The Eye of Zeitoon

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THE EYE OF ZEITOON
By Talbot Mundy

Author of Rung Ho, King--of the Khyber Rifles, Hira Singh,
The Ivory Trail, etc.

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Chapter One
Parthians, Medes and Elamites

SALVETE!

Oh ye, who tread the trodden path
And keep the narrow law
In famished faith that Judgment Day
Shall blast your sluggard mists away
And show what Moses saw!
Oh thralls of subdivided time,
Hours Measureless I sing
That own swift ways to wider scenes,
New-plucked from heights where Vision preens
A white, unwearied wing!
No creed I preach to bend dull thought
To see what I shall show,
Nor can ye buy with treasured gold
The key to these Hours that unfold
New tales no teachers know.
Ye'll need no leave o' the laws o' man,
For Vision's wings are free;
The swift Unmeasured Hours are kind

And ye shall leave all cares behind
If ye will come with me!
In vain shall lumps of fashioned stuff
Imprison you about;
In vain let pundits preach the flesh
And feebling limits that enmesh
Your goings in and out,
I know the way the zephyrs took
Who brought the breath of spring,
I guide to shores of regions blest
Where white, uncaught Ideas nest
And Thought is strong o' wing!
Within the Hours that I unlock
All customed fetters fall;
The chains of drudgery release;
Set limits fade; horizons cease
For you who hear the call
No trumpet note--no roll of drums,
But quiet, sure and sweet--
The self-same voice that summoned Drake,
The whisper for whose siren sake
They manned the Devon fleet,
More lawless than the gray gull's wait,
More boundless than the sea,
More subtle than the softest wind!

* * * * * *

Oh, ye shall burst the ties that bind
If ye will come with me!

It is written with authority of Tarsus that once it was no mean city, but that is a tale of nineteen centuries ago. The Turko-Italian War had not been fought when Fred Oakes took the fever of the place, although the stage was pretty nearly set for it and most of the leading actors were waiting for their cue. No more history was needed than to grind away forgotten loveliness.

Fred's is the least sweet temper in the universe when the ague grips and shakes him, and he knows history as some men know the Bible--by fathoms; he cursed the place conqueror by conqueror, maligning them for their city's sake, and if Sennacherib, who built the first foundations, and if Anthony and Cleopatra, Philip of Macedon, Timour-i-lang, Mahmoud, Ibrahim and all the rest of them could have come and listened by his bedside they would have heard more personal scandal of themselves than ever their contemporary chroniclers dared reveal.

All this because he insisted on ignoring the history he knew so well, and could not be held from bathing in the River Cydnus. Whatever their indifference to custom, Anthony and Cleopatra knew better than do that. Alexander the Great, on the other hand, flouted tradition and set Fred the example, very nearly dying of the ague for his pains, for those are treacherous, chill waters.

Fred, being a sober man and unlike Alexander of Macedon in several other ways, throws off fever marvelously, but takes it as some persons do religion, very severely for a little while. So we carried him

and laid him on a nice white cot in a nice clean room with two beds in it in the American mission, where they dispense more than royal hospitality to utter strangers. Will Yerkes had friends there but that made no difference; Fred was quinined, low-dieted, bathed, comforted and reproved for swearing by a college-educated nurse, who liked his principles and disapproved of his professions just as frankly as if he came from her hometown. (Her name was Van-something-or-other, and you could lean against the Boston accent--just a little lonely-sounding, but a very rock of gentle independence, all that long way from home!)

Meanwhile, we rested. That is to say that, after accepting as much mission hospitality as was decent, considering that every member of the staff worked fourteen hours a day and had to make up for attention shown to us by long hours bitten out of night, we loafed about the city. And Satan still finds mischief.

We called on Fred in the beginning twice a day, morning and evening, but cut the visits short for the same reason that Monty did not go at all: when the fever is on him Fred's feelings toward his own sex are simply blunt bellicose. When they put another patient in the spare bed in his room we copied Monty, arguing that one male at a time for him to quarrel with was plenty.

Monty, being Earl of Montdidier and Kirkudbrightshire, and a privy councilor, was welcome at the consulate at Mersina, twenty miles away.
The consul, like Monty, was an army officer, who played good chess, so that that was no place, either, for Will Yerkes and me. Will prefers dime novels, if he must sit still, and there was none. And besides, he was never what you could call really sedative.

He and I took up quarters at the European hotel--no sweet abiding-place. There were beetles in the Denmark butter that they pushed on to the filthy table-cloth in its original one-pound tin; and there was a Turkish officer in riding pants and red morocco slippers, back from the Yemen with two or three incurable complaints. He talked out-of-date Turkish politics in bad French and eked out his ignorance of table manners with instinctive racial habit.

To avoid him between meals Will and I set out to look at the historic sights, and exhausted them all, real and alleged, in less than half a day (for in addition to a lust for ready-cut building stone the Turks have never cherished monuments that might accentuate their own decadence). After that we fossicked in the manner of prospectors that we are by preference, if not always by trade, eschewing polite society and hunting in the impolite, amusing places where most of the facts have teeth, sharp and ready to snap, but visible.

We found a khan at last on the outskirts of the city, almost in sight of the railway line, that well agreed with our frame of mind. It was none of the newfangled, underdone affairs that ape hotels, with Greek managers and as many different prices for one service as there are grades of credulity, but a genuine two-hundred-year-old Turkish place, run by a Turk, and named Yeni Khan (which means the new rest house) in proof that once the world was younger. The man who directed us to the place called it a kahveh; but that means a place for donkeys and foot-passengers, and when we spoke of it as kahveh to the obadashi--the elderly youth who corresponds to porter, bell-boy and chambermaid

in one--he was visibly annoyed.

Truly the place was a khan--a great bleak building of four high outer walls, surrounding a courtyard that was a yard deep with the dung of countless camels, horses, bullocks, asses; crowded with arabas, the four-wheeled vehicles of all the Near East, and smelly with centuries of human journeys' ends.

Khans provide nothing except room, heat and water (and the heat costs extra); there is no sanitation for any one at any price; every guest dumps all his discarded rubbish over the balcony rail into the courtyard, to be trodden and wheeled under foot and help build the aroma. But the guests provide a picture without price that with the very first glimpse drives discomfort out of mind.

In that place there were Parthians, Medes and Elamites, and all the rest of the list. There was even a Chinaman. Two Hindus were unpacking bundles out of a creaking araba, watched scornfully by an unmistakable Pathan. A fat swarthy-faced Greek in black frock coat and trousers, fez, and slippered feet gesticulated with his right arm like a pump-handle while he sat on the balcony-rail and bellowed orders to a crowd mixed of Armenians, Italians, Maltese, Syrians and a Turk or two, who labored with his bales of cotton goods below. (The Italians eyed everybody sidewise, for there were rumors in those days of impending trouble, and when the Turk begins hostilities he likes his first opponents easy and ready to hand.)

There were Kurds, long-nosed, lean-lipped and suspicious, who said very little, but hugged long knives as they passed back and forth among the swarming strangers. They said nothing at all, those Kurds, but listened a very great deal.

Tall, mustached Circassians, with eighteen-inch Erzerum daggers at their waists, swaggered about as if they, and only they, were history's heirs. It was expedient to get out of their path alertly, but they cringed into second place before the Turks, who, without any swagger at all, lorded it over every one. For the Turk is a conqueror, whatever else he ought to be. The poorest Turkish servant is race-conscious, and unshakably convinced of his own superiority to the princes of the conquered. One has to bear that fact in mind when dealing with the Turk; it colors all his views of life, and accounts for some of his famous unexpectedness.

Will and I fell in love with the crowd, and engaged a room over the great arched entrance. We were aware from the first of the dull red marks on the walls of the room, where bed-bugs had been slain with slipper heels by angry owners of the blood; but we were not in search of luxury, and we had our belongings and a can of insect-bane brought down from the hotel at once. The fact that stallions squealed and fought in the stalls across the courtyard scarcely promised us uninterrupted sleep; but sleep is not to be weighed in the balance against the news of eastern nights.

We went down to the common room close beside the main entrance, and pushed the door open a little way; the men who sat within with their backs against it would only yield enough to pass one person in gingerly at a time. We saw a sea of heads and hats and faces. It looked impossible to squeeze another human being in among those already seated on the floor, nor to make another voice heard amid all that

babel.

But the babel ceased, and they did make room for us--places of honor against the far wall, because of our clean clothes and nationality. We sat wedged between a Georgian in smelly, greasy woolen jacket, and a man who looked Persian but talked for the most part French. There were other Persians beyond him, for I caught the word poul--money, the perennial song and shibboleth of that folk.

