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with dead lips rather than live to tell them. But I shall be his witness, and you, my brothers, shall be his judges. Captain Ballaban was recalled from the raid by our brother, Sinam, aga of the division to which the captain belongs; but, alas, the sword of Scanderbeg has loosed Sinam's soul for flight to paradise, and he could not testify to this man's fidelity. But I know the order of Sinam. In this very tent it was written. And, though the faithful messenger who carried it was slain in after conflict, the order was executed by Captain Ballaban to every letter. Every moment of his absence from the raid is accounted for on my tablets," tapping his forehead as he

spoke. "Ballaban! Ballaban!" cried the multitude, lifting the brave fellow upon their shoulders.

"Death to Caraza Bey! Down with the lying villain!" rose the cry, the crowd beginning to move, as if animated by a common spirit, to seek the envious commandant of the neighboring corps. But they halted at the tent side, waiting for the sign of permission from their chief, who by the motion of his hand forbade the assault which would have brought on a terrific battle between the janizaries and their rivals throughout the army.

"We shall deal with Caraza Bey hereafter if his shame does not send him skulking from the camps," said the chief, resuming his sitting posture and restoring order about him.

"Summon the witnesses again," he proceeded.

"You, Lovitsch, testified truly as to Captain Ballaban's absence and may go, but you twin rascals who swore to his escape with the girl, your heads shall go to Caraza Bey and your black souls to the seventh hell. Executioner, "Hold!" cried Ballaban as the man

drew his scimiter. "Upon my return to the company I found my fair captive gone and under such strange circumstances that I can see that these good fellows may be honest in what they have stated. I bespeak thy mercy, sire, for them."

"Captain Ballaban's will shall be ours," replied the chief, with a wave of his hand, dismissing the assemblage. As the crowd withdrew he said, "My brothers, the agas, will remain, and Captain Ballaban."

The sides of the tent were put up. The guard patrolled without at a distance of sixty paces that no one might overhear the conversation in the coun-

CHAPTER XIV.

\*\* AS Captain Ballaban any explanation of this conspiracy against him?" was asked. "None!" was the laconic

But after a moment's pause he added: "Perhaps there was no conthing. The girl that I captured at the be at the Mansion House Wed- giaour village was no common peasant. Her face, as lit by the blazing never seen except in some dreams of in commanding me to liberate her were those of one well born or used to authority. It was well that I bethought me to give her into the keeping of that dull headed Koremi or she might have bewitched me into obeying her and letting her go. My belief is that the girl was rescued. It may be that our men were heavily bribed to give her up or that some one personated myself and demanded her and that the story of my return may be thus accounted for, but I cannot see any treachery in Koremi's the women were carrying water from manner. If she was of any special a spring far down in a ravine, though value to Scanderbeg he would find some way of running her off, though he had to make a league with the devil and assume my shape to do it."

"But," said the second aga, "Caraza Bey's insult was none the less, if your | drink the water of such a spring before surmise be true. We must wash it out as many days have passed as the dog in the blood of a hundred or so of his has hairs on his tail the water will

hirelings tomorrow." The chief shook his head. "But," continued the second aga, "the jealousy of our corps must be punished. You see how near it came to losing for us the life of one of our bravest.

Caraza Bey must fight me tomorrow." "Bravo!" cried all, while one added, "And let the challenge be public, that the entire force of the Yeni-Tscheri be on hand and all the troops of the Beyler Bey of Anatolia, and"—lowering his voice-"we can manage it so that the fight become general and teach these reptiles of Asiatics that the Yeni-

Tscherl are the right hand and the brain of the empire." "Aye, are the empire!" said another. "Let us have a scrimmage that will be interesting. The war with Scanderbeg is getting monotonous. One day he comes into our camp like a butcher into a slaughter pen, and the next day we are marched out to him to be slaughtered elsewhere. It requires one to be full of Islam, the holy resignation, to stand this sort of life. Yes,

let's do a little fighting in our own way and get rid of some of this sol When buying mention The Free Press. Subscribe now for the Free Press.

dier spawn which the padishah has brought with him from across the Bos-

"But you forget, my brothers," said Ballaban, "that this fight with the Sanjak Bey does not belong to any one besides myself. His lie was about me. I, then, am the man to take off his head, and I think I can do it with as good grace as the executioner was nigh to taking off mine just now."

