# The Unspeakable Turk

**Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.**

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John Curtis, a young American, who chances to be in Athens at the outbreak of the Greco-Turkish war, joins a filibustering expedition to Crete. The little vessel is wrecked, but Curtis, accompanied by Lieutenant Lindbohm, a soldier of fortune, and a native Cretan, Michali, reach the island safely. They arrive at a village and are cared for by the inhabitants. Curtis has injured his foot on a sea urchin. He is nursed by Panayota, the priest's daughter. In a few days word comes of the advance of the Turks, under Kostakes, toward the town. The Cretans gather in the pass, the men fighting and the women and girls keeping up beacon fires. Thirty Turks are killed, but Michali is badly wounded and Panayota is captured by Kostakes. The Cretans retreat to the sea, Kostakes plunders the town, taking the old priest and Panayota along as prisoners. Curtis, representing himself as a newspaper correspondent, also accompanies the Turks. Kostakes has the old priest murdered and Curtis plans to rescue Panayota and avenge her father's death.

## CHAPTER XIX.

The sound of a reveille awoke Curtis, and he looked out into the dim, dewy morning. The wigwams of muskets had disappeared, and the little army had already fallen in. Several horses, saddled and bridled, stood by the village fountain. One, a young and sleek charger, was impatiently pawing the earth and another was drinking. Kostakes was sitting at a table, giving some orders to his second in command, the veteran with the scar. A sword attached to a leather belt kept company on the cloth with a pile of eggs, a loaf of bread and a pot of steaming coffee.

"Bon jour," cried the Captain, gayly, springing to his feet, as he espied the American. "How have you slept, and how is the foot?"

"I got a little sleep, despite the pain, but the foot seems no better. I am getting very anxious to see that doctor of yours."

"Tomorrow, I promise you without fail. And now for some breakfast, as we must be off."

The Captain and his Lieutenant ran to the American, who put an arm about the neck of each and hopped to the table, groaning ostentatiously. After the hurried breakfast, Panayota was summoned. She came forth, pale as death, a beautiful, living statue of despair, and mounted without assistance. Kostakes offered to help her, but she repulsed him with loathing and climbed into her saddle as a refuge from his attentions. There were dark circles under her swollen eyelids. As she looked about her as though in hopeless search for the missing dear one, her features trembled on the verge of tears, and groaning, "Ach, my God!" she clasped her hands tightly in her lap and stared into vacancy. Her beautiful hair was dishevelled and her long, white cuffs were wrinkled and soiled. The chivalry in Curtis' nature prompted him to speak and comfort her, although the words sounded hollow and false to his own ear.

"Take comfort," he said, "your father is surely alive. Believe me, he has escaped."

She smiled sadly.

"You do not know the Turks," she replied.

"Did I not tell you, my darling?" cried Kostakes eagerly. "Of course, he has escaped."

She did not even look at him, but murmured:

"Murderer! perjurer!"

Kostakes shrugged his shoulders, as who would say "See!" and, turning to Curtis, cried:

"But Monsieur speaks Greek famously!"

"Only a few words and those with much difficulty."

"Mais non! On the contrary, I find your Greek very perfect. And now allons!"

They pushed briskly up the narrow street, through a scene of utter desolation. The whirlwind of war had struck the town and wrecked it. As they turned a corner a long-legged, half-grown fowl broke for cover and stilted away, balancing its haste with awkward, half-fledged wings. They came unexpectedly upon the little orthodox church and a putrid odor assailed Curtis' nostrils. Their path led them around to the front door.

"My God!" he gasped. "O, hell!" and leaning over his horse's mane, gave vent to a spasm of retching disgust. A sight had met his eyes which was destined to thrill him with sickness and horror to the latest day of his life, as often as the black phantom of its recollection should arise in his mind. The village priest, an old, gray-bearded man, had died about a month before and had been buried in his robes. There was the body, hanging to its own church door, like the skin of a great black bat. Nails had been driven through the clothing at the shoulders, and the weight of the carcass, sinking down into the loose garment, had left it pulled up above the head into the semblance of joints in a vampire's wings. The flesh had parted and fallen in a flap from one cheekbone, disclosing a V-shaped opening of jaw, studded with infrequent, yellow teeth. The eyes had slipped from their sockets and hung at the end of their loosened cords. The poor old head, streaming with hoary hair and whisker, lay broken necked upon one shoulder. It was a sight obscene, unthinkable, fascinatingly profane—ghoulishly filthy.