The day was fine enough, but consensus of opinion had it that snow was likely falling in the Taurus Mountains, and rain would fall the next day between the mountains and the sea, making roads and fords impassable and the mountain passes risky. So men from the ends of earth sat still contentedly, to pass earth's gossip to and fro--an astonishing lot of it. There was none of it quite true, and some of it not nearly true, but all of it was based on fact of some sort.

Men who know the khans well are agreed that with experience one learns to guess the truth from listening to the ever-changing lies. We could not hope to pick out truth, but sat as if in the pit of an old-time theater, watching a foreign-language play and understanding some, but missing most of it.

There was a man who drew my attention at once, who looked and was dressed rather like a Russian--a man with a high-bridged, prominent, lean nose--not nearly so bulky as his sheepskin coat suggested, but active and strong, with a fiery restless eye. He talked Russian at intervals with the men who sat near him at the end of the room on our right, but used at least six other languages with any one who cared to agree or disagree with him. His rather agreeable voice had the trick of carrying words distinctly across the din of countless others.

"What do you suppose is that man's nationality?" I asked Will, shouting to him because of the roar, although he sat next me.

"Ermenie!" said a Turk next but one beyond Will, and spat venomously, as if the very name Armenian befouled his mouth.

But I was not convinced that the man with the aquiline nose was Armenian. He looked guilty of altogether too much zest for life, and laughed too boldly in Turkish presence. In those days most Armenians thereabouts were sad. I called Will's attention to him again.

"What do you make of him?"

"He belongs to that quieter party in the opposite corner." (Will puts two and two together all the time, because the heroes of dime novels act that way.) "They're gipsies, yet I'd say he's not--"

"He and the others are jingaan," said a voice beside me in English, and I looked into the Persian's gentle brown eyes. "The jingaan are street robbers pure and simple," be added by way of explanation.

"But what nationality?"

"Jingaan might be anything. They in particular would call themselves Rommany. We call them Zingarri. Not a dependable people--unless--"

I waited in vain for the qualification. He shrugged his shoulders, as if there was no sense in praising evil qualities.

But I was not satisfied yet. They were swarthier and stockier than the man who had interested me, and had indefinite, soft eyes. The man I watched had brown eyes, but they were hard. And, unlike them, he had long lean fingers and his gestures were all extravagant. He was not a Jew, I was sure of that, nor a Syrian, nor yet a Kurd.

"Ermenie--Ermenie!" said the Turk, watching me curiously, and spitting again. "That one is Ermenie. Those others are just dogs!"

The crowd began to thin after a while, as men filed out to feed cattle and to cook their own evening meal. Then the perplexing person got up and came over toward me, showing no fear of the Turk at all. He was tall and lean when he stood upright, but enormously strong if one could guess correctly through the bulky-looking outer garment.

He stood in front of Will and me, his strong yellow teeth gleaming between a black beard and mustache. The Turk got up clumsily, and went out, muttering to himself. I glanced toward the corner where the self-evident gipsies sat, and observed that with perfect unanimity they were all feigning sleep.

"Eenglis sportmen!" said the man in front of us, raising both hands, palms outward, in appraisal of our clothes and general appearance.

It was not surprising that he should talk English, for what the British themselves have not accomplished in that land of a hundred tongues has been done by American missionaries, teaching in the course of a generation thousands on thousands. (There is none like the American missionary for attaining ends at wholesale.)

"What countryman are you?" I asked him.

"Zeitoonli," he answered, as if the word were honor itself and explanation bound in one. Yet he looked hardly like an honorable man. "The chilabi are staying here?" he asked. Chilabi means gentleman.

"We wait on the weather," said I, not caring to have him turn the tables on me and become interrogator.

He laughed with a sort of hard good humor.

"Since when have Eenglis sportmen waited on the weather? Ah, but you are right, effendi, none should tell the truth in this place, unless in hope of being disbelieved!" He laid a finger on his right eye, as I have seen Arabs do when they mean to ascribe to themselves unfathomable cunning. "Since you entered this common room you have not ceased to observe me closely. The other sportman has watched those Zingarri. What have you learned?"

He stood with lean hands crossed now in front of him, looking at us down his nose, not ceasing to smile, but a hint less at his ease, a shade less genial.

"I have heard you--and them--described as jingaan," I answered, and he stiffened instantly.

Whether or not they took that for a signal--or perhaps he made another that we did not see--the six undoubted gipsies got up and left the room, shambling out in single file with the awkward gait they share in common with red Indians.

"Jingaan," he said, "are people who lurk in shadows of the streets to rob belated travelers. That is not my business." He looked very hard indeed at the Persian, who decided that it might as well be supper-time and rose stiffly to his feet. The Persians rob and murder, and even retreat, gracefully. He bade us a stately and benignant good evening, with a poetic Persian blessing at the end of it. He bowed, too, to the Zeitoonli, who bared his teeth and bent his head forward something less than an inch.

"They call me the Eye of Zeitoon!" he announced with a sort of savage pride, as soon as the Persian was out of ear-shot.

Will pricked his ears--schoolboy-looking ears that stand out from his head.

"I've heard of Zeitoon. It's a village on a mountain, where a man steps out of his front door on to a neighbor's roof, and the women wear no veils, and--"

The man showed his teeth in another yellow smile.

"The effendi is blessed with intelligence! Few know of Zeitoon."

Will and I exchanged glances.

"Ours," said Will, "is the best room in the khan, over the entrance gate."

"Two such chilabi should surely live like princes," he answered without a smile. If he had dared say that and smile we would have struck him, and Monty might have been alive to-day. But he seemed to know his place, although he looked at us down his nose again in shrewd appraisal.

Will took out tobacco and rolled what in the innocence of his Yankee heart he believed was a cigarette. I produced and lit what he contemptuously called a "boughten cigaroot"--Turkish Regie, with the scent of aboriginal ambrosia. The Zeitoonli took the hint.

"Yarim sa' at," he said. "Korkakma!"

"Meanin'?" demanded Will.

"In half an hour. Do not be afraid!" said he.

"Before I grow afraid of you," Will retorted, "you'll need your friends along, and they'll need knives!"

The Zeitoonli bowed, laid a finger on his eye again, smiled and backed away. But he did not leave the room. He went back to the end-wall against which he had sat before, and although he did not stare at us the intention not to let us out of sight seemed pretty obvious.

"That half-hour stuff smacked rather of a threat," said Will. "Suppose

we call the bluff, and keep him waiting. What do you say if we go and dine at the hotel?"

But in the raw enthusiasm of entering new quarters we had made up our minds that afternoon to try out our new camp kitchen--a contraption of wood and iron we had built with the aid of the mission carpenter. And the walk to the hotel would have been a long one, through Tarsus mud in the dark, with prowling dogs to take account of.

"I'm not afraid of ten of him!" said I. "I know how to cook curried eggs; come on!"

"Who said who was afraid?"

So we went out into darkness already jeweled by a hundred lanterns, dodged under the necks of three hungry Bactrian camels (they are irritable when they want their meal), were narrowly missed by a mule's heels because of the deceptive shadows that confused his aim, tripped over a donkey's heel-rope, and found our stairway--thoroughly well cursed in seven languages, and only just missed by a Georgian gentleman on the balcony, who chose the moment of our passing underneath to empty out hissing liquid from his cooking pot.

Once in our four-square room, with the rags on the floor in our especial honor, and our beds set up, and the folding chairs in place, contentment took hold of us; and as we lighted the primus burner in the cooking box, we pitied from the bottom of compassionate young hearts all unfortunates in stiff white shirts, whose dinners were served that night on silver and laundered linen.

Through the partly open door we could smell everything that ever happened since the beginning of the world, and hear most of the elemental music--made, for instance, of the squeal of fighting stallions, and the bray of an amorous he-ass--the bubbling complaint of fed camels that want to go to sleep, but are afraid of dreaming--the hum of human voices--the clash of cooking pots--the voice of a man on the roof singing falsetto to the stars (that was surely the Pathan!) --the tinkling of a three-stringed instrument--and all of that punctuated by the tapping of a saz, the little tight-skinned Turkish drum.

It is no use for folk whose finger-nails were never dirty, and who never scratched themselves while they cooked a meal over the primus burner on the floor, to say that all that medley of sounds and smells is not good. It is very good indeed, only he who is privileged must understand, or else the spell is mere confusion.

The cooking box was hardly a success, because bright eyes watching through the open door made us nervously amateurish. The Zeitoonli arrived true to his threat on the stroke of the half-hour, and we could not shut the door in his face because of the fumes of food and kerosene. (Two of the eggs, like us, were travelers and had been in more than one bazaar.)

But we did not invite him inside until our meal was finished, and then we graciously permitted him to go for water wherewith to wash up. He strode back and forth on the balcony, treading ruthlessly on prayer-mats (for the Moslem prays in public like the Pharisees of old).

