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By JAMES M. LUDLOW

Constantine threw off his turban and

captive from her horse, exclaiming

with delight in his own familiar tones:

"Constantine!" she cried.

"I am no Albanian, dear Morsinia,

In a few words the mutual stories of

the hours of their separation were told.

Morsinia had been treated with exceed-

ing kindness and respect as the captive

of the chief officer of the expedition,

who seemed to be a person of some

distinction, though she had not seen

him. Constantine insisted upon his

companion seeking sleep, but by his

inquiries did as much as her own

thoughts to keep her awake, so that at

the dawn they confessed that the eyes

of neither had been closed. The neces-

sity of procuring food led them to start

at daybreak for the nearest settlement.

They descended to the road and re-

traced the course of the preceding

by the neighing.

to meet them."

gathering about.

who continued his bantering.

that he may spy us again."

"Who is he?" cried the horsemen,

"Why, the very knave who escaped

us about sundown yesterday after spy-

ing our camp, and he has the impu-

Constantine was helpless as they ad-

tine,"but I have not returned yet; at | allowed the men who had followed least my return must not be known to the troops until the morning. We will take your tongue out if you tell any one I am back without bidding." "You speak the Servian excellent

well, captain." "One must get used to it and every other tongue in commanding such a mixed crew as the sultan gathers into side, up a path and down again to a

his army," said Constantine. "You janizaries are wonderful men," replied the soldier. "You know all languages. There was the little aga I once"-

"No matter about that now," said Constantine, interrupting him. "I want you for a special duty. Can I trust you to do me an errand? If you do it well, you will be glad of it hereafter." "Aye, aye, sire, with my life, and my

lips as mute as the horse's." "I captured a girl last night. She knows something I would find out by close questioning. I must have her brought to the rear."

"Aye, the girl Koremi holds?"

"Yes, tell Koremi to loiter a little with her until I come up. We must not go far from this defile before I find out what she knows if I have to discover it with my dagger in her heart, for there are traitors among us. Last night there were Arnaouts dressed as Moslems in the fight." "That I know," said the soldier, "for

I tripped over a fellow myself hiding in the bushes who swore at me in good round Arnaout tongue. I ran him through and found a glaour corselet under his jacket."

Constantine took the ropes which held the horses the man was leading and, bidding him to haste, but be cautious that no one but Koremi should know the message, followed slowly behind. It was nearly an hour later when the

form of the soldier appeared in the road just before him. "Right!" said Constantine.

"Right!" was the response, first to the assumed captain, then repeated to some one behind him. Two other forms appeared, one of them a woman.

Anticipating his orders, the second ing his declaration that his dress was treoper untied a rope from about his only assumed. own waist and handed it, together with the rein of the horse the woman rode, Turk's skin, are you? But yesterday to Constantine. Then, making a low you were a Turk in a Christian's feathobeisance, the two troopers withdrew ers," was the taunt with which he was a little distance to the rear. greeted by one of the foremost riders,

The other end of the rope which Constantine held was about the waist of the captive. Drawing the lead horse close to his own and dropping his turban more over his face Constantine closely scrutinized the features of the woman. She was Morsinia.

"Where are you taking me? If you have the courage, kill me," said the

Constantine replied only by whistling

justed a halter about his neck, with which to lead him at the side of a aga. horseman, the butt of the scurrilous a snatch of an Albanian air. "Are you an Albanian renegade?" wit and sharper spear points of his

continued the girl. "Could you not be content to sell yourself to fight for the

cutting a broad strap which bound her

limbs to the saddle. "If tied elsewhere,

The way, which had been narrowed

by the projection of the mountains on

either side, now widened a little. Con-

stantine knew the spot well. There

had once been a mill and peasant's hut

tremulous response.

here is the knife."

