

The Captain of the Janizaries

By JAMES M. LUDLOW

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and the young lover, with a voice which showed that her request had cut him to the heart. "My hand would become paralyzed sooner than touch rudely a hair of your head."

"Nay, in that you do not know yourself," said Morsinia. "Would you not pluck a mole from my face if I was marred by it in your eyes?"

"But that would be to perfect, not to harm you," said Constantine. "And did you not hold the hand of the poor soldier today while the leech was cutting him lest the gangrene should infect his whole body with poison? And would you not have done so had he been your long lost brother, Michael, whom you loved? And would you not have done it more willingly because you loved him?"

"Yes," said Constantine, "but that would be to save life, not to destroy it. Let me ask the question of you, Morsinia. Could you take my life as I lie here? Will your hand mix the poison to put to my lips in the event of the Turk entering the city? My life will be worse than death in its bitterness if you are lost to me."

Morsinia pondered the question, growing pale with the fearfulness of the thought. For awhile she was speechless. The imagination started by Constantine's question seemed to stun her. She stared at the vague distance. At length she burst into tears and, laying her head upon her companion's shoulder, said:

"I love you too dearly, Constantine, to ask that of you which you shrink from doing. There is another who can render me the service."

"Who would dare?" said Constantine, rising and gazing wildly at her. "Who would dare to touch you, even at your own bidding?"

"I would," said Morsinia quietly. "And this I shall save for the moment when I need the last friend on earth," she added, drawing from her dress the bright blade of an Italian stiletto. "Perhaps my heart would tremble and my flesh shrink from the sharp point, though I love not myself as I love you."

"Let us talk no more of this," said Constantine, "but leave it for the hour of necessity, which happily I think will not soon come. I must tell you now for what I sought you. I have been ordered this very night to aid in a venture which, heaven grant, shall re-provision the city. Several large galleys laden with corn and oil are now coming up the sea from Genoa. If they see the cordon of the enemy's ships drawn across the harbor, not knowing the extremity to which the city is reduced, they may return without venturing an encounter. I am to reach them and if possible induce them to cut their way through. The great chain at the entrance to the Golden Horn will be lowered at the opportune moment, and all the shipping in the harbor will make an attack upon the enemy's fleet. Of this our allies must be informed. As soon as it is dark I shall drift in a swift little skiff between the Turkish boats, and before the dawn I shall be far down on Marmora. Tomorrow night, if your prayers are offered, Jesu will grant us success."

CHAPTER XXVII.
CONSTANTINE eluded the heavy boats of the Turks, which were anchored to prevent their drifting away upon the swift current with which the Black Sea discharges itself through the Bosphorus into Marmora. Upon meeting the befriending galleys it was with little difficulty that he persuaded the Genoese captains to risk the encounter with the Turkish fleet. As Constantine pointed out to the Italian captains, the enormous navy of the blockaders, formed in the shape of a crescent and stretched from the wall of the city across to the Asiatic shore, presented a more formidable obstacle to the eye than to the swift and skillfully manned Genoese galleys. The Turkish boats were generally but small craft and laden down to the water's edge with men. The Genoese had four galleys, together with one which belonged to Byzantium.

These were vessels of the largest size, constructed by men who had learned to assert their prowess as lords of the sea. They were armed with cannon adapted to sweep the deck of an adversary at short range. Heaven favored the Christians, for a strong gale was blowing, which, while it tossed the boats of their adversaries beyond their easy control, filled the sails of the Genoese and sent them bounding over the waves, the oarsmen sitting ready to catch deftly into the bending billows with their blades. Each of the five vessels chose for a target a large one of the Turks and clove it with its iron prow, while the cannon swept the Turkish soldiers by hundreds from other boats near to them. Again and again the galleys passed, like shuttles on a loom, through the line of the enemy, sinking the unwieldy hulks and drowning the crowded crews.

From the walls and house-tops of the city went up huzzas for the victors and praises to heaven. From the shores of Asia and from below the cit-

wall thousands of Moslems groaned their imprecations. The sultan raged upon the beach as he saw one after another of his pennants sink beneath the waves. Dashing far into the sea upon his horse, he vented his impotent fury in beating the water with his mace, shrieking maledictions into the laughing winds and invoking upon the Christians curses from all the pagan gods and Moslem saints.