From a bonfire of bones, half-decayed corpse and sacred ikons—the last named gathered from the houses and the church—a disgusting odor arose and filled the air. The Turks broke forth in derisive laughter as their eyes fell upon the horrid spectacle.

"My rascals have eluded my vigilance, I see," observed Kostakes, "and have been having a little fun in their own way."

"Different nations have different ideas about a joke," gasped Curtis through his handkerchief. "Oh, God!"

Emerging from the town, they picked their way through a large patch of freshly-felled olive trees. The sound of the nocturnal chopping was now explained. About 11 o'clock they stopped for dinner in a small, deserted hamlet. During the progress of the meal a wounded Bashi Bazouk rode into the town and up to the table where Curtis and Kostakes were sitting. The man wore a red turban, which gave to his pallid face a tint similar to that of the underside of a toadstool. His soft shirt had sagged into a little bagful of blood, that dripped out like whey from a sack of cottage cheese upon his yellow sash and blue breeches. He said a few words with mouth wide open, as though his under jaw had suddenly grown heavy, and then, reeling, was caught by two soldiers, dragged from the saddle and carried into a hut.

"I must ask you to excuse me," said Kostakes, rising, "for several hours, my Bashi Bazouks, whom I left with certain commissions to execute, are getting the worst of it at Revent, about an hour's march from here. How 50 Bashi Bazouks can find any difficulty with a little place like Revent is more than I can understand. But I shall soon put a new face on affairs when I arrive!"

"God help the poor people!" prays Curtis, inaudibly.

"I shall leave three of my men behind to look after your wants and those of the young lady. I shall explain to the one I leave with you that he is your servant—that he must bring you anything you ask for. He speaks Greek, so you will be able to get along with him."

Five minutes afterward Kostakes was riding away at the head of his troop. He turned once in the saddle and waved his hand to Curtis. The American picked up his hat from the table and swung it in the air.

"Au revoir, Kostakes," he cried. "The devil confound you and your whole crew of cutthroats—I wonder if this beggar speaks English?"

He glanced suspiciously at the tall, sallow-faced Turk who stood a short distance away, leaning upon his musket.

"No, I guess not. He'd give some sign if he did."

Two other Turks, with muskets on shoulder, were pacing back and forth before the door of the hut where Panayota was imprisoned. Curtis could feel his heart thumping against his beast. He struck the place with his doubled fist.

"Keep still, curse you!" he muttered, "and let me think. Here is the opportunity—but how? how?"

The army was crawling along a white road that streamed like a ribbon athwart the fout of a hill. The ribbon fluttered as the dust rose in the wind. The bayonets twinkled in a dun cloud.

"Four against one," mused Curtis, "Four Turks against one Yankee trick—but how? how?"

Kostakes plunged into the hill and disappeared, and the blazing bayonets, line after line, were extinguished in a billow of green thyme. The American looked back over his shoulder at the door of a stone hut—the one into which the wounded Bashi Bazouk had been carried.

"Hey!" he called. "You there—hey!"

The Turk left ostensibly as Curtis' servant, but actually as his guard, stepped briskly forward, and, taking in his own the American's extended hand, pulled him to his feet.

"Help me into the house," said Curtis. "Now bring me that bench."

The man complied, after which he went to the door, and, leaning against the jamb, looked wistfully at his fellows. At one end of the room was a fireplace, filled with ashes and charred pieces of log. It was a primitive concern, the only vent for smoke being a hole in the roof directly overhead. Board platforms on either side of the fireplace served as couches for the family. On one of these, flat on his back, lay the wounded man.