"No, captain," said the chief. "Your rank is as yet below the bey's, and he would make that an excuse for declining the gage. Besides," said he, lowering his voice, "I have special service for you elsewhere which cannot be

When the agas, making the low courtesy, retired, the chief walked with

"Captain, I have heard no report of the errand upon which you were sent." "No, sire. I was arrested the moment I returned to camp."

movements of the enemy, although the slowness of the padishah in ordering an advance when Scanderbeg was diverted by your ruse prevented our taking advantage of it." "Yes," said Ballaban, "I succeeded as

well as any one could, not being seconded from headquarters. But I did some service incidentally and picked up some helpful information. The night after leaving the hamlet we fired I fell in with a company of Arnaouts who were coming to the rescue. They would have got into the narrow valley before our men got out had I not managed to trick them. I was in disguise and readily passed for an Arnaout lout, giving them false information about the direction our party had taken and so lost them an hour or two and saved the throats of Lovitsch's fellows, a mere rabble, good enough for a raid, but not to be depended upon for a square fight. But we must have no more raids. Scanderbeg has means of communication as quick and subtle as if the clouds were his signals and the stars

were his beacons." "I then came upon a Dibrian settlement, pretending to be a fugitive from the valleys to the north, and entertained the villagers with bugaboo stories about the hosts of men with turbans on their heads and little devils on their shoulders who had destroyed all that country and were now pouring down

toward the south. "By the way," continued Ballaban, laughing, "there was an old fellow there, very lame, with a patch over one eye, who could hardly stand leaning on his staff, he was so palsied with age. But the one eye that was open was altogether too bright for his years, and his legs didn't shake enough for one who rattled his staff so much. So I put him down as one of Scanderbeg's lynxes; they are everywhere. I described to him the Moslem movements in such a way as to let a trained soldier spiracy, except as our jealous neigh- believe that we had entirely changed bors are willing to take advantage of front, with the prospective raising of every unseemly circumstance that can the siege of Sfetigrade and alliance be twisted to point against any of the with the Venetians for carrying the Yeni-Tscheri. This may explain some | war farther to the north. The old codger took the bait and asked fifty questions in the tone of a fellow whose head had been used for a mush pot inkonak, was of such beauty as I have stead of a brain holder, but every question was in its meaning as keen as a my childhood. Her voice and manner dagger thrust into the very ribs of the military situation. Well, I helped him to all the information he wanted, when, with a twinkle in his eye, he hobbled away as wise as an owl when a fresh streak of daylight has struck him, and before night the whole country to the borders of Sternogovia was alive with Scanderbeg's scouts, and every crosspath was a rendezvous of his broken winded cavalry.

"I saw one thing which gave me a hint I may use some day. At a village there was a fine flowing fountain quite near them. It seems that a dog had got into the fountain about a month before and was drowned. These Dibrians believe that if any one should make his bowels rot and his soul go into a dog's body when he dies. "The next night I spent inside the

walls of Sfetigrade." "No!" cried the chief. "Why, man, you must fly the air with the witches!"

"Not at all. I have some acquaintances in that snug little place. That night I lodged with a worthy family of Sfetigrade, pretending that I was a poor fugitive from the very town we had raided a few nights before, and I saw there the very captive I had taken. She lay asleep on a cot just within a doorway, unless I was asleep myself and dreaming, as I half believe I was."

"res, it was a dream of yours, no a fair woman in his arms, as you say her shadow. Beware illusions, captain! They use up a fellow's thoughts, make him too meek eyed to see things as a soldier should."

"I thank you for your counsel, aga," replied Ballaban, his face coloring as deep as his hair. "But there was one thing I saw with a waking eye."