At one moment the Byzantine galley was nearly overcome, having been caught in a group of Turkish boats, whose occupants climbed her sides and did murderous work among the crew. Though ultimately rescued by the Genoese, it was only after severe loss.

But above all other casualties the Christians mourned the fate of young Constantine. With almost superhuman strength he had cut down several assailants, but was finally set upon by such odds that he was pressed over the low bulwarks and fell into the sea. The galley with its consorts made way to the chain at the entrance to the Golden Horn, where the rich stores, a thousand times richer now in the necessity which they relieved, were received amid the acclamations of the grateful Greeks.

But woe—oh, so heavy!—crushed one solitary heart. Her eyes stared wildly at the messenger who brought the fatal tidings, and stared, hour by hour, in their stony grief upon the wall of her apartment.

The morning came, and the cheer of the sunlight which, quickening the outer world, poured through the windows high in the walls of her apartment seemed to awaken her from her trance. But how changed in appearance! The ruddy hue of health and the bronzing of daily exposure to the open air seemed alike to have been blanched by that which had taken hope from her soul. Morsinia rose, weak at first, but her limbs grew strong with the imparted strength of her will. She ate and, speaking aloud, but more in addressing herself than her attendants, said, "I will away to the walls!"

Through the masses of debris and among the groups of men who were resting and waiting to take the places of their wearied comrades on the ramparts she went straight to the gate of St. Romanus, where the assaults were most incessant. As if impelled by some superhuman purpose, her beauty lit as with a halo by the majesty of a celestial passion, she climbed the steps into the tottering tower above the gate. A strong but gentle hand was put upon her arm. It was that of the emperor.

"My daughter, you must not be here. I know your grief, and now, as your emperor, I must protect you against yourself."

"I want no protection!" cried the broken hearted girl. "Oh, let me die! For what should I live?"

"My dear child," said the emperor, with trembling voice, while the tears filled his eyes, "in other days your holy faith taught me how to be strong. Now, in your necessity let me repeat to you the lesson. For what shall you live? For what should I live? I am emperor, but my empire is doomed. I live no longer for earthly hope, but solely to do duty—nothing but duty, stern duty, painful every instant, crushing always, but a burden heaven imposed on a breaking heart. That heaven appoints it—that, and that alone—makes me willing to live and do it. When the time comes I shall seek death where the slain lie the thickest. But not today, for today I can serve. Live for duty! Live for God! The days may not be many before we must clasp hands with those who, now invisible, are looking upon us. Let us go and cheer the living before we seek the companionship of the dead."

As the emperor spoke his face glowed with a majesty of soul which made the symbol of earthly majesty that adorned his brow seem poor indeed.

Gazing a moment with reverent amazement at the man who had already received the divine anointing for the sacrifice of martyrdom he was so soon to offer, Morsinia responded:

"Your words, sire, come to me as from the lips of God. I will go and pray, and then—then I shall live for duty."

CHAPTER XXVIII.
MAHOMET had not expended all his petulant rage upon feelings waves and distant Christians. He summoned to his presence the admiral of his defeated fleet, Baltaoglu, and ordered that he should be impaled.

The admiral had shown as much naval skill as could perhaps have been exhibited with the unwieldy boats at his command and, moreover, had brought from the fight an eyesore socket to attest his bravery and devotion. The penalty, therefore, which Mahomet attached to his misfortune brought cries of entreaty in his behalf from other brave officers, especially from the leading Janizaries. This opposition at first confirmed the determination of the irate despot. But soon the petition of the honored corps swelled into a murmur, which the more experienced of his advisers persuaded Mahomet to heed.

The sultan had schooled himself to obey the precept which Yusuf, the eunuch who instructed his childhood, had imparted—viz, "Make passion bend to policy." He therefore apparently yielded, so far at least as to compromise with those whom he feared to offend, and commuted the admiral's sentence to a flogging.

The brave man was stretched upon the ground by four slaves. Turning to Captain Ballaban, the sultan bade him lay on the lash. Ballaban hesitated. Drawing near to Mahomet, he said respectfully, but firmly:

"The Janizaries are soldiers, not executioners, sire."

Mahomet's rage burst as suddenly as powder under the smother. "Away with the rebel!" cried he. "We will find the executioner for him, too, who dares to disobey our orders." Seizing his golden mace, the sultan himself beat the prostrate form of the admiral until it was senseless.

Wearing of his bloody work, Mahomet glared like a half-satiated beast upon those about him.