"I wonder how badly he's hurt," mused Curtis. "There isn't strength enough left in him to put up a fight, but there's enough left to pull a trigger if I tackle the other chap. Hello! he's got the hiccoughs. Why, that's queer."

The man became quiet, and again Curtis relapsed into thought, to be disturbed a second time by the sound of knocking on boards. Looking around, his eyes fell directly upon the eyes of the Bashi Bazouk, and he felt as though he heard some one crying for help when no help was near. The man was resting upon his back and both elbows. For a moment those bloodshot, preying, awful eyes were fixed upon Curtis; then they swept the dingy hut and went out like panes of glass when the light is extinguished in a room. The man fell backward, fluttered on the hard planks and was still. Curtis shuddered.

"That wasn't nice," he muttered, "but this is no time for sentiment."

The other Turk stood by the body of his dead comrade, looking down at the ghastly upturned face. Curtis pinched the muscles of his own right arm with the fingers and thumb of his left hand, and moved his doubled fist tentatively up and down.

"Where shall I hit him," he mused, "in the chin or back of the ear? He must never know what struck him."

Bending over, he untied the long strip of cloth about his foot and unwound it. Taking it in his hands he pulled several times on it to test its strength.

"Strong as a hemp rope. You could hang a man with that."

It was Panayota's blue homespun.

"Hey!" he called to the Turk. "You, there! Say, look at this foot of mine, will you, and see what you think of it?"

The man kneeled. Curtis drew back his arm, but realized that he could not get sufficient swing in a sitting posture.

"Oh, hold on a minute! Let me try the foot on the ground and see how it goes."

They rose to their feet together, and the unsuspecting soldier reeled backward, stunned by a vicious punch on the temple. But he did not fall, and Curtis, maddened by a great fear lest he bungle his opportunity, sprang forward and delivered a swinging, sledge-hammer-like blow upon his victim's ear, throwing into it the entire strength of his body. The Turk dropped like an ox under the butcher's hammer. Then Curtis hastily bound him hand and foot with Panayota's bandage, and, tearing the lining from the man's coat, stuffed it down his throat. Pulling up a plank from one of the platforms by the fireplace, he thrust the limp form out of sight and closed up the opening.

"I hope I didn't kill you," he muttered; "but, as old Lindbohm says, 'you must yust take your chances.'"

He walked once or twice the length of the hut. The foot gave him considerable pain, but it was possible to step on it. The wound, which had taken a turn for the better from the moment the spine had been removed, had made wonderful improvemend uring the past 30 hours.

"What'll I do with the other two?" he mused.

He picked up the gun lying on the floor and examined it. It was a Mauser, and charged with five shells. He peeped cautiously through the door at Panayota's prison, concealing his body. The two guards appeared at the corner and looked curiously in his direction.

"Bah! What a fool I am!" he thought, and hopped boldly into sight, holding up his lame leg by passing his hand under it while he leaned against the jamb. The guards faced about and disappeared, putting the house between themselves and Curtis on their backward march to the other end of their beat.

"I could pot one of them, and then—but no, I might miss, and then I'd be in a pretty mess. And even if I did hit one, the other would have me at an advantage."

There was a sound of kicking against the boards at the fireplace. He sprang to the spot, rifle in hand, and tore up the plank. The man was lying upon his back with his eyes open. A great light broke in upon Curtis—an inspiration. He had thrust the Turk out of sight through instinct.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed. "They can't both leave Panayota. If I call to them, maybe one will come out of curiosity, and I'll do this thing right over again. But what'll I tie him with?"

He cast his eyes about the room. The inevitable chest, studded with brass nails, stood against the wall. He opened it.

"Cleaned out, by Jove!"

He went again to his victim, and, taking a large jackknife from his pocket, deliberately opened it. The man turned as white as veal, his jaws worked convulsively on the gag as he made a vain effort to plead for mercy, and a pitiful noise, a sort of gurgling bleat, sounded in his throat.

"What the devil ails you?" asked Curtis. "O—I see," and he added in Greek:

"No kill. Cut your clothes—see?"