"And what was that?" "That there was but one well of wa- training before you are fit to parade as ter in the town of Sfetigrade, the one prisoners of Amurath. You sit your in the citadel court. But another thing horse as a cat rides a dog, though you I didn't see, though I searched the do hold on as well with your heel as place for it, and that was a dog to she with her claws. Your short legs throw into the well, or I would have would do better to clamp the belly of thirsted the superstitious garrison out. a crocodile." They have eaten up the last cur."

"Then the surrender must come soon," said the aga.

eral Moses Goleme came into the town | me by a false step-not when we leapas I was leaving, driving a flock of sheep which he had stolen from us, for | gulch back yonder. The beast came he had cut off an entire train of provi- down as safely and softly as on the sions which had been sent to our camp from Adrianople." "Then I must have you off at once

on another errand, captain. You see yonder line of mountains off to the northwest. It may be necessary to shift the war to that region for awhile. once. Take your time, and spy thorder the leadership of Scanderbeg. If a dissension could be created among these Arnaouts, it would be well. Amesa has a large personal following in that north country, for his castle is just on the border of it."

"But," replied Ballaban, "I must first pluck the beard of that cowardly Cara-

za Bey!" "No! I forbid it. Your blood is worth more in your own veins than anywhere else. I should not consent to your risking a drop of it in personal combat with any one except Scanderbeg himself."

The fight between the second aga and Caraza Bey did not take place. That worthy was conveniently sent by Sultan Amurath, who had learned of the feud, to look after certain turbulent Caramanians, and, leaving behind him a wake of curses upon all janizaries, from the chief to the pot scourers, he took his departure for the Asiatic prov-

Had he remained, the Turks would have had enough to occupy them without this gratuitous melee, for during the night scouts brought word that Scanderbeg had massed all his forces that were not behind the walls of Sfetigrade at a point to the right of the Turkish lines. Hardly had the army been faced to meet this attack when scouts came from the left, reporting serious depredations on that flank. Amurath in the uncertainty of the enemy's movement divided his host. The Asiatics were given the northern and the janizaries the southern defense, either of them outnumbering any force Scanderbeg could send against them. But as a tornado cuts its broad swath through a forest, uprooting or snapping the gigantic trees, showing its direction only by the after track of desolation, which it cuts in almost unvarying width, while beyond its well defined lines scarcely a branch is broken or a nest overturned among the swaying foliage, so Scanderbeg swooped from



"You and your beast are well matched. east to west through the very center of the Turkish encampment, gathering up arms and provisions and strewing his track with the bodies of the slain. By the time that the Moslems were sufficiently concentrated to offer effective resistance the assailants were gone.

At the head of the victorious band Scanderbeg rode a small and ungainly but tough and tireless animal, like most of the Albanian horses, which were better adapted to threading their | Lake Scutari along the left shore, then way down the pathless mountain sides | up the great river. Not two leagues than to curveting in military parade, from the mountain spur that bends the their lack of natural ballast being stream out of your sight, at the hamlet made up by the enormous burdens they | just off the road into your Uncle Ivan's were trained to carry.

The figure and bearing of Scanderthat his sword arm was bared. His raid, she never gets out of the embrace beard of commingled yellow and gray with her. I followed the fellow day of his imagination. He will see her his complete the steel plates of after day. Once I saw him yonder on everywhere and go about trying to hug his corselet. His helmet, stuck far back the spur. He clipped the bark of a from the Albanian custom of clipping upper forehead.

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wneering his horse, he engaged in conversation with a stout but awkward

"You and your beast are well matched, Constantine. You both need better

"Yes, we are both accustomed to marching and fighting in our own way rather than in company," replied Con-"No," replied Ballaban, "for the gen- | stantine. "But the beast has not failed ed the fallen oak and landed in the training lawn.