"Myself I am Christian," he said, spitting over the rail, and sitting down again to watch us. We accepted the remark with reservations.

When we asked him in at last, and we had driven out the flies with flapping towels, be closed the door and squatted down with his back to it, we two facing him in our canvas-backed easy chairs. He refused the "genuine Turkish" coffee that Will stewed over the primus. Will drank the beastly stuff, of course, to keep himself in countenance, and I did not care to go back on a friend before a foreigner, but I envied the man from Zeitoon his liberty of choice.

"Why do they call you the Eye of Zeitoon?" I asked, when time enough had elapsed to preclude his imagining that we regarded him seriously. One has to be careful about beginnings in the Near East, even as elsewhere.

"I keep watch!" he answered proudly, but also with a deeply-grounded consciousness of cunning. There were moments when I felt such strong repugnance for the man that I itched to open the door and thrust him through--other moments when compassion for him urged me to offer money--food--influence--anything. The second emotion fought all the while against the first, and I found out afterward it had been the same with Will.

"Why should Zeitoon need such special watching?" I demanded. "How do you watch? Against whom? Why?"

He laughed with a pair of lawless eyes, and showed his yellow teeth.

"Ha! Shall I speak of Zeitoon? This, then: the Turks never conquered it! They came once and built a fort on the opposite mountain-side, with guns to overawe us all. We took their fort by storm! We threw their cannon down a thousand feet into the bed of the torrent, and there they lie to-day! We took prisoner as many of their Arab zaptiehs as still were living--aye, they even brought Arabs against us--poor fools who had not yet heard of Zeitoon's defenders! Then we came down to the plains for a little vengeance, leaving the Arabs for our wives to guard. They are women of spirit, the Zeitoonli wives!

"Word reached Zeitoon presently that we were being hard pressed on the plains. It was told to the Zeitoonli wives that they might arrange to have pursuit called off from us by surrendering those Arab prisoners. They answered that Zeitoon-fashion. How? I will tell. There is a bridge of wood, flung over across the mountain torrent, five hundred feet above the water, spanning from crag to crag. Those Zeitoonli wives of ours bound the Arab prisoners hand and foot. They brought them out along the bridge. They threw them over one at a time, each man looking on until his turn came. That was the answer of the brave Zeitoonli wives!"

"And you on the plains?"

"Ah! It takes better than Osmanli to conquer the men of Zeitoon!" he gave the Turks their own names for themselves with the air of a brave fighting man conceding his opponent points. "We heard what our wives had done. We were encouraged. We prevailed! We fell back to-ward our mountain and prevailed! There in Zeitoon we have weapons--numbers--advantage of position, for no roads come near Zeitoon that an araba, or a gun, or anything on wheels can use. The only thing we fear is treachery, leading to surprise in overwhelming force.

And against these I keep watch!"

"Why should you tell us all this?" demanded Will.

"How do you know we are not agents of the Turkish government?"

He laughed outright, throwing out both hands toward us. "Eenglis sportmen!" he said simply.

"What's that got to do with it?" Will retorted. He has the unaccountable American dislike of being mistaken for an Englishman, but long ago gave up arguing the point, since foreigners refuse, as a rule, to see the sacred difference.

"I am, too, sportman. At Zeitoon there is very good sport. Bear. Antelope. Wild boar. One sportman to another--do you understand?"

We did, and did not believe.

"How far to Zeitoon?" I demanded.

"I go in five days when I hurry. You--not hurrying--by horse--seven --eight--nine days, depending on the roads."

"Are they all Armenians in Zeitoon?"

"Most. Not all. There are Arabs--Syrians--Persians--a few Circassians --even Kurds and a Turk or two. Our numbers have been reenforced continually by deserters from the Turkish Army. Ninety-five per cent., however, are Armenians," he added with half-closed eyes, suddenly suggesting that masked meekness that disguises most outrageous racial pride.

"It is common report," I said, "that the Turks settled all Armenian problems long ago by process of massacre until you have no spirit for revolt left."

"The report lies, that is all!" he answered. Then suddenly he beat on his chest with clenched fist. "There is spirit here! There is spirit in Zeitoon! No Osmanli dare molest my people! Come to Zeitoon to shoot bear, boar, antelope! I will show you! I will prove my words!"

"Were those six jingaan in the common room your men?" I asked him, and he laughed as suddenly as he had stormed, like a teacher at a child's mistake.

"Jingaan is a bad word," he said. "I might kill a man who named me that--depending on the man. My brother I would kill for it--a stranger perhaps not. Those men are Zingarri, who detest to sleep between brick walls. They have a tent pitched in the yard."

"Are they your men?"

"Zingarri are no man's men."

The denial carried no conviction.

"Is there nothing but hunting at Zeitoon?" Will demanded.

"Is that not much? In addition the place itself is wonderful--a mountain in a mist, with houses clinging to the flanks of it, and scenery to burst the heart!"

"What else?" I asked. "No ancient buildings?"

He changed his tactics instantly.

"Effendi," he said, leaning forward and pointing a forefinger at me by way of emphasis, "there are castles on the mountains near Zeitoon that have never been explored since the Turks--may God destroy them! --overran the land! Castles hidden among trees where only bears dwell! Castles built by the Seljuks--Armenians--Romans--Saracens--Crusaders! I know the way to every one of them!"

"What else?" demanded Will, purposely incredulous.

"Beyond Zeitoon to north and west are cave-dwellers. Mountains so hollowed out that only a shell remains, a sponge--a honeycomb! No man knows how far those tunnels run! The Turks have attempted now and then to smoke out the inhabitants. They were laughed at! One mountain is connected with another, and the tunnels run for miles and miles!"

"I've seen cave-dwellings in the States," Will answered, unimpressed. "But just where do you come in?"

"I do not understand."

"What do you propose to get out of it?"

"Nothing! I am proud of my country. I am sportman. I am pleased to show."

We both jeered at him, for that explanation was too outrageously ridiculous. Armenians love money, whatever else they do or leave undone, and can wring a handsome profit out of business whose very existence the easier-going Turk would not suspect.

"See if I can't read your mind," said Will. "You'll guide us for some distance out of town, at a place you know, and your jingaan-gipsy brethren will hold us up at some point and rob us to a fare-you-well. Is that the pretty scheme?"

Some men would have flown into a fury. Some would have laughed the matter off. Any and every crook would have been at pains to hide his real feelings. Yet this strange individual was at a loss how to answer, and not averse to our knowing that.

For a moment a sort of low cunning seemed to creep over his mind, but he dismissed it. Three times be raised his hands, palms upward, and checked himself in the middle of a word.

"You could pay me for my services," he said at last, not as if that were the real reason, nor as if he hoped to convince us that it was, but as if he were offering an excuse that we might care to accept for the sake of making peace with our own compunctions.

"There are four in our party," said Will, apropos apparently of nothing.

The effect was unexpected.

"Four?" His eyes opened wide, and be made the knuckle-bones of both hands crack like caps going off. "Four Eenglis sportman?"

"I said four. If you're willing to tell the naked truth about what's back of your offer, I'll undertake to talk it over with my other friends. Then, either we'll all four agree to take you up, or we'll give you a flat refusal within a day or two. Now--suit yourself."

"I have told the truth--Zeitoon--caves--boar--antelope--wild boar. I am a very good guide. You shall pay me handsomely."

"Sure, we'll ante up like foreigners. But why do you make the proposal? What's behind it?"

"I never saw you until this afternoon. You are Eenglis sportmen. I can show good sport. You shall pay me. Could it be simpler?"

It seemed to me we had been within an ace of discovery, but the man's mind had closed again against us in obedience to some racial or religious instinct outside our comprehension. He had been on the verge of taking us into confidence.

"Let the sportmen think it over," he said, getting up. "Jannam! (My soul!) Effendi, when I was a younger man none could have made me half such a sportmanlike proposal without an answer on the instant! A man fit to strike the highway with his foot should be a judge of men! I have judged you fit to be invited! Now you judge me--the Eye of Zeitoon!"

"What is your real name?"

"I have none--or many, which is the same thing! I did not ask your names; they are your own affair!"

He stood with his hand on the door, not irresolute, but taking one last look at us and our belongings.

"I wish you comfortable sleep, and long lives, effendim!" he said then, and swung himself out, closing the door behind him with an air of having honored us, not we him particularly. And after he had gone we were not at all sure that summary of the situation was not right.

We lay awake on our cots until long after midnight, hazarding guesses

about him. Whatever else he had done he had thoroughly aroused our curiosity.

"If you want my opinion that's all he was after anyway!" said Will, dropping his last cigarette-end on the floor and flattening it with his slipper.