And stooping, he slitted the Turk's sleeve from wrist to shoulder. Following the seam around with the blade, he pulled away the large rectangular piece of cloth. Seizing the other sleeve, he was about to slash into it when he thought he heard footsteps among the stones and gravel outside the hut.

"My God!" he cried, in a hoarse whisper, and jumped into the corner beside the door, just as one of the other two Turks walked boldly into the room. Without a moment's thought Curtis brought the barrel of his rifle down upon the man's head, who dropped his own gun and pitched sprawling upon his face. For fully a minute, which seemed an hour, the American stood motionless, breathless, in the attitude which had followed the blow. Every muscle was set to knotted hardness; he held the rifle in both hands, ready to throw it suddenly to his shoulder. He did not breathe, and he listened so intently that he could hear his own heart beating, and the breathing of the man at the fireplace. Suddenly his muscles relaxed like an escaping spring and he looked nervously about for the detached sleeve. Picking it up, he stooped over the second Turk, when the latter moved his left arm several times with the palm of the hand down, feebly suggesting an effort to rise. Then the arm dropped and the hand beat a faint tattoo on the earthen floor. There was a great shiver of the whole body, a twitching of the muscles; a queer rattle in the throat, and—silence. Curtis stared with open mouth and dilated eyes, and a great, inexplicable horror came over him. "Ah!" he gasped, and, dropping upon his knees, he ran his fingers over the skull. The hair was matted with blood, and a deep, ragged-edged dent bore witness to the terrible force with which the rifle barrel had fallen.

"I've killed a man," he whispered, in an awestruck voice, rising to his feet. Staring fixedly at the silent thing lying there before him, he repeated the sentence over and over again:

"I've killed a man—I've killed a man!"

Then all at once a great change came over him, the joy of fierceness of the lust of blood, and he laughed hysterically, gloating over the dead man before him, as the victorious heroes used to do in the old barbaric ages.

He thought of the other Turk, and looked out of the door just in time to see him turn at the hither corner and disappear as he walked back on his beat. Curtis made a dash for an olive tree about eight rods distant, and, skulking behind it, peeped between the high gnarled roots. When the guard had again appeared and turned back, he ran to a rock and threw himself down behind it, instinctively using tactics by which he had sometimes crept up on a diving duck. He was now within listening distance. The next run brought him to the side of the house, and he had just time to throw his gun to his shoulder when the guard stepped into view. Curtis fired, and the man dropped. He might have taken him prisoner, but the thought did not occur to him. He had tasted blood. Panayota came to the door and looked wonderingly out. The American ran to her with his smoking musket in his hand and seized her by the wrist. It was the natural act of the savage who has won his woman in fight.

"Come, Panayota!" he cried, "you are free. They are all dead!"

And he started down the hill, pulling the girl with him. She came without a word.

## CHAPTER XX.

Tied to a tree was one of those large black and tan mules that are stronger than any horse and tough as steel. This one, a pack animal, had been left behind in charge of the three guards. Curtis picked up the clumsy pack saddle which lay near and threw it upon the beast's neck. In his excitement he bungled the unfamiliar straps, but Panayota assisted with nimble and experienced fingers. He helped her to mount, and was about to climb up behind, when he happened to think of the dead Turk's ammunition. Bringing a supply from the hut, he climbed up behind the girl. So they rode away, the American astride the animal's rump, the fair Cretan sitting sidewise in the saddle. He passed an arm around her waist to steady them both, and accelerated the animal's speed by jabbing the butt of his musket into its side. He could not use his heels, because one foot was bare and still somewhat lame. Panayote guided the mule by flipping in its eyes, first on one side of the head and then on the other, the end of the rope that was tied about its neck. As Curtis felt beneath his arm the firm but yielding form, innocent of corsets; as the warm, strong heart throbbed against his hand, his madness became complete. He had killed two men for this girl, and he was worth it. He was ferociously happy. The very touch of her thrilled him. He knew now why he had killed the men—for the same reason that David had slain Uriah. Woman, gentle, refining, softening woman will, in an instant, blot 2000 years of civilization out of a man's nature and turn him back into a primitive savage. He held her very tightly and she made no resistance. What trifles shape our destinies! In the giddy happiness of the moment he could not have framed an original Greek sentence to save his soul, but as he leaned forward with his lips close to the girl's ear, with his face partly buried in her hair, the refrain of Byron's "Maid of Athens" sang itself in his brain, and his whispered again and again, "Zoe mou, sas agapo, zoe mou, sas agapo." ("My life, I love you!") She shivered slightly the first time that he repeated the sentence, but when he placed his face against her flaming cheek, she did not repulse him. And at last, that first keen madness of contact with her passed away, and he chattered excitedly as he jabbed the ambling mule again and again: "Don't be afraid, Panayota; they'll never catch us. I've got you now, not Kostakes. My life, I love you! Go on, you dromedary, or I'll punch a rib out of you! They must kill me before they take you again."

