

The Unspeakable Turk

A Tale of the Greco-Turkish War
By George Norton, Author of "A Fair Brigand," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

John Curtis, a young American, who chances to be in Athens at the outbreak of the Greco-Turkish war, is taken a prisoner by the Turks. He is taken to a village and is 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 Kostas toward the town. The Christians gather in the past, the men fighting and women and children fleeing up toward the sea. Kostas plunders the town, taking the old priest and Panayota along as prisoners. Curtis, representing himself as a newspaper correspondent, also accompanies the Turks. Kostas has the old priest murdered and Curtis plans to rescue Panayota and avenge her father's death. In the absence of Kostas, Curtis kills two of the guards and wounds another, and escapes with Panayota. They meet Lindholm and friends, and attack the Turkish bandits, who capture Panayota. Curtis and Lindholm seek discovery that the other is in love with the Cretan captive. Kostas now imprisons her in his house in Cana, and tries to persuade her to marry him.

CHAPTER XXVI—Continued.

Then, as soon as Ferideh, she threw away her cigarette, crossed the court and disappeared into the house. Souleima ran after, and, hiding her body behind the wall, peeped within. She saw Ferideh step out of her slippers and tip-toe up the stairs. Souleima waited until she was out of sight, and then followed. Ayeshah, overcome by a woman's curiosity—that passion which fears neither death nor shame—slipped the fish, now ready for the pan, into a drawer of the table and hid likewise.

"I must know what's going on," she muttered, and she stole into the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Panayota was lying face down upon the bed, but when she heard heavy footsteps in the hall and the scratching of the key upon the lock, she sprang to her feet and backed to the wall at the farther side of the room. She cast her eyes about the bare, dim room, as though there must be some way of escape, moaning, meanwhile:

"Little Virgin, save me! O my God, what shall I do?"

When Kostas entered he found her thus, her face clenched, her lips white. She was looking at him with great eyes of fear and horror, and she scarcely seemed to breathe. There was in her attitude the alertness of a hunted cat, that hopes to make a sudden dash for liberty and get away even at the last moment.

"In the name of God, Panayota," he said, tenderly, "why are you so frightened? Have I not said to you that I would not touch a hair of your head?"

She made no reply, but said aloud the wall, with her eyes fixed on the open door. He turned with an exclamation of surprise, and, with a slam, locked it and put the key in his pocket.

"No!" he said, "don't think of escaping. Try to fix your mind on what I am going to say to you and now, in the first place, I swear to you by my hopes of salvation that I mean you no harm. Now listen to me—I love you, Panayota."

He said that why you murdered my father?

"Why do you say that I murdered your father?"

"Bring him to me alive, and then I will know the truth," he said.

"You ask an impossible thing, Panayota. He is probably among the Syphacian mountains by this time, and you know there are no troops enough in all Turkey to get him."

"Then I'll tell you what you do," cried Panayota eagerly, advancing a step or two. "Let me go and find him. I'll return here to Cana, with him. Honestly, I will, honestly, and you shall come and talk to me all you like."

Kostas gave his mustache an impatient twist.

"Let you go, after all the trouble I've had getting you, O no, Panayota. You're mine, by Allah! and whoever takes you away from me must kill me first. You don't know how I love you. I could never tell you—listen. There isn't a drop of Turkish blood in me. My grandfather became a Turk because—because of circumstance, to save his life. I am the son of a Greek mother and she used to sing Greek lullabies to me in my cradle."

"He was talking very fast now. 'I have always said I would turn Christian some time, and when I saw you, I have up my mind to do it right away. I have heard great news. Everybody says that the powers have decided to give the island to the King of Greece. She must escape. There will be no more Turks here. They will either go away or become Orthodox. May you'll have me, Panayota, and I'll get rid of my haven, and we'll be married before the priest—"

"Will you murder your wives as you did my father?" asked the girl. Kostas stared at her, deprived for the moment of the power of speech. In his enthusiasm, he had talked himself into the feeling that his dreams were already realized. Panayota's voice, hard, menacing, cold with hate, shocked him like a sledge blow in the face with a whip. Then rage surged up in his veins and knocked at his temples. His hands, that he had extended pleadingly, trembled, and he gasped his teeth. Kostas was not beautiful at that moment. Panayota laughed.