"Cut the cackle, and let's sleep!"

We fell asleep at last amid the noise of wild carousing; for the proprietor of the Yeni Khan, although a Turk, and therefore himself presumably abstemious, was not above dispensing at a price mastika

that the Greeks get drunk on, and the viler raki, with which Georgians, Circassians, Albanians, and even the less religious Turks woo imagination or forgetfulness.

There was knife-fighting as well as carousal before dawn, to judge by the cat-and-dog-fight swearing in and out among the camel pickets and the wheels of arabas. But that was the business of the men who fought, and no one interfered.

Chapter Two

"How did sunshine get into the garden? By whose leave came the wind?"

A TIME AND TIMES AND HALF A TIME

When Cydnus bore the Taurus snows
To sweeten Cleopatra's keels,
And rippled in the breeze that sings
>From Kara Dagh, where leafy wings
Of flowers fall and gloaming steals
The colors of the blowing rose,
Old were the wharves and woods and ways--
Older the tale of steel and fire,
Involved intrigue, envenomed plan,
Man marketing his brother man
By dread duress to glut desire.
No peace was in those olden days.
Hope like the gorgeous rose sun-warmed
Blossomed and blew away and died,
Till gentleness had ceased to be
And Tarsus knew no chivalry
Could live an hour by Cydnus' side
Where all the heirs of evil swarmed.
And yet--with every swelling spring
Each pollen-scented zephyr's breath
Repeats the patient news to ears
Made dull by dreams of loveless years,
"It is of life, and not of death
That ye shall hear the Cydnus sing!"

We awoke amid sounds unexplainable. Most of the Moslems had finished their noisy ritual ablutions, and at dawn we had been dimly conscious of the strings of camels, mules and donkeys jingling out under the arch beneath us. Yet there was a great din from the courtyard of wild hoofs thumping on the dung, and of scurrying feet as if a mile-long caravan were practising formations.

So we went out to yawn, and remained, oblivious of everything but the cause of all the noise, we leaning with elbows on the wooden rail, and she laughing up at us at intervals.

The six Zingarri, or gipsies, had pitched their tent in the very middle of the yard, ambitious above all other considerations to keep away from walls. It was a big, low, black affair supported on short poles, and subdivided by them into several compartments. One could

see unshapely bulges where women did the housekeeping within.

But the woman who held us spell-bound cared nothing for Turkish custom --a girl not more than seventeen years old at the boldest guess. She was breaking a gray stallion in the yard, sitting the frenzied beast without a saddle and doing whatever she liked with him, except that his heels made free of the air, and he went from point to point whichever end up best pleased his fancy.

Travelers make an early start in Asia Minor, but the yard was by no means empty yet; some folk were still waiting on the doubtful weather. Her own people kept to the tent. Whoever else had business in the yard made common cause and cursed the girl for making the disturbance, frightening camels, horses, asses and themselves. And she ignored them all, unless it was on purpose that she brought her stallion's heels too close for safety to the most abusive.

It was only for us two that she had any kind of friendly interest; she kept looking up at us and laughing as she caught our eyes, bringing her mount uprearing just beneath us several times. She was pretty as the peep o' morning, with long, black wavy hair all loose about her shoulders, and as light on the horse as the foam he tossed about, although master of him without a second's doubt of it.

When she had had enough of riding--long before we were tired of the spectacle--she shouted with a voice like a mellow bell. One of the gipsies ran out and led away the sweating stallion, and she disappeared into the tent throwing us a laugh over her shoulder.

"D'you suppose those gipsies are really of that Armenian's party?" Will wondered aloud. "Now, if she were going to Zeitoon--!"

Feeling as he did, I mocked at him to hide my feelings, and we hung about for another hour in hope of seeing her again, but she kept close. I don't doubt she watched us through a hole in the tent. We would have sat there alert in our chairs until evening only Fred sent a note down to say he was well enough to leave the hospital.

We found him with his beard trimmed neatly and his fevered eyes all bright again, sitting talking to the nurse on the veranda about a niece of hers--Gloria Vanderman.

"Chicken in this desert!" Will wondered irreverently, and Fred, who likes his English to have dictionary meanings, rose from his chair in wrath. The nurse made that the cue for getting rid of us.

"Take Mr. Oakes away!" she urged, laughing. "He threatened to kill a man this morning. There's too much murder in Tarsus now. If he should add to it--"

"You know it wasn't on my account," Fred objected. "It was what he wrote--and said of you. Why, he has had you prayed for publicly by name, and you washing the brute's feet! Let me back in there for just five minutes, and I'll show what a hospital case should really look like!"

"Take him away!" she laughed. "Isn't it bad enough to be prayed for? Must I get into the papers, too, as heroine of a scandal?"

The head missionary was not there to say good-by to, life in his case being too serious an affair to waste minutes of a precious morning on farewells, so we packed Fred into the waiting carriage and drove all the way to Mersina, where we interrupted Monty's mid-afternoon game of chess.

Fred Oakes and Monty were the closest friends I ever met--one problem for an enemy--one stout, two-headed, most dependable ally for the lucky man or woman they called friend.

"Oh, hullo!" said Monty over his shoulder, as our names were called out by the stately consular kavass.

"Hullo!" said Fred, and shook hands with the consul.

"Thought you were due to be sick for another week?" said Monty, closing up the board.

"I was. I would have been. Bed would have done me good, and the nurse is a darling, old enough to be Will's mother. But they put a biped by the name of Peter Measel in the bed next mine. He's a missionary on his own account, and keeps a diary. Seems be contributes to the funds of a Welsh mission in France, and they do what he says. He has all the people he disapproves of prayed for publicly by name in the mission hall in Marseilles, with extracts out of his diary by way of explanation, so that the people who pray may know what they've got on their hands. The special information I gave him about you, Monty, will make Marseilles burn! He's got you down as a drunken pirate, my boy, with no less than eleven wives. But be asked me one night whether I thought what he'd written about the nurse was strong enough, and he read it aloud to me. You'd never believe what the reptile had dared suggest in his devil's log-book! I'm expelled for threatening to kill him!"

"The nurse was right," said the consul gloomily. "There'll be murder enough hereabouts--and soon!"

He was a fairly young man yet in spite of the nearly white hair over the temples. He measured his words in the manner of a man whose speech is taken at face value.

"The missionaries know. The governments won't listen. I've been appealed to. So has the United States consul, and neither of us is going to be able to do much. Remember, I represent a government at peace with Turkey, and so does he. The Turk has a side to his character that governments ignore. Have you watched them at prayer?"

We told him how close we had been on the previous night, and he laughed.

"Did you suppose I couldn't smell camel and khan the moment you came in?"

"That was why Sister Vanderman hurried you off so promptly!" Fred announced with an air of outraged truthfulness. "Faugh! Slangy talk and stink of stables!"

"I was talking of Turks," said the consul. "When they pray, you may have noticed that they glance to right and left. When they think there is nobody looking they do more, they stare deliberately to

the right and left. That is the act of recognition of the angel and the devil who are supposed to attend every Moslem, the angel to record his good deeds and the devil his bad ones. To my mind there lies the secret of the Turk's character. Most of the time he's a man of his word--honest--courteous--considerate--good-humored --even chivalrous--living up to the angel. But once in so often he remembers the other shoulder, and then there isn't any limit to the deviltry he'll do. Absolutely not a limit!"

"I suppose we or the Americans could land marines at a pinch, and protect whoever asked for protection?" suggested Monty.

"No," said the consul deliberately. "Germany would object. Germany is the only power that would. Germany would accuse us of scheming to destroy the value of their blessed Baghdad railway."

A privy councilor of England, which Monty was, is not necessarily in touch with politics of any sort. Neither were we; but it happened that more than once in our wanderings about the world things had been forced on our attention.

"They would rather see Europe burn from end to end!" Monty agreed.

"And I think there's more than that in it," said the consul. "Armenians are not their favorites. The Germans want the trade of the Levant. The Armenians are business men. They're shrewder than Jews and more dependable than Greeks. It would suit Germany very nicely, I imagine, to have no Armenians to compete with."

"But if Germany once got control of the Near East," I objected, "she could impose her own restrictions."

The consul frowned. "Armenians who thrive in spite of Turks--"

"Would skin a German for hide and tallow," nodded Will.

"Exactly. Germany would object vigorously if we or the States should land marines to prevent the Turks from applying the favorite remedy, vukuart -that means events, you know--their euphemism for massacre at rather frequent intervals. Germany would rather see the Turks finish the dirty work thoroughly than have it to do herself later on."

"You mean," said I, "that the German government is inciting to massacre?"