After they had been about an hour on the road, they began to feel uneasy.

"They must have got back by this time," thought Curtis. "I wish I had killed that other Turk, then they would have thought we were rescued," and he looked anxiously back over his shoulder. The idea came to Curtis of turning off sharply from the path and hiding in the hills. But the mountains that enclosed the long valley looked forbidding. They would certainly lose their way and perish of hunger. Besides, there were Greeks ahead of them somewhere. As they began to ascend toward Galata, they could see for a long distance over the lovely plain now stretched out before them in the rays of the afternoon sun.

"It'll be time to make a break for the woods," mused Curtis, "when I see them coming." Once a cloud of dust arose far behind and he caught Panayota's arm.

"Look!" he cried. "They're coming!"

But she replied:

"No, 'tis a whirlwind."

Curtis did not understand the word, but there was no mistaking the speaking gesture which accompanied it. The mule becoming tired, Panayota slid to the ground, and, throwing the rope over her shoulder, trotted on ahead.

"There's Galata!" she cried, pointing with level arm to the distant village.

"How many hours?" asked Curtis.

"About two more."

"We shall get there after dark, then?"

"Certainly."

The sun was just setting, as it always does in the interior of Crete, behind a mountain. Curtis turned in the saddle and took one last long look. The white road lay very plain on the side of the low ridge over which they had come. It was in shape like a giant letter S, one end of which ended at the summit and the other among the green vineyards, climbing half-way up the slope. The trees, and the deep waterways and castles of rock on the side of the hill were indistinguishable at that distance, all blending into a general effect of soft color. But the top of the hill was sketched against the sky as distinctly as a crayon line, and on it every tree, nay, every shrub stood magnified in the parting light. There was something unnatural about this row of trees, rope-walking on a curved line swaying in the sky. As Curtis gazed at the weird effect two giant horsemen balanced on the aerial rope for an instant, and then lunged headforemost into the purple glow on the hither side. They were followed by row after row of mounted men, four abreast, that appeared and disappeared in rapid succession and in the same way.

"Look, Panayota," said Curtis quietly. The girl went deadly white and crossed herself.

"My little Virgin, help us," she prayed. "The Bashi Bazouks!"

"They haven't got us yet. How far away are they?"

"An hour, may be an hour and a half."

"We'll turn off into the hills when it's a little darker. Can they see us?"

"I think not," replied Panayota. "We are now among the trees. But we better wait a little before we turn."

The Turkish troops had now become a long, dark quadrangle, sliding slowly down the giant S. The sun dropped behind the mountain, the white letter became black, and the quadrangle disappeared. The fleeing man and woman were walking in the world's amethyst shadow.

"Shall we turn now, Panayota?" asked Curtis. "I care not where, so we go together."

For answer she turned and held up her hand. He listened, but heard nothing.

"Voices," said the girl, "and footsteps. But I hear no more. They are moving stealthily."

"Is it more Turks, coming from in front?"

"God knows, but I think not."

And she led the mule some distance to the side of the road into a clump of green oleander. Curtis slid to the ground and looked carefully to his rifle.