"And you have done as well yourself," replied the general. "That was a bad play, though, you had with the Turk as we cut our way through the last knot of them. But for a side thrust which I had time to give at your Ivan Beg, the brother-in-law of Scan- antagonist while waiting for the slow derbeg, has raised a pack of wild fiends | motions of my own I fear your animal among those hills of his and is driving | would be lighter now by just your out all our friends. Nothing can stand | weight. You strike powerfully, but against him unless it be the breasts of | you do not recover yourself skillfully. the Yeni-Tscheri. Scanderbeg may A good swordsman would get a recompel us to raise the siege of Sfeti- sponse into your ribs before you could grade, for he bleeds us daily like a deal him a second. Here, I will show leech. A diversion after Ivan Beg will you! Now thrust! Strike! No, not at least be more honorable than a re- | so, but hard, villainously, at me, as if I turn to Adrianople. Now I would were the Turk who stole your girl! So! know exactly the passes and best Again! Again! Now learn this moveplaces for fortification in Ivan's coun- ment," pressing his own sword steadily try, and you, captain, are the man to against his companion's and bending find them out. You should be off at him back until he was almost off his horse. "And this," dealing so tremen-"You succeeded, I know, from the oughly, making a map and transmit- dous a slash with the back of the sword ting to me your notes. And while there | that Constantine's arm was almost feel the people. It is rumored that the numbed by the effort to resist it. "And feel the people." young chieftain, Amesa, is restless un- transmitting a twist' motion from his own to his opponent's weapon, so that for one instant they seemed

> "You will make a capital swordsman with practice, my boy. And the girl? Keep a sharpened eye for her and tell me if so much as a new spider's web be woven at her door."

like two serpents writhing together,

but at the next Constantine's sword

was twirled out of his hand.

CHAPTER XV.

PON the southern slope of the Black mountain-that is, on the rising uplands which lead from Albania to Montenegrolay the ancient and princely estates of the De Streeses. A dense forest of pines spread for miles, like a myriad of gigantic pillars in some vast temple. They seemed to support, as it were, some titanic dome surrounded with pinnacles and turrets, a huge cluster of jagged rocks, which was called by those who gazed upon it from leagues away "The Eyrie." In the midst of these great monoliths and hardly distinguishable from them rose the walls of the new castle which the voivode, or chief. Amesa, had built upon the ruins of that destroyed at the time of the massacre of its former possessor.

The horse of the voivode stood within the court, his head drooping and the white sweat foam drying upon his heated flanks. His master paced up and down the inclosure, engaged in low but excited conversation with a

The voivode was of princely mien, tall, but compactly built, face full in its lower development and somewhat sensual, eyes gray and restless, which gave one at first a sharp, penetrating glance and then seemed to hide behind the half closed lids, like some wild animal that inspects the hunter hastily, then takes to covert.

"You are sure, Drakul, that the party which drove you from the hamlet were Turks and not Arnaouts in disguise, like yourselves?"

"I could not mistake," said Drakul, a hard faced man, one of whose eyebrows was arched higher than the other and whose entire countenance was distorted from the symmetrical balance of its two sides, giving an expression of duplicity and cruelty. "I could not mistake, noble Amesa, for I have too often eyed those rascals over the point of my sword not to know a Turk in the dark. But all the fiends combined against us that night. We left our two best men dead, and the two we wanted, the boy and the girl, escaped us. The she witch did not come back to the village the next day, but the red headed and did and raved like a hyena when he found the girl missing. I watched him as he suddenly went off, doubtless to some spot they both knew of. The young thief stole the clothes off a dead Turk. The next day we spied him again, this time with that Arnaud-Kabilovitsch, Albanian-Servian, forester-colonel or whatever he may be, who came back when Castriot did. The fellow escaped us a second time."

"Track him! Track him!" cried Amesa spitefully. "I will make you rich, Drakul, the day you bring me that fex's brush of red hair from his head." "I have tracked him and could take

you to the very spot where he and the girl are today," said the man. "Come this way, my noble Amesa," leading him to the side of the court commanding a far stretch of country to the northwest. "Now let your eye follow country"-

"The stargeshina has a red golter beg, however, amply compensated the like a turkeycock? I know every hut when a young fellow like you once gets lack of martial picturesqueness in his in the hamlet," interrupted Amesa.

"Why? I have seen her and him brow, which seemed of ampler height A little beyond he did the same thing. He spied this way and that way with short or shaving the hair off from the all the pains one would take to pick a way for an army. Then he took a roll

(To be continued.)

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