"Hardly. There are German missionaries in the country, doing good work in a funny, fussy, rigorous fashion of their own. They'd raise a dickens of a hocus-pocus back in Germany if they once suspected their government of playing that game. No. But Germany intends to stand off the other powers, while Turks tackle the Armenians; and the Turks know that."

"But what's the immediate excuse for massacre?" demanded Fred.

The consul laughed.

"All that's needed is a spark. The Armenians haven't been tactful. They don't hesitate to irritate the Turks--not that you can blame them, but it isn't wise. Most of the money-lenders are Armenians; Turks won't engage in that business themselves on religious grounds,

but they're ready borrowers, and the Armenian money-lenders, who are in a very small minority, of course, are grasping and give a bad name to the whole nation. Then, Armenians have been boasting openly that one of these days the old Armenian kingdom will be reestablished. The Turks are conquerors, you know, and don't like that kind of talk. If the Armenians could only keep from quarreling among themselves they could win their independence in half a jiffy, but the Turks are deadly wise at the old trick of divide et impera; they keep the Armenians quarreling, and nobody dares stand in with them because sooner--or later--sooner, probably--they'll split among themselves, and leave their friends high and dry. You can't blame 'em. The Turks know enough to play on their religious prejudices and set one sect against another. When the massacres begin scarcely an Armenian will know who is friend and who enemy."

"D'you mean to say," demanded Fred, "that they're going to be shot like bottles off a wall without rhyme or reason?"

"That's how it was before," said the consul. "There's nothing to stop it. The world is mistaken about Armenians. They're a hot-blooded lot on the whole, with a deep sense of national pride, and a hatred of Turkish oppression that rankles. One of these mornings a Turk will choose his Armenian and carefully insult the man's wife or daughter. Perhaps he will crown it by throwing dirt in the fellow's face. The Armenian will kill him or try to, and there you are. Moslem blood shed by a dog of a giaour--the old excuse!"

"Don't the Armenians know what's in store for them?" I asked.

"Some of them know. Some guess. Some are like the villagers on Mount Vesuvius--much as we English were in '57 in India, I imagine --asleep--playing games--getting rich on top of a volcano. The difference is that the Armenians will have no chance."

"Did you ever hear tell of the Eye of Zeitoon?" asked Will, apropos apparently of nothing.

"No," said the consul, staring at him.

Will told him of the individual we had talked with in the khan the night before, describing him rather carefully, not forgetting the gipsies in the black tent, and particularly not the daughter of the dawn who schooled a gray stallion in the courtyard.

The consul shook his head.

"Never saw or heard of any of them."

We were sitting in full view of the roadstead where Anthony and Cleopatra's ships had moored a hundred times. The consul's garden sloped in front of us, and most of the flowers that Europe reckons rare were getting ready to bloom.

"Would you know the man if you saw him again, Will?" I asked.

"Sure I would!"

"Then look!"

I pointed, and seeing himself observed a man stepped out of the shadow of some oleanders. There was something suggestive in his choice of lurking place, for every part of the oleander plant is dangerously poisonous; it was as if he had hidden himself among the hairs of death.

"Him, sure enough!" said Will.

The man came forward uninvited.

"How did you get into the grounds?" the consul demanded, and the man laughed, laying an unafraid hand on the veranda rail.

"My teskere is a better than the Turks give!" he answered in English. (A teskere is the official permit to travel into the interior.)

"What do you mean?"

"How did sunshine come into the garden? By whose leave came the wind?"

He stood on no formality. Before one of us could interfere (for he might have been plying the assassin's trade) he had vaulted the veranda rail and stood in front of us. As he jumped I heard the rattle of loose cartridges, and the thump of a hidden pistol against the woodwork. I could see the hilt of a dagger, too, just emerging from concealment through the opening in his smock. But he stood in front of us almost meekly, waiting to be spoken to.

"You are without shame!" said the consul.

"Truly! Of what should I be ashamed!"

"What brought you here?"

"Two feet and a great good will! You know me."

The consul shook his head.

"Who sold the horse to the German from Bitlis?"

"Are you that man?"

"Who clipped the wings of a kite, and sold it for ten pounds to a fool for an eagle from Ararat?"

The consul laughed.

"Are you the rascal who did that?"

"Who threw Olim Pasha into the river, and pushed him in and in again for more than an hour with a fishing pole--and then threw in the gendarmes who ran to arrest him--and only ran when the Eenglis consul came?"

"I remember," said the consul.

"Yet you don't look quite like that man."

"I told you you knew me."

"Neither does to-day's wind blow like yesterday's!"

"What is your name?"

"Then it was Ali."

"What is it now?"

"The name God gave me?"

"Yes."

"God knows!"

"What do you want here?"

He spread out his arms toward us four, and grinned.

"Look--see! Four Eenglis sportman! Could a man want more?"

"Your face is hauntingly familiar," said the consul, searching old memories.

"No doubt. Who carried your honor's letter to Adrianople in time of war, and received a bullet, but brought the answer back?"

"What--are you that man--Kagig?"

Instead of replying the man opened his smock, and pulled aside an undershirt until his hairy left breast lay bare down to where the nipple should have been. Why a bullet that drilled that nipple so neatly had not pierced the heart was simply mystery.

"Kagig, by jove! Kagig with a beard! Nobody would know you but for that scar."

"But now you know me surely? Tell these Eenglis sportman, then, that I am good man--good guide! Tell them they come with me to Zeitoon!"

The consul's face darkened swiftly, clouded by some notion that he seemed to try to dismiss, but that refused to leave him.

"How much would you ask for your services?" he demanded.

"Whatever the effendim please."

"Have you a horse?"

He nodded.

"You and your horse, then, two piasters a day, and you feed yourself and the beast."

The man agreed, very bright-eyed. Often it takes a day or two to come to terms with natives of that country, yet the terms the consul offered him were those for a man of very ordinary attainments.

"Come back in an hour," said the consul.

Without a word of answer Kagig vaulted back across the rail and disappeared around the corner of the house, walking without hurry but not looking back.

"Kagig, by jove! It would take too long now to tell that story of the letter to Adrianople. I've no proof, but a private notion that Kagig is descended from the old Armenian kings. In a certain sort of tight place there's not a better man in Asia. Now, Lord Montdidier, if you're in earnest about searching for that castle of your Crusader ancestors, you're in luck!"

"You know it's what I came here for," said Monty. "These friends of mine are curious, and I'm determined. Now that Fred's well--"

"I'm puzzled," said the consul, leaning back and looking at us all with half-closed eyes. "Why should Kagig choose just this time to guide a hunting party? If any man knows trouble's brewing, I suspect be surely does. Anything can happen in the interior. I recall, for instance, a couple of Danes, who went with a guide not long ago, and simply disappeared. There are outlaws everywhere, and it's more than a theory that the public officials are in league with them."

"What a joke if we find the old family castle is a nest of robbers," smiled Monty.

"Still!" corrected Fred.

I was watching the consul's eyes. He was troubled, but the prospect of massacre did not account for all of his expression. There was debate, inspiration against conviction, being fought out under cover of forced calm. Inspiration won the day.

"I was wondering," he said, and lit a fresh cigar while we waited for him to go on.

"I vouch for my friends," said Monty.

"It wasn't that. I've no right to make the proposal--no official right whatever--I'm speaking strictly unofficially--in fact, it's not a proposal at all--merely a notion."

He paused to give himself a last chance, but indiscretion was too strong.

"I was wondering how far you four men would go to save twenty or thirty thousand lives."

"You've no call to wonder about that," said Will.

"Suppose you tell us what you've got in mind," suggested Monty, putting his long legs on a chair and producing a cigarette.

The consul knocked out his pipe and sat forward, beginning to talk a little faster, as a man who throws discretion to the winds.

"I've no legal right to interfere. None at all. In case of a massacre of Armenians--men, women, little children--I could do nothing. Make a fuss, of course. Throw open the consulate to refugees. Threaten a lot of things that I know perfectly well my government won't do.

The Turks will be polite to my face and laugh behind my back, knowing I'm helpless. But if you four men--"

"Yes--go on--what?"

"Spill it!" urged Will.

"--should be up-country, and I knew it for a fact, but did not know your precise whereabouts, I'd have a grown excuse for raising most particular old Harry! You get my meaning?"

"Sure!" said Will. "Monty's an earl. Fred's related to half the peerages in Burke. Me and him"--I was balancing my chair on one leg and he pushed me over backward by way of identification--"just pose as distinguished members of society for the occasion. I get you."

"It might even be possible, Mr. Yerkes, to get the United States Congress to take action on your account."

"Don't you believe it!" laughed Will. "The members for the Parish Pump, and the senators from Ireland would howl about the Monroe Doctrine and Washington's advice at the merest hint of a Yankee in trouble in foreign parts."

"What about the United States papers?"