"Panayota," he whispered, hurriedly, "they shall not take us while I live. I love you. We may have but a few moments to live. Let me take one kiss, the first, perhaps the last."

He put his arm about her neck, and drew her toward him in the dark. He drank the milk-warm breath of her lips, but ere he had pressed his own to them she placed her hand against his chest and pushed him from her with a cautious "hist!"

The footsteps of many men could be heard plainly, not far up the road now.

"If they would only speak," she muttered.

The words were hardly out of her mouth ere some one uttered a sharp and hurried command in a suppressed tone.

"They are Greeks!" exclaimed the girl. "Now Christ and the virgin—"

But Curtis put his hand gently over her mouth, whispering:

"Hush! Perhaps it is a ruse."

The moon had not yet arisen, and the darkness was like ink. Some one stumbled, and a musket or other weapon fell, "ching!" among the rocks.

"Take care!" said an imperious voice in Greek.

"That's Kurios Lindbohm," whispered Panayota. "I know his voice."

"Lindbohm don't know any Greek," replied her companion.

"He could not be in Crete one day without learning the word for 'take care!' I tell you it is Lindbohm. Who that has ever heard that voice could forget it?"

The men were now passing them quite close and several of them were conversing in low tones. The girl leaned forward, listening. Then suddenly she called in a loud voice:

"Patriotai, where are you?"

Utter silence for several moments, broken at last by an inquiring "Eh?" and the clicking of rifle locks.

"Lindbohm!"

"Curtis, by damn! It's all right; come out!"

The American sprang eagerly forward, but stepped on a stone. Then he leaped on to the back of the mule and Panayota led the animal out into the highway and into the midst of a goodly company of armed insurgents, who forgot all discipline, and broke forth into a volley of questions.

The American and the lieutenant were shaking each other by the hand through it all.

"I saved her!" cried Curtis. "I killed two Turks and did up another. Then we ran away on this mule. I cracked one of 'em on the head and shot another. I smashed one with my fist and took his gun away from him. Then I—"

"So you saved Panayota?"

"Yes, I saved her, I tell you, I—"

"Thank God! Thank God!" cried Lindbohm, throwing his arms about Curtis' neck.

"Where is my father?" asked Panayota, in a shrill voice, that pierced the bubble of questions, suddenly, awkwardly.

"Her father is dead," said the Lieutenant huskily. "We found his body. She must not know. Poor girl! Poor girl!"

"I blew a hole right through the last one and then we departed. We got here just in time, old man, for they're right behind us—the whole shooting-match."

"How many?"

"All the Bashi Bazouks—about 50 of 'em."

"Good," cried Lindbohm; "we'll ambush 'em. We'll give 'em hell!"

"We'll settle 'em, Lindbohm. We'll lick 'em out of their boots. How many men have you got?"

"Thirty."

"Why, it's a cinch. We shan't let one of them get away alive. We'll shoot down the Bashi Bazouks and ride away on their horses."

When, half an hour later, the great, tranquil, yellow moon looked down upon the town of Galata from a neighboring mountain top, all was seemingly peaceful in its desolate streets. Save the dreadful figure nailed to the church door, not a human form was to be seen. And yet death and hate crouched there in the shadows, for Lindbohm and his 30 men lurked in the ruined houses that surrounded the square, and whosoever looked closely might have seen here and there the dull gleam of a rifle barrel; but even then he would have suspected nothing, for the moonlight plays strange and fantastic tricks. Curtis and Lindbohm kneeled side by side at the same window, and Panayota sat on the floor in a dark corner, clasping her knees with her hands and moaning gently, "Oh, my father, my little father!"

## CHAPTER XXI.

Interminably they waited, listening for the sound of galloping horses. Curtis' extreme tension passed away, and the situation suddenly assumed an unreal aspect in his thoughts. His knees began to feel bruised on the hard floor. He was strongly tempted to rise up and ease them.

"Pshaw!" he said to Lindbohm, "I don't believe they're coming, after all. I guess I'll go out and take a look."