half mad and half merry captors. They had gone but a few paces when Turk against other enemies but must ment made his way through the troopbe a double traitor and kill and kidnap ers to the front. He was a venerable man, with long flowing white beard. your own kind?" The whistling continued. But as the His bodily strength seemed to come soldiers were a little removed he said solely from the vitality of nerve and in a low voice, disguising his natural the dominance of his spirit, for he was

well worn with years. "I am an Albanian, and if you will "What is this noise about?" he asked not speak, but only obey, I can save

Before any could reply he stared "Jesu grant you are true!" was the with a moment's incredulity and wonder at Constantine, who relieved his "This will prove it," muttered he, doubts by recognizing him. reaching toward her and with his knife

"Colonel Kabilovitsch!" cried he. "Your men are playful fellows, as frolicsome as a cat with a mole."

"But why are you here, my boy, and why this disguise?" interrupted Kabilovitsch. The explanation was given in a few

words-on the one side the story of the

slaughter at the village and the adven-

tures of Morsinia and Constantine; on

the other of how the news of the Turk-

ish raid reached the camp at Sfeti-

grade about noon and the rescuing party had started at once under Kabilovitseh's command and ridden at breakneck speed during the entire night in the hope of meeting the Turks before they emerged from the narrow valley. Learning now that they were too late for this, Kabilovitsch halted his command and with Constantine sought the place where Morsinia was in waiting. When the old man heard that the first assailants of the hamlet had been Albanians in disguise his rage was furious, and through his incautious words Morsinia learned more of her relation to the voivode Amesa than her reputed father had ever told her, for the mystery of her family had never been fully explained in her hearing. It had heretofore been deemed best that the girl should not be made the custodian of her own secret, yet she had guessed the greater part of the problem of her led by the new curiosity which his in- execute it, though they cut the throats ment, he addressed the throng in rapid

membered the grassy stretch was just of her own life. round the point of rock they were pass- Removed from the hearing of all othing. The horses were walking slowly, ers, Kabilovitsch rehearsed to Morsinia being allowed by their riders to pick and Constantine what the reader altheir way along the stony road. Halt- ready knows of her extraction and early ing them at a few yards' distance, they residence in Albania. He advised her

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sister of Constantine.

safe in these lonely valleys. Under his agas of lower rank. will be amply protected. There are nameless enemies of the old house of De lantly as we avoid the Turks."

It was determined that Constantine should make a detour with her and approach Sfetigrade from the south, givthem to pass by and sat in silence until the lessening sound told them that ing out that they were fugitives from the road. Then, wheeling the horses, had also been raiding.

The colonel stated to his underof-Constantine gave loose rein back over the track they had come. After a short ficers, in hearing of the men, that the wide he dismounted and closely exam- young Turk was really one of Castriot's scouts and that the young woman was ining the way, led the horses to one an accomplice. Borrowing from one and another sufficient Albanian coslittle plateau, perhaps a furlong from the main road, where a grazing patch | tumes to substitute for Constantine's would keep them from being betrayed disguise, Kabilovitsch dismissed the

Two days later a beautiful girl, accompanied by her brother, who was as stretched his strong arms to lift the unlike her as the thorn bush is unlike the graceful flowering clematis that parent destitution, refugees from near the Greek border, entered the town of house was not far from the citadel.

CHAPTER XIII.

HE battlements of Sfetigrade lay, like a ruffled collar, upon rising high above the surrounding country. Over them rose, like a massive head, the citadel with its bartizans projecting as a crown about

The assaults which Sultan Amurath night, for it was useless to return to launched against the place had been as the wrecked hamlet. They had gone frequent as the early summer showers, but a short distance when they heard and his armies were beaten to pieces as the sound of a body of cavalry directly the rain rebounded in spray and ran in in front of them riding rapidly up the streams from the rocks. The chagrin valley. There was no time to avoid of the baffled sultan reflected itself in the approaching riders either by flight the discouragement of his generals and or concealment. Constantine said hasthe demoralization of their men. The envy of the leaders of the other corps "Remember, if they are Turks, I, too, and branches of the service was excitam a Turk, and you are my captive. ed against the janizaries, to whose un-If they are friends, all is well. Stay rivaled training and daring were due where you are, and I will ride forward whatever minor victories had been won and whatever exploits worthy of men-The newcomers proved to be a detion had been performed. tachment of Albanians. Constantine