"They'd think it was an English scheme to entangle the United States, and they'd be afraid to support action for fear of the Irish. No, England's your only chance!"

"Well," said the consul, "I've told you the whole idea. If I should happen to know of four important individuals somewhere up-country, and massacres should break out after you had started, I could supply our ambassador with something good to work on. The Turkish government might have to stop the massacre in the district in which you should happen to be. That would save lives."

"But could they stop it, once started?" I asked.

"They could try. That 'ud be more than they ever did yet."

"You mean," said Monty, "that you'd like us to engage Kagig and make the trip, and to remain out in case of--ah--vukuart until we're rescued?"

"Can't say I like it, but that's what I mean. And as for rescue, the longer the process takes the better, I imagine!"

"Hide, and have them hunt for us, eh?"

"Would it help," I suggested, "if we were to be taken prisoner by outlaws and held for ransom?"

"It might," said the consul darkly. "I'd take to the hills myself and send back a wail for help, only my plain duty is here at the mission. What I have suggested to you is mad quixotism at the best, and at the worst--well, do you recall what happened to poor Vyner, who was held for ransom by Greek brigands? They sent a rescue party instead of money, and--"

"Charles Vyner was a friend of mine," said Monty quietly.

Fred began to look extremely cheerful and Will nudged me and nodded.

"Remember," said the consul, "in the present state of European politics there's no knowing what can or can't be done, but if you four men are absent in the hills I believe I can give the Turkish government so much to think about that there'll be no massacres in that one district."

"Whistle up Kagig!" Monty answered, and that was the end of the argument as far as yea or nay had anything to do with it. Prospect of danger was the last thing likely to divide the party.

"How about permits to travel?" asked Will. "The United States consul told me none is to be had at present."

The consul rubbed his thumb and forefinger together.

"It may cost a little more, that's all," he said. "You might go without, but you'd better submit to extortion."

He called the kavass, the uniformed consular attendant, and sent him in search of Kagig. Within two minutes the Eye of Zeitoon was grinning at us through a small square window in the wall at one end of the veranda. Then he came round and once more vaulted the veranda rail, for he seemed to hold ordinary means of entry in contempt. His eye looked very possessive for that of one seeking employment as a guide, but he stood at respectful attention until spoken to.

"These gentlemen have decided to employ you," the consul announced.

"Mashallah!" (God be praised!) For a Christian he used unusual expletives.

"They want to find a castle in the mountains, to hunt bear and boar, and to see Zeitoon."

"I shall lead them to ten castles never seen before by Eenglismen! They shall kill all the bears and pigs! Never was such sport as they shall see!"

He exploded the word pigs as if he had the Osmanli prejudice against that animal. Yet he wore a pig-skin cartridge belt about his middle.

"They will need enormous lots of ammunition!" he announced.

"What else would the roadside robbers like them to bring?"

"No Turkish servants! They throw Turks over a bridge-side in Zeitoon! I myself will provide servants, who shall bring them back safely!"

It seemed to me that he breathed inward as he said that. A Turk would have added "Inshallah!"--if God wills!

"Make ready for a journey of two months," he said.

"When and where shall the start be?"

It would obviously be unwise to start from the consulate.

"From the Yeni Khan in Tarsus," said Will.

"That is very good--that is excellent! I will send Zeitoonli servants to the Yeni Khan at once. Pay them the right price. Have you horses? Camels are of no use, nor yet are wheels--you shall know why later! Mules are best."

"I know where you can hire mules," said the consul, "with a Turkish muleteer to each pair."

"Oh, well!" laughed Kagig, leaning back against the rail and moving his hands palms upward as if he weighed one thought against another. "What is the difference? If a few Turks move or less come to an end over Zeitoon bridge--"

It was only for moments at a time that he seemed able to force himself to speak as our inferior. A Turk of the guide class would likely have knelt and placed a foot of each of us on his neck in turn as soon as he knew we had engaged him. This Armenian seemed made of other stuff.

"Then be on hand to-morrow morning," ordered Monty.

But the Eye of Zeitoon had another surprise for us.

"I shall meet you on the road," he announced with an air of a social equal. "Servants shall attend you at the Yeni Khan. They will say nothing at all, and work splendidly! Start when you like; you will find me waiting for you at a good place on the road. Bring not plenty, but too much ammunition! Good day, then, gentlemen!"

He nodded to us--bowed to the consul--vaulted the rail. A second later he grinned at us again through the tiny window. "I am the Eye of Zeitoon!" he boasted, and was gone. A servant whom the consul sent to follow him came back after ten or fifteen minutes saying he had lost him in a maze of narrow streets.

His latter, offhanded manner scarcely auguring well, we debated whether or not to search for some one more likely amenable to discipline to take his place. But the consul spent an hour telling us about the letter that went to Adrianople, and the bringing back of the answer that hastened peace.

"He was shot badly. He nearly died on the way back. I've no idea how he recovered. He wouldn't accept a piaster more than the price agreed on."

"Let's take a chance!" said Will, and we were all agreed before he urged it.

"There's one other thing," said the consul. "I've been told a Miss Gloria Vanderrnan is on her way to the mission at Marash--"

"Gee whiz!" said Will.

The consul nodded. "She's pretty, if that's what you mean. It was very unwise to let her go, escorted only by Armenians. Of course, she may get through without as much as suspecting trouble's brewing, but--well--I wish you'd look out for her."

"Chicken, eh?"

Will stuck both hands deep in his trousers pockets and tilted his chair backward to the point of perfect poise.

"Cuckoo, you ass!" laughed Fred, kicking the chair over backward, and then piling all the veranda furniture on top, to the scandalized amazement of the stately kavass, who came at that moment shepherding a small boy with a large tray and perfectly enormous drinks.

Chapter Three
"Sahib, there is always--work for real soldiers!"

WHERE TWO OR THREE

Oh, all the world is sick with hate,
And who shall heal it, friend o' mine?
And who is friend? And who shall stand
Since hireling tongue and alien hand
Kill nobleness in all this land?
Judas and Pharisee combine
To plunder and proclaim it Fate.

Days when the upright dared be few
Are they departed, friend o' mine?
Are bribery and rich largesse
Fair props for fat forgetfulness,
Or anodynous of distress?
Oh, would the world were drunk with wine
And not this last besotting brew!

Oh, for the wonderful again -
The greatly daring, friend o' mine!
The simply gallant blade unbought,
The soul compassionate, unsought,
With no price but the priceless thought
Nor purpose than the brave design
Of giving that the world may gain!

So we took two rooms at the Yeni Khan instead of one, not being minded to sleep as closely as the gentry of Asia Minor like to. Will hurried us down there for a look at the gipsy girl. But the tent was gone and the gipsies with it, and when we asked questions about them people spat.

Your good Moslem--and a Moslem is good in those parts who makes a mountain of observances, regarding mole-hills of mere morals not at all--affects to despise all giaours; but a giaour, like a gipsy, who has no obvious religion of any kind, he ranks below the pig in order of reverence. It did not redound to our credit that we showed interest in the movements of such people.

Monty brought an enormous can of bug-powder with him, and restored our popularity by lending generously after he had treated our quarters

sufficiently for three days' stay. Fred did nothing to our quarters --stirred no finger, claiming convalescence with his tongue in his cheek, and strolling about until he fell utterly in love with the khan and its crowd, and the khan with him.
That very first night he brought out his concertina on the balcony, and yowled songs to its clamor; and whether or not the various crowd agreed on naming the noise music, all were delighted with the friendliness.

Fred talks more languages fluently than he can count on the fingers of both hands. He began to tell tales in a sing-song eastern snarl --a tale in Persian, then in Turkish, and the night grew breathless, full of listening, until pent-up interest at intervals burst bonds and there were "Ahs" and "Ohs" all amid the dark, like little breaths of night wind among trees.

He found small time for sleep, and when dawn came, and four Zeitoonli servants according to Kagig's promise, they still swarmed around him begging for more. He went off to eat breakfast with a khan from Bokhara, sitting on a bale of nearly priceless carpets to drink overland tea made in a thing like a samovar.

All the rest of that day, and the next, sleeping only at intervals, while Monty and Will and I helped the Zeitoonli servants get our loads in shape, Fred sharpened his wonder-gift of tongues on the fascinated men of many nations, giving them London ditties and tales from the Thousand Nights and a Night in exchange for their news of caravan routes. He left them well pleased with their bargain.

Monty went off alone the second day to see about mules. The Turk with a trade to make believes that of several partners one is always "easier" than the rest; consequently, one man can bring him to see swifter reason than a number can. He came back that evening with twelve good mules and four attendants.

"One apiece to ride, and two apiece to carry everything. Not another mule to be had. Unpack the loads again and make them smaller!"