"Keep still!" replied the Swede. "Don't you stir on your life, and don't you speak a word aloud," and a moment afterward he added more pleasantly:

"They may send scouts on foot."

Panayota had fallen asleep. They could hear her deep but troubled breathing, as her frame continued to vibrate with the sorrow that for the moment she had mercifully forgotten.

"Michali was burned, alive," said Curtis, in a low tone, after another stretch of waiting, during which his knees had become the most important portions of his entire anatomy.

"I tried to save him, but Kostakes—"

Lindbohm seized him impatiently by the arm and whispered:

"Tst, be quiet, can't you? Do you want to spoil the whole thing? No, we rescued Michali."

Curtis worked himself on to his feet, and sat upon his heels. The nightingales were singing in full chorus, and he wondered how anybody could hear anything in that infernal racket. The water in the fountain of Petros Nicolaides hissed and gurgled and crashed like the waters of Lodore.

Curtis' new attitude became more painful than a spiked chair, and he slid back onto his knees again. He sat down for awhile, but the desire to peep over the window sill was irresistible. Finally, just as his knees had become boils, the Swede touched him upon the shoulder, and he forgot them. The screeching of the nightingales, the hurtling of the fountain, were swallowed up in the dull and distant pounding of horses' hoofs.

"They're yust coming right into it," said Lindbohm, in his natural tone. "Kostakes, he's too mad to be careful. Have you got a bayonet?"

"No, I forgot to take it. He was wearing it for a sword."

"Here, take this gras and give me the mauser. You'll yust get all tangled up with that. The gras is simpler, and the bayonet, in the hands of a man who doesn't know how to use it, is a terrible weapon. Give me your ammunition. Thanks. Here's my cartridge belt."

Lindbohm was gay, with the gaiety of a child. He was about to play his favorite game, to indulge the innocent impulse of boys and untutored men. The clatter came nearer, grew louder.

"Do you know the orders?" he asked.

"No."

"Each man is to pick out his mark and aim, but nobody is to shoot until I do. I shall take Kostakes."

"I too, to make sure of him. He needs killing."

"All right—now, ready."

The galloping changed into the chug! chug! chug! of men sitting upon trotting horses. The moon had risen and had filled the trees and about half of the square with its silver snow. The battered features of Petros Nicolaides, the benefactor, were those of a frozen corpse. The horses could now be heard plainly staggering through the narrow, stony street. Now was the time when Lindbohm was cool. No detail escaped him.

"Your gun is already cocked," he whispered. "Aim just above the saddle—shoot when I say 'three.'"

"I'll hit him," rplied Curtis. "I'm an old squirrel hunter, I am."

Kostakes trotted into the square, and, jerking his horse nearly to its haunches, whirled about to face his Lieutenant and the Bashi Bazouks who debouched from the mouth of the street in twos and threes—a wild, motley, terrible throng. Curtis aimed first at the Captain's breast and then at his head. The intended victim was evidently in a vile temper, for he kept twitching viciously at the bridle rein, causing the tired animal to rear and throw its head in the air. The American was one moment aiming at the horse's neck and then at the marble corpse of Petros Nicolaides.

"Will Lindbohm never shoot?" he asked himself every time that the Turk's form swung squarely in line with his gun. The Bashi Bazouks continued to pour into the square, sitting very straight, resting their short guns over their shoulders or on their horses' necks.

"Hup!" cried Kostakes, flourishing his sword in the moonlight, and giving an order in Turkish. The men began to fall into line, eight abreast.

"One!" whispered Lindbohm. Curtis glued his cheek to the rifle barrel, and aimed full at the breast of Kostakes, who was now sitting quietly upon his horse.

"I've got you, damn you, I've got you," he said in thought.