A lofty tent, whose projecting center was instantly captured, notwithstandpole bore the glittering brass crescent and star and before the entrance to which a single horse tail hung from "Ah! You are a Christian now in a the long spear, denoted the headquarters of a sanjak bey. In front of the tent walked two men in eager and not amiable conversation. The one was the bey, whose huge turban of white, inwound with green, indicated that his martial zeal was supplemented by equal enthusiasm for his faith and that ne nau added to the fatigue of many campaigns against the infidels the toil of a more monotonous though more dence to ask us to take him prisoner satisfactory pilgrimage to Mecca. His companion was an aga of the janizaries, second only in rank to the chief

The latter was speaking with a wrath which his courteous words but ill concealed:

"I do not impugn your honor or the the colonel commanding the detach- sincerity of your motives, Caraza Bey, jealousy which is everywhere manifested against our corps compels me to believe not a single word to the dis-

Tscheri without indubitable proof." be proved, if not to your personal satisfaction at least before those who will | the rear under plea of getting from her not care to ask your assent to their judgment," replied the other, not attempting to veil his hatred of the aga any more than his purpose of crushing the one of whom they were speaking.

"What will the lies of a whole sanjak of your hirelings avail against the honor of a janizary?" replied the aga. "The janizaries will take no suggestion from any but the padishah."

"A curse on the brag of the janizaries! The arrogancy of the Christian renegades needs better warrant than Ballaban can give it," sneered the bey. "If you like, let the matter rest as it is. The whole army believes that one of your dervish capped heroes-the best of the brood, I imagine-deserted his comrades in battle, and all for the sake of a captive girl."

ing his sword upon him.

The attitude of the two officers drew a crowd, who rushed from all sides to of the apparently convicted person. A witness the duel. Both were masters of sword play, so that neither obtained any sanguinary advantage before they were separated by the arrival of the announcement of his readiness. The chief aga, who forbade his subaltern to continue the conflict. Upon hearing the | sought in vain any palliatory suggesoccasion of the affray the chief said:

be had, with the publication of the fact | then raised his eyes as if for the invothat Caraza Bey has assumed the position of his accuser, and in the event of | sentence as just. But his prayer was a his charge proving false he shall atone strange one: "O Allah, thou hast for his malice by submitting to any given a wondrous spirit to this man, a punishment the captain may indicate, | courage worthy of the soul of Othman and the force of the janizaries shall himself!" Then, rising, with excitethere, and now quite a plot of grass advertent expressions had awakened in of his entire command in order to do it. speech: was growing from the soft soil. The her as well as by the remarkably diswas growing from the sort the darkeye could not discern it, for the darkcreet and cautious judgment she had the corps and then take vengeance upthe shining face! ness was rayless. But Constantine redisplayed to tell her the entire story on its detractors. I demand that Cararow at the sixth hour or accept the color when he heard the damning testijudgment of coward and vilifier, which | mony? A true son of Kara Caliph is our court shall then proclaim to the he. A word from his lips would have army."

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to extreme damour against the sugntest | lowing the tent of the chief aga was ference to herself as the young Mara | the gathering place of the notable ofde Streeses and that she should insist ficers of the corps. The canvas sides of upon her identity as the daughter of the tent were removed, making it an the Servian peasant Milosch and the open pavilion and inviting inspection and audience from any who desired to "My rough arms have often cradled approach. A diven was at one side and thee," said Kabilovitsch. "but now you | made a semicircle of about half the nave a nobler and stronger protector in | tent. Upon this sat the chief aga, his our country's father, the great Castriot. | cushion slightly raised above those at To him you must go, for it is no longer his side, which were occupied by the