"Where is the rebel who dares arrest my will? Did no one arrest him?"

"The order was not so understood," said an aga who was near.

"You understand it now," growled the infuriated yet half-astamed monarch. "Arrest him! But no! Let these slaves go search for the runaway. It shall be their office to deal with one who dares to break with my will."

The Janizaries returned to their places near the walls.

Mahomet was ill at ease when his better judgment displaced his unwise passion. His love for Ballaban, the manliness of the captain's reply to the unreasonable order and the danger of injuring one who stood so high in the estimate of the entire Janizary corps were not outweighed even by the sense of the indignity which the act of disobedience had put upon the royal authority.

The slaves, not daring to venture among the Janizaries in their search for Captain Ballaban, easily persuaded themselves that he must have fled and that perhaps he might be lurking somewhere on the shore, as this was the only way to escape. Their search was rewarded. Though in the disguise of scant garments, utterly exhausted so that he could make no resistance, their victim was readily recognized by his form and features, which were too peculiar to be mistaken. The captain had apparently attempted to escape by water, perhaps had ventured upon some chance canoe or raft and been wrecked in the caldron which the strong south wind made with the current pouring from the north.

His wet garments, such as he had not stripped off, and his exhausted look confirmed their theory.

One of their number brought the report to the grand vizier, Kallil, who repeated it to the sultan.

"I will deal with him in person. Let no one know of the capture until I have seen him," said Mahomet, seeking an opportunity to revoke the threat against his friend, which he had uttered in insane rage, and at the same time to cover his imperial dignity by the semblance of a trial.

The culprit was brought in the early evening to the sultan's tent. A large lantern of various colored crystals hung from the ridgepole and threw its beautiful but partly obscured light over the arraigned man.

His captors had clothed him in the uniform of the Janizaries.

"His face has a strange look, as if another's soul had taken lodging behind the familiar lineaments," the sultan remarked to Kallil as he scanned the culprit closely.

"Do you know, kave, in whose presence you are?" said Mahomet sternly.

"I know not, sire, except that the excellent adornment of your person and pavilion suggest that I am in the presence of his majesty the sultan."

THE KING OF DIAMONDS

(Continued on page 6.)
He saw a way out. Whatever that wretched word meant, it could be dealt with subsequently.

But Evelyn's prompt reply only made confusion worse confounded: "Delay is impossible. The man has put off the duchess two days already."

So a man, and a duchess, and a period of time were mixed up with blue atom. He must do something desperate, begin his plan of alienation sooner than he intended. He answered:

"Too busy to attend to matter further. Going to Leeds to-day. Letters here as usual."

And to Leeds he went. Residence in York was a fever—a constant fret. In Leeds he was removed from the arena. He passed the afternoon and evening in roaming the streets, consumed with a fiery desire of doing, daring, braving difficulties.

But he must wait at least another day before he could lay hands on any portion of Philip Anson's wealth save the money stolen from his pockets.

At the hotel there was only one letter and no telegrams.

The London bankers wrote: "We beg to acknowledge yours of yesterday. Your cash balance at date is twelve thousand four hundred and ten pounds nine shillings one penny. Your securities in our possession amount to a net value at today's prices of about nine hundred and twenty thousand pounds, including two hundred and fifty thousand pounds Consols at par. We will forward you a detailed list if desired, and will be pleased to realize any securities."

Kindly note that instructions for sale should be given in your handwriting, and not typed.

There was joy, intoxicating almost to madness, in this communication, but it was not unalloyed by the elements of danger and delay.

His signature had not been accepted without demur; he could control an enormous sum without question; these were the entrancing certainties which dazzled his eyes for a time.

But it was horribly annoying that a millionaire should keep his current account so low, and the concluding paragraph held a bogey, not wholly unforeseen, but looming large when it actually presented itself.

The memorandum in Philip's handwriting on Evelyn's letter was now three precious. He hurriedly scrutinized it, and at once commenced to practice the words.

"Devonshire" and "Sharpe" gave him the capitals for "Dear Sirs." He was at a loss for a capital "C," but he saw that Philip used the simplest and boldest outlines in his calligraphy and he must risk a "C" without the upper loop. In "Lady M.," too, he had the foundation of the "k" to precede the requisite figures. Soon he framed a letter in the fewest words possible:

"Yours of to-day's date received. Kindly sell Consols value one hundred and fifty pounds, and place the same to my credit."