Fred came and sat with us that night before the charcoal brazier in his and Monty's room.

"They all talk of robbers on the road," he said. "Northward, through the Circassian Gates, or eastward it's all the same. There's a man in a room across the way who was stripped stark naked and beaten because they thought he might have money in his clothes. When he reached this place without a stitch on him he still had all his money in his clenched fists! Quite a sportsman--what? Imagine his juggling with it while they whipped him with knotted cords!"

"What have you heard about Kagig?"

"Nothing. But a lot about vukuart.* It's vague, but there's something in the air. You'll notice the Turkish muleteers are having nothing whatever to say to our Zeitoonli, although they've accepted the same service. Moslems are keeping together, and Armenians are getting the silence cure. Armenians are even shy of speaking to one another. I've tried listening, and I've tried asking questions, although that was risky. I can't get a word of explanation. I've noticed, though, that the ugly mood is broadening. They've been polite to me, but

I've heard the word shapkali applied more than once to you fellows. Means hatted man, you know. Not a serious insult, but implies contempt."

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* Turkish word: happenings, a euphemism for massacre.

Nothing but comfort and respectability ever seemed able to make Fred gloomy. He discussed our present prospects with the air of an epicure ordering dinner. And Monty listened with his dark, delightful smile --the kindliest smile in all the world. I have seen unthoughtful men mistake it for a sign of weakness.

I have never known him to argue. Nor did he then, but strode straight down into the khan yard, we sitting on the balcony to watch. He visited our string of mules first for an excuse, and invited a Kurdish chieftain (all Kurds are chieftains away from home) to inspect a swollen fetlock. With that subtle flattery he unlocked the man's reserve, passed on from chance remark to frank, good-humored questions, and within an hour had talked with twenty men. At last he called to one of the Zeitoonli to come and scrape the yard dung from his boots, climbed the stairs leisurely, and sat beside us.

"You're quite right, Fred," he said quietly.

Then there came suddenly from out the darkness a yell for help in English that brought three of us to our feet. Fred brushed his fierce mustaches upward with an air of satisfaction, and sat still.

"There's somebody down there quite wrong, and in line at last to find out why!" he said. "I've been waiting for this. Sit down."

We obeyed him, though the yells continued. There came blows suggestive of a woman on the housetops beating carpets.

"D'you recollect the man I mentioned at the consulate--the biped Peter Measel, missionary on his own account, who keeps a diary and libels ladies in it? Well, he's foul of a thalukdar* from Rajputana, and of a Prussian contractor, recruiting men for work on the Baghdad railway. I wasn't allowed to murder him. I see why now--finger of justice--I'd have been too quick. Sit down, you idiots! You've no idea what he wrote about Miss Vanderman. Let him scream, I like it!"

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* Punjabi Word--landholder.

"Come along," said Monty. "If he were a bad-house keeper he has had enough!"

But Will had gone before us, headlong down the stairs with the speed off the mark that they taught him on the playing field at Bowdoin. When we caught up he was standing astride a prostrate being who sobbed like a cow with its throat cut, and a Rajput and a German, either of them six feet tall, were considering whether or not to resent the violence of his interference. The German was disposed to yield to numbers. The Rajput not so.

"Why are you beating him?" asked Monty.

"Gott in Hinimel, who would not! He wrote of me in his diary --der Liminel!--that I shanghai laborers."

"Do you, or don't you?" asked Monty sweetly.

"Kreutz-blitzen! What is that to do with you--or with him? What right had he to write that people in France should pray for me in church?"

The Rajput all this while was standing simmering, as ready as a boar at bay to fight the lot of us, yet I thought with an air about him, too, of half-conscious surprise. Several times he took a half-pace forward to assert his right of chastisement, looked hard at Monty, and checked mid-stride.

"You've done enough," said Monty.

"Who are you that says so?" the German retorted.

"He--who--will--attend--to--it--that--you--do--no--more!" Monty's smooth voce had become without inflection.

"Bah! That is easy, isn't it? You are four to one!"

"Five to one!"

The Rajput's gruff throat thrilled with a new emotion. He sprang suddenly past me, and thrust himself between Monty and the German, who took advantage of the opportunity to walk away.

"Lord Montdidier, colonel sahib bahadur, burra salaam!"

He made no obeisance, but stood facing Monty eye to eye. The words, as be roiled them out, were like an order given to a thousand men. One almost heard the swish of sabers as the squadrons came to the general salute.

"I knew you, Rustum Khan, the minute I set eyes on you. Why were you beating this man?"

"Sahib bahadur, because he wrote in his book that people in France should pray for me in church, naming my honorable name, because, says he--but I will not repeat what he says. It is not seemly."

"How do you know what is in his diary?" Monty asked.

"That German read it out to me. We were sitting, he and I, discussing how the Turks intend to butcher the Armenians, as all the world knows is written. They say it shall happen soon. Said he to me--the German said to me--'I know another,' said he, 'who if I had my way should suffer first in that event.' Saying which he showed the written book that he had found, and read me parts of it. The German was for denouncing the fellow as a friend of Armenians, but I was for beating him at once, and I had my way."

"Where is the book?" demanded Monty.

"The German has it."

"The German has no right to it."

"I will bring it."

Rustum Khan strode off into the night, and Monty bent over the sobbing form of the self-appointed missionary. We were all alone in the midst of the courtyard, not even watched from behind the wheels of arabas, for a fight or a thrashing in the khans of Asia Minor is strictly the affair of him who gets the worst of it.

"Will you burn that book of yours, Measel, if we protect you from further assault?"

The man sobbed that he would do anything, but Monty held him to the point, and at last procured a specific affirmative. Then Rustum Khan came back with the offending tome. It was bulky enough to contain an account of the sins of Asia Minor.

Fred and I picked the poor fellow up and led him to where the cooking places stood in one long row. Will carried the book, and Rustum Khan stole wood from other folks' piles, and fanned a fire. We watched the unhappy Peter Measel put the book on the flames with his own hands.

"You're old enough to have known better than keep such a diary!" said Monty, stirring the charred pages.

"I am at any rate a martyr!" Measel answered.

The man could walk by that time--he was presumably abstemious and recovered from shock quickly. Monty sent me to see him to his room, which turned out to be next the German's, and until Will came over from our quarters with first-aid stuff from our chest I spent the minutes telling the German what should happen to him in case he should so far forget discretion as to resume the offensive. He said nothing in reply, but sat in his doorway looking up at me with an expression intended to make me feel nervous of reprisals without committing him to deeds.

Later, when we had done our best for "the martyred biped Measel," as Fred described him, Will and I found Rustum Khan with Fred and Monty seated around the charcoal brazier in Monty's room, deep in the valley of reminiscences. Our entry rather broke the spell, but Rustum Khan was not to be denied.

"You used to tell in those days, Colonel sahib bahadur," he said, addressing Monty with that full-measured compliment that the chivalrous, old East still cherishes, "of a castle of your ancestors in these parts. Do you remember, when I showed you the ruins of my family place in Rajputana, how you stood beside me on the heights, sahib, and vowed some day to hunt for that Crusaders' nest, as you called it?"

"That is the immediate purpose of this trip of ours," said Monty.

"Ah!" said the Rajput, and was silent for about a minute. Fred Oakes began to hum through his nose. He has a ridiculous belief that doing that throws keen inquirers off a scent.

"Colonel sahib, since I was a little butcha not as high as your knee I have spoken English and sat at the feet of British officers. Little

enough I know, but by the beard of God's prophet I know this: when a British colonel sahib speaks of 'immediate purposes,' there are hidden purposes of greater importance!"

"That well may be," said Monty gravely. "I remember you always were a student of significant details, Rustum Khan."

"There was a time when I was in your honor's confidence."

Monty smiled.

"That was years ago. What are you doing here, Rustum Khan?"

"A fair enough question! I hang my head. As you know, sahib, I am a rangar. My people were all Sikhs for several generations back. We converts to Islam are usually more thorough-going than born Moslems are. I started to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, riding overland alone by way of Persia. As I came, missing few opportunities to talk with men, who should have been the lights of my religion, I have felt enthusiasm waning. These weeks past I have contemplated return without visiting Mecca at all. I have wandered to and fro, hoping for the fervor back again, yet finding none. And now, sahib, I find you--I, Rustum Khan, at a loose end for lack of inspiration. I have prayed. Colonel sahib bahadur, I believe thou art the gift of God!"'

Monty sought our eyes in turn in the lantern-lit darkness. We made no sign. None of us but he knew the Rajput, so it was plainly his affair.

"Suit yourself," said Will, and the rest of us nodded.

"We are traveling into the interior," said Monty, "in the rather doubtful hope that our absence from a coast city may in some way help Armenians, Rustum Khan."