strong arm and all watchful eye you ! The chief aga waved his hand to an attendant, and the military court was formally opened. Several cases were Streeses whom we must avoid as vigi- disposed of before that of Captain Bal-

laban was called. The expectation not only of common

soldiers, but also of officials, led them to crane their necks to look at the next comer. Even the ordinary immobile the soldiers had made another turn in the lower country, which the enemy features of the chief relaxed into an expression of anxiety as a young man walked down the aisle made by the reverent receding of the crowd to either side. He was not graceful in form. His body was beyond the proportions of his legs, though his arms compensated for any lack in the length of his lower limbs. His neck was thick, the head round, with full development of forehead, though that portion of his face was somewhat concealed by the short, bushy masses of red hair which protruded beneath his rimless janizary cap. His face was homely, but strongfestoons its limbs, both of them in ap- | ly marked, evincing force of character as clearly as the convolutions of his muscles evinced animal strength and Sfetigrade. By order of the general, to endurance. The brightness of his eye whom their piteous story was told by atoned for any lack of beauty in his Kabilovitsch, for he had chanced, so he | features, as did his free and manly said, to come upon them as they were | bearing make ample amends for deinquiring their way to the town, they | ficiency in grace of form. Altogether were quartered with a family whose he was a man to attract one's attention and hold it pleasantly. The chief aga announced that, al-

though the witnesses in this case were not of the order of the Yeni-Tscheri, and, therefore, had no claim to the conenormous shoulders of rock sideration of the court, yet it pleased him in this peculiar case to waive the right to try the matter exclusively among themselves, that the good name of the Yeni-Tscheri might suffer no reproach. "Caraza Bey," added the chief, "for some reason best known to himself does not accept the privilege we have extended him to speak in our officiat presence what he has freely spoken elsewhere. We shall, therefore, hear any witnesses he may have One Lovitsch, belonging to the irreg-

ular auxiliary troops, testified that Captain Ballaban had organized a raid



The executioner stepped forward.

upon an Albanian village and engaged in making your accusation against our | himself and company for the venture, Captain Ballaban, but the well known | but had left them in the heat of the fight, not rejoining them until the second day. A common soldier deposed that the captain returned to the comcredit of him or any of the Yeni- pany early in the second evening and induced him (the witness) and Koremi, "But your upstart captain's guilt can to whom the captain had intrusted a beautiful captive, to bring the girl to information regarding the enemy and had then mysteriously disappeared with her. Koremi corroborated this

Captain Ballaban gave a look of puzzled curiosity as he heard this, but otherwise evinced not the slightest

The crowd gazed upon the young captain with disappointment while testimony was being given, the agas nres-

ent being unable to conceal the deep anxiety depicted upon their countenances as they leaned forward with impatience to hear from his lips some exonerating statement, which, however, they feared could not be given.

The endangered man answered his

gaze with equal stolidity when the judge turned to him for his defense, "It is a lie!" shouted the aga, draw- but he remained speechless. A shudder of horror ran through the crowd. The executioner stepped forward to the side slight ringing sound as the long curve of the well tempered blade grazed the ground sent to every heart the chilling chief aga turned to the others, but tion or appeal for mercy except in the "The trial of Captain Ballaban shall mute agony of their looks. The chief cation of Allah's confirmation of the

"Did he quail at the ring of the executioner's sword? Did he even change

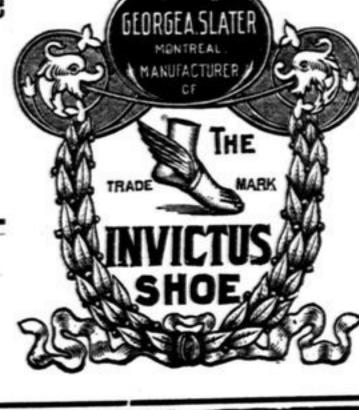
exonerated him, yet he would not At the appointed time on the day fol- speak it lest it should reveal the secrets (To be continued.)

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