"O, you Turk," she cried, "you cowardly Turk. You needn't grind your teeth at me. I'm not afraid of death. It's only your love that I fear."

Kostas raised his doubled fists above his head and brought them down with such violence that an involuntary "Ah!" escaped him.

"By God, girl, you would drive a saint crazy," he cried. "Here I am offering to change my religion and put away my hatred, and all for you, and I get nothing out of you but an insult. Don't you know that you are in my power, and I can do with you what I please? No foreigner will rescue you this time. He did not know enough to keep you when he had you, and I'll see that he doesn't get another chance. I want you to love me as I love you, Panayota. I've made you an honorable proposition. I leave you to think it over. But make up your mind to this—you're mine, and I'll never give you up while I live."

When Kostas turned to the court again, Souleima was waiting on the stairs in a little chamber, some, home made from an American petroleum can. Ayeshah, who was sitting in the room all day, was plainly audible through the window.

"The offend!" she said, and pulled the fish from the drawer.

"Isn't dinner ready yet?" he married;

"What have you lady women been doing?"

"All ready, offend!" replied Ayeshah. "We couldn't fry the barbutina till you came. They are better hot. Souleima, bring the olive oil and the salt. In two minutes, offend!"

"Got any wine?" asked Kostas, as the platter of steaming fish was set before him.

"Wine, offend! In a Turkish house?"

"Yes, wine! If you've got any, bring it on, for I am tired and thirsty."

"I think Ferideh has some," suggested Souleima. "She drinks like a fish."

"Umph! And I don't suppose you help her?"

"Effendi, I swear!" commenced Souleima.

"I don't even know the taste of it," protested Ayeshah.

Silence, silence! and bring me some. And look here," as the dancing was set before him. "If I ever hear a lie about my wine drinking I'll wring the necks of you both—cocking old hens that you are. And now send Ferideh to wait on me, and get out of my sight, the two of you. You take my appetite away. She at least is not a greedy old slave!"

After the offend had eaten he betook himself to his chamber in search of more needed rest. Ferideh followed him, and, sitting down upon the side of the bed, attempted to lay her cheek against his. But he pushed her from him, saying in a querulous and disgusted tone:

"Get off from me and let me breathe, can't you? Darken the room and go to bed."

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Mountains, and below them lay the bright, smiling valleys of the coast, and the lower slopes, where an occasional white village gleamed among its olive orchards.

"How many are there of 'em?" asked Curtis. Lindholm smiled, and raising his big pink hand to his blonde mustache, gave it a playful pull.

"That's just what we're going to find out," he replied. "Calling an insurgent to him who spoke French, he explained in that language the plan for the assault. He himself selected the men who were to accompany him, 25 in number, and such as possessed bayonets proceeded to fix them to their rifles. The places from which the shooting was to be done were selected, and the men began to get to them as rapidly as possible. Lindholm and Curtis, at the head of their little band, worked down toward the open spot across which the rush must be made. These movements caused more or less of exposure, and drew repeated fusillades from the blockhouse. Most of the bullets passed over the head of the attackers, but occasionally one slapped against the soft face of a rock, or scurried through the gravel. One glanced near Curtis' head and hummed like a musical top. He turned and looked curiously in the direction of the sound.

"It takes you one good big battle to break a man of that," observed the Lieutenant.

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ply half a dozen guns roared from a covert near by, a dozen more followed as rapidly as the sound of a boy trailing a stick along a picket fence, and then for a full moment the firing continued as capriciously as the explosions of a bunch of firecrackers. It ceased, and Lindholm, bent low, was running toward the blockhouse. He had not gone more than 10 yards away before the others were darting after him.