"Two!" he tightened his finger on the trigger, when "bang!" went the gun of an impatient Greek on the other side of the square, and one of the Bashi Bazouks pitched from his saddle. Lindbohm sprang to his feet, with a roar of rage that was cut in two by the terrific clatter of the rifles that were now spitting fire from more than a dozen doors and windows. And one sound had wailed out between the first shot and the volley, as vivid as a lightning flash between thunder claps. Panayota, fatigued beyond human endurance, had fallen asleep as soon as she found herself again in the hands of her friends, and the sound of the gun, breaking in upon her overwrought nerves, had drawn from her a long, piercing shriek.

There was a maelstrom now of horses in the square, and a pandemonium of yelling men. Curtis could not distinguish Kostakes. He had, in fact, forgotten all about him. He stood in the door laughing and swearing and shooting into the whirling, plunging, snorting, yelling, scrambling melee. But the maelstrom period was brief, for there were three streets that gave into the square, and the outside horses broke for safety. They were hurled like mud from a wagon wheel into these exits, and went clattering away, with or without their riders, until at last only one maddened beast was left, dragging over the ground a Turk whose foot was caught in the stirrup. The terror of the animal was something pitiful to see. He ran blindly into a house. He plunged into the fountain, slipped, fell and scrambled to his feet again. His master's clothing caught on a sharp rock, and he left the saddle behind, with the desk Turk still attached. Then he found the opening of a street, and disappeared with a mad clatter of hoofs. The Greeks darted from the houses and scurried after the Turks, loading and firing as they ran. Curtis shot into a last tangle of horses, wedged together at the mouth of a lane. They slipped loose and plunged through, scraping off one of the Bashi Bazouks, who bounded to his feet uninjured, and, whipping out a long curved sword, came toward Curtis. He was a big man, in baggy trousers, bareheaded and hairy as an ape. Curtis threw the gras to his shoulder and pulled the trigger. He had forgotten to reload it. The Turk laughed. Curtis lowered the gun, and, presenting the bayonet, tiptoed about his foe in a semi-circle. The Turk revolved as on a pivot, squat, alert, weapon deftly advanced. Suddenly, to Curtis' surprise, his enemy turned and ran. The American bounded after, and then, for the first time, during the fray, he remembered that he had a sore foot, and that that foot was bare. Panayota came to him. She carried a rifle that she had picked up in the square.

"Bravo! Panayota!" said Curtis. "Two to one frightened him away. But why didn't you shoot?"

"I wanted to get close and make sure," replied the girl, "and then, when he ran, you were in the way."

Slipping a fresh shell into his gras, Curtis picked his way through the stones toward a distant spot where he heard continued firing. Panayota attempted to follow, but he stopped her with a wave of the hand.

"I'll be right back," he shouted, "as soon as I get another shot. You're safe enough here."

He left her standing in the deserted square, among the dead Turks. The moon shone full upon her there, leaning toward him, holding her gun by the extreme muzzle, the butt trailing behind on the ground. Her hair, that fell like a double mane on either side of her face, blew into her eyes, and she tossed a great brush of it over her shoulder. It sprayed in the moonlight like a wave broken against a jetty. A wounded horse rose to its haunches near her and threw its fore feet dangerously about. Then it pitched over on its side with a groan.

Curtis had gone quite a way up the narrow street, when he heard again the clatter of horses' hoofs. He stepped behind a tree that grew close against a wall and waited. A Greek ran by and darted under a house. He was followed by the Bashi Bazouk, who had run from Panayota's rifle. He was trotting by the side of a mounted comrade, holding to the stirrup strap. One, two, three, four five, six horsemen followed. The firing continued in the outskirts of the town.

"My God! Panayota!" It flashed over Curtis in a moment. The Greeks had scattered too much, and the Turks, getting together in small parties, were returning to the attack. He stepped from his hiding place just as a seventh Basi Bazouk was passing. He stabbed his bayonet clear through the man, who toppled off on the other side of the horse. While he was still in the crooked lane, making frantic haste toward Panayota, he heard a shot in the square. His heart stood still for one moment with terror, which instantly gave way to fury. A woman's scream, mingled with brutal laughter, told him that the girl had again been made a prisoner. When he at last reached the square, the six Bashi Bazouks had gone, taking her with them.

(To be continued.)

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