The Rajput jumped to his feet that instant, and came to the salute.

"I might have known as much. Colonel Lord Montdidier sahib, I offer fealty! My blood be thine to spill in thy cause! Thy life on my head--thine honor on my life--thy way my way, and God be my witness!"

"Don't be rash, Rustum Khan. Our likeliest fate is to be taken prisoner by men of your religion, who will call you a renegade if you defend Armenians. And what are Armenians to you?"

"Ah, sahib! You drive a sharp spur into an open sore! I have seen too much of ill-faith--cruelty--robbery--torture--rapine--butchery, all in the name of God! It is this last threat to the Armenians that is the final straw! I took the pilgrimage in search of grace. The nearer I came to the place they tell me is on earth the home of grace, the more unfaith I see! Three nights ago in another place I was led aside and offered the third of the wealth of a fat Armenian if I would lend my sword to slit helpless throats--in the name of God, the compassionate, be merciful! My temper was about spoilt forever when that young idiot over the way described me in his book as--never mind how he described me--he paid the price! Sahib bahadur, I take my stand with the defenseless, where I know thou and thy friends will surely be! I am thy man!"

"It is not included in our plans to fight," said Monty.

"Sahib, there is always work for real soldiers!"

"What do you fellows say? Shall we let him come with us?"

"I travel at my own charges, sahib. I am well mounted and well armed."

"Sure, let him come with us!" said Will. "I like the man."

"He has my leave to come along to England afterward," said Fred, "if he'll guarantee to address me as the 'gift of God' in public!"

I left them talking and returned to see whether the "martyred biped Measel" needed further help. He was asleep, and as I listened to his breathing I heard voices in the next room. The German was talking in English, that being often the only tongue that ten men have in common. Through the partly opened door I could see that his room was crammed with men.

"They are spies, every one of them!" I heard him say. "The man I thrashed is of their party. You yourselves saw how they came to his rescue, and seduced the Indian by means of threats. This is the way of the English. ("Curse them!" said a voice.) They write notes in a book, and when that offense is detected they burn the book in a corner, as ye saw them do. I saw the book before they burned it. I thrashed the spy who wrote in the book because he had written in it reports on what it is proposed to do to infidels at the time ye know about. I tell you those men are all spies--one is as bad as the other. They work on behalf of Armenians, to bring about interference from abroad."

That he had already produced an atmosphere of danger to us I had immediate proof, for as I crossed the yard again I dodged behind an araba in the nick of time to avoid a blow aimed at me with a sword by a man I could not see.

"All your charming is undone!" I told Fred, bursting in on our party by the charcoal brazier. Almost breathless I reeled off what I had overheard. "They'll be here to murder us by dawn!" I said.

"Will they?" said Monty.

We were up and away two hours before dawn, to the huge delight of our Turkish muleteers, who consider a dawn start late, yet not too early for the servants of the khan, who knew enough European manners to stand about the gate and beg for tips. Nor were we quite too early for the enemy, who came out into the open and pelted us with clods of dung, the German encouraging from the roof. Fred caught him unaware full in the face with a well-aimed piece of offal. Then the khan keeper slammed the gate behind us and we rode into the unknown.

Chapter Four
"We are the robbers, effendi!"

THE ROAD

There is a mystery concerning roads
And he who loves the Road shall never tire.
For him the brooks have voices and the breeze
Brings news of far-off leafiness and leas
And vales all blossomy. The clinging mire
Shall never weary such an one, nor yet their loads
O'ercome the beasts that serve him. Rock and rill
Shall make the pleasant league go by as hours
With secret tales they tell; the loosened stone,
Sweet turf upturned, the bees' full-purposed drone,
The hum of happy insects among flowers,
And God's blue sky to crown each hill!
Dawn with her jewel-throated birds
To him shall be a new page in the Book
That never had beginning nor shall end,
And each increasing hour delights shall lend--
New notes in every sound--in every nook
New sights----new thoughts too wide for words,
Too deep for pen, too high for human song,
That only in the quietness of winding ways
>From tumult and all bitterness apart
Can find communication with the heart -
Thoughts that make joyous moments of the days,
And no road heavy, and no journey long!

The snow threatened in the mountains had not materialized, and the weather had changed to pure perfection. About an hour after we started the khan emptied itself behind us in a long string, jingling and clanging with horse and camel bells. But they turned northward to pass through the famed Circassian Gates, whereas we followed the plain that paralleled the mountain range--our mules' feet hidden by eight inches of primordial ooze.

"Wish it were only worse!" said Monty. "Snow or rain might postpone massacre. Delay might mean cancellation."

But there was no prospect whatever of rain. The Asia Minor spring, perfumed and amazing sweet, breathed all about us, spattered with little diamond-bursts of tune as the larks skyrocketed to let the wide world know how glad they were. Whatever dark fate might be brooding over a nation, it was humanly impossible for us to feel low-spirited.

Our Zeitoonli Armenians trudged through the mud behind us at a splendid pace--mountain-men with faces toward their hills. The Turks--owners of the animals another man had hired to us--rode perched on top of the loads in stoic silence, changing from mule to mule as the hours passed and watching very carefully that no mule should be overtaxed or chilled. In fact, the first attempt
they made to enter into conversation with us was when we dallied to admire a view of Taurus Mountain, and one of them closed up to tell us the mules were catching cold in the wind. (If they had been our animals it might have been another story.)

Their contempt for the Zeitoonli was perfectly illustrated by the difference in situation. They rode; the Armenians walked. Yet the

Armenians were less afraid; and when we crossed a swollen ford where a mule caught his forefoot between rocks and was drowning, it was Armenians, not Turks, who plunged into the icy water and worked him free without straining as much as a tendon.

The Turks were obsessed by perpetual fear of robbers. That, and no other motive, made them tolerate the hectoring of Rustum Khan, who had constituted himself officer of transport, and brought up the rear on his superb bay mare. As he had promised us he would, he rode well armed, and the sight of his pistol holsters, the rifle protruding stock-first from a leather case, and his long Rajput saber probably accomplished more than merely keeping Turks in countenance; it prevented them from scattering and bolting home.

His own baggage was packed on two mules in charge of an Armenian boy, who was more afraid of our Turks than they of robbers. Yet, when we demanded of our muleteers what sort of men, and of what nation the dreaded highwaymen might be they pointed at Rustum Khan's lean servant. At the khan the night before one of them had pointed out to Monty two Circassians and a Kurd as reputed to have a monopoly of robbery on all those roads. Nevertheless, they made the new accusation without blinking.

"All robbers are Armenians--all Armenians are robbers!" they assured us gravely.

When we halted for a meal they refused to eat with our Zeitoonli, although they graciously permitted them to gather all the firewood, and accepted pieces of their pasderma (sun-dried meat) as if that were their due. As soon as they had eaten, and before we had finished, Ibrahim, their grizzled senior, came to us with a new demand. On its face it was not outrageous, because we were doing our own cooking, as any man does who has ever peeped into a Turkish servant's behind-the-scene arrangements.

"Send those Armenians away!" he urged. "We Turks are worth twice their number!"

"By the beard of God's prophet!" thundered Rustum Khan, "who gave camp-followers the right to impose advice?"

"They are in league with highwaymen to lead you into a trap!" Ibrahim answered.

Rustum Khan rattled the saber that lay on the rock beside him.

"I am hunting for fear," he said. "All my life I have hunted for fear and never found it!"

"Pekki!" said Ibrahim dryly. The word means "very well." The tone implied that when the emergency should come we should do well not to depend on him, for he had warned us.

We were marching about parallel with the course the completed Baghdad railway was to take, and there were frequent parties of surveyors and engineers in sight. Once we came near enough to talk with the German in charge of a party, encamped very sumptuously near his work. He had a numerous armed guard of Turks.

"A precaution against robbers?" Monty asked, and I did not hear what the German answered.

Rustum Khan laughed and drew me aside.

"Every German in these parts has a guard to protect him from his own men, sahib! For a while on my journey westward I had charge of a camp of recruited laborers. Therefore I know."

The German was immensely anxious to know all about us and our intentions. He told us his name was Hans von Quedlinburg, plainly expecting us to be impressed.

"I can direct you to good quarters, where you can rest comfortably at every stage, if you will tell me your direction," he said.

But we did not tell him. Later, while we ate a meal, he came and questioned our Turks very closely; but since they were in ignorance they did not tell him either.

"Why do you travel with Armenian servants?" he asked us finally before we moved away.

"We like 'em," said Monty.

"They'll only get you in trouble. We've dismissed all Armenian laborers from the railway works. Not trustworthy, you know. Our agents are out recruiting Moslems."

"What's the matter with Armenians?"