He copied it again and again, until it was written freely and carelessly, and every letter available compared favorably with the original in his possession. Then he posted it, thus saving a day, according to his calculations.

With this missive committed irrecoverably to the care of his majesty's mail, Victor Grenier's spirits rose. Now, indeed, he was in the whirlpool. Would he emerge high and dry in the El Dorado of gilded vice which he longed to enter, or would fortune consign him to Portland once again—perchance to the scaffold? He could not say. He would not feel safe until Philip Anson was a myth, and Victor Grenier a reality, with many thousands in the bank.

Already he was planning plausible lies to keep Mason out of his fair share of the plunder. A few more of those forged letters would easily establish the fact that he was unable to obtain a bigger haul than, say, fifty thousand pounds.

and spirits.
If anyone sought an interview, it might be helpful to sham a slight degree of intoxication. The difference between Philip drunk and Philip sober would then be accounted for readily.

But rest—that was denied him. It was one thing to harden himself against surprise; quite another to forget that disfigured corpse swirling about in the North Sea.

He wished now that Philip Anson had not been cast forth naked. It was a blunder not to dress him, to provide him with means of identification with some unknown Smith or Jones.

When he closed his eyes he could see a shadowy form wavering helplessly in green depths. Never before were his hands smeared with blood. He had touched every crime save murder.

Physically, he was a coward. In plotting the attack on Philip, he had taxed his ingenuity for weeks to discover means where he need not become Mason's actual helper. He rejected project after project. The thing might be bungled, so he must attend to each part of the undertaking himself, short of using a bludgeon.

He slept again and dreamed of long flights through space pursued by demons. How he longed for day. How slowly the hours passed after dawn, until the newspapers were obtainable, with their columns of emptiness for him. A letter came from Evelyn. It was a trifle reserved, with an impulse to tears concealed in it.

"I asked mother for fifty pounds," she wrote, "so the Blue Atom incident has ended, but I don't think I will ever understand the mood in which you wrote your last telegram. Perhaps your letter now in the post—I half expected it mid-day—will explain matters somewhat."

He considered Blue Atom to a sultry climate, and began to ask himself why Mr. Abingdon had not written. The ex-magistrate's reticence annoyed him. A letter even remonstrating with him, would be grateful. This silence was irritating; it savored of doubt, and doubt was the one phase of thought he wished to keep out of Mr. Abingdon's mind at that moment.

As for Evelyn, she mistrusted even his telegrams, while a bank had accepted his signature without reservation. He would punish her with zest. Philip Anson's memory would be poisoned in her heart long before she realized that he was dead.

CHAPTER XX.
Nemesis.
Philip was thrown into the sea on a Tuesday. Jocky Mason reached London on Wednesday, and kept his appointment with Inspector Bradley on Thursday evening.

The inspector received him graciously, thus chasing from the convict's mind a lurking suspicion, that matters were awry. There is a curious sympathy between the police and well-known criminals. They meet with friendliness and exchange pleasantries, as a watchdog might fraternize with a wolf in off hours.

But Mason had no responsive smile or ready quip.

"What's up?" he demanded, morosely. "You sent for me. Here I am I would have brought my ticket sooner if you hadn't written."

"All right, Mason. Keep your wool on. Do you remember Saperintendent Robinson?"

"Him that was inspector in White-chapel when I was put away? Rather."

"Well, some friends of yours have been inquiring from him as to your whereabouts. He sent a message round, and I promised that you should meet them if you showed up. I was half afraid you had bolted to the States."

"Friends? I have no friends."

"Oh, yes, you have—very dear friends, indeed?"

"Then where are they?"
He glared around the roomy police office, but it was only tenanted by policemen attending to various books or chatting quietly across a huge counter.

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The sultan beat the prostrate form.

hind the familiar lineaments," the sultan remarked to Kallil as he scanned the culprit closely.

"Do you know, kave, in whose presence you are?" said Mahomet sternly.

"I know not, sire, except that the excellent adornment of your person and pavilion suggest that I am in the presence of his majesty the sultan."

"Silence, villain! Do you mock me?" cried the padishah, in surprise at the man's assumed ignorance.

"I mock thee not, sire," said the victim, bowing with courtly reverence and speaking in a sort of patois of Greek and Turkish. "But I was not about to say that I know thee not except that from the excellence of thy person and estate thou art none less."

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