

CHAPTER XXXII

THE END

SOME eighteen months after the death of my friend Grant, the curiosity of the passengers on a British steamer making for Constantinople was acutely aroused by the sight of one of the oddest looking vessels that ever put to sea. She was steaming slowly down the Bosphorus, flying the Ottoman flag, and was clearly a Turkish boat; but what extraordinary kind of cargo she could be carrying baffled us.

Almost the whole of the deck from stern to fore-castle had been boarded in; the bulwarks had been built high up; and as the whole superstructure was of rough unpainted timber, she resembled nothing so closely as a huge floating packing-case. Only a couple of men were to be seen on board; and not a sound came from her save that caused by the churning of the propellers. Almost a weird object.

"What an extraordinary boat, Mervyn," said Enid, as we stood together looking at her. "What can she be?"

"I should have guessed she was carrying a cargo of wild beasts, only there wasn't a sound of any sort on her as she passed, and we were quite close. Besides, they don't come to Turkey for wild beasts."

"Not four-footed, perhaps," answered Enid with a shrug. "I expect there's something horrible behind it. Let's ask the captain."

He came by us at the moment and she asked him.