"Oh, damn his orders," muttered Curtis as he scrambled to his feet, he ran so rapidly forward that he passed two or three of the Italians, and had nearly reached Lindholm's side. He heard a Frenchman shout the man behind him had stepped on a bunch of dry twigs. Turning, he saw the poor fellow lying upon his side, bent like a bow. He was clutching the calf of his left leg with both hands and grinning at his pain. The man at his side took deliberate aim at some body and fired. Curtis followed his example and shot at one of the windows of the blockhouse. There was a fall and they dashed forward again. Curtis kept his eye on Lindholm this time, and pitched forward upon his face when he saw the Swede do likewise. They ran but a few yards, and then a white flag sprang from the half way to the destination. Lindholm now kept straight on, stopping every moment to aim and fire. The others followed his example and they were able thus to keep advancing and none the less to maintain quite a fusillade against the doors and windows of the Turkish stronghold. They were still 10 or 12 rods away, when a white flag appeared on the roof. Lindholm turned and motioned to his companions, who gathered about him. They walked fearfully through the open door, into the front room of a square stone building. A thin-faced, gray-headed officer in a faded fife, came forward to meet them. Twenty Turks in ragged uniforms were huddled together in the rear. The place was dim and sulphurous with smoke.

"To whom have I the honor of surrendering?" asked the Turkish officer in French.

"To me, monsieur," replied Lindholm, bringing his heels together with a "click," and saluting with great dignity.

"I surrender to save bloodshed," said the Turk. "I see that you are not a Cretan and I, therefore, with perfect confidence turn these men over to you as prisoners of war."

"They shall give up their arms and suffer no harm. Monsieur will do me the honor of retaining his sword."

The remaining Cretans were now come up and many of them had crowded into the room. Lindholm ordered them out and put two stout fellows at the door.

"Now, monsieur, if you will kindly tell your men to give up their guns."

The officer said a few words to his little band, and one by one, as a sergeant called their names, they stepped forward and handed their weapons to Curtis, who passed them to a man outside the door. The last gun had scarcely been given up, ere a sudden commotion broke out among the Cretans and half a dozen burly insurgents, forcing their way past the guard, burst into the room. The commotion now swelled to a hoarse uproar, and Curtis caught the words "Kill! Kill!" and "No! No!" Lindholm did not realize the gravity of the situation. He was raging because his orders had been disobeyed, and thought that the whole band, actuated by curiosity, were about to swarm in. He therefore leaped to the door with leveled bayonet and there, in the crowd so fiercely that they all shrank back. Meanwhile a thing happened that fairly froze Curtis with horror. The half-dozen insurgents raised their guns to their shoulders and deliberately pointed them at the body of unarmed Turks, who, seized with panic, assumed all the attitudes of fear. Some crouched against the wall, some hid their faces behind their hands, and some fell upon the floor, or front of their faces and chests. Several tried to seize their companions and hold them before they were bodied.

A dreadful laugh, mingled with foul and insulting words, broke from the insurgents' throats. The Turkish officer stepped quietly in front of his men, and, crossing his arms over his chest, regarded the Cretans with a look of high scorn. His thin face and gray beard added sublimity to the dauntless soul that spoke in his attitude. He had the beak and eyes of an eagle.

Curtis was completely carried away with revulsion and horror. The words, "In the name of God! In the name of God!" beat in his brain with the regular thud of a trip-hammer, and he fancied that he heard some one shouting them. An insurgent threatened him with the bayonet and another, with an outbreak of expletives, seized the Turkish officer's gun. Then a third Cretan leaped upon him, and attempted to push him to one side of the room. Curtis, now completely crazed with rage, dropped the gun which he was unable to use, such close quarters, and snarling, "Damn you, I'll choke the life out of you!" danced with hooked hands at his adversary's throat. Strong as a goliath, and no less among the best athletes in the world the football players of Harvard, he had nothing to fear. He dodged between the sneaky arms of his opponent, and, arching his back and the python embrace which now tightened upon him, felt for the Cretan's throat, when—there was a great crunching and trembling sound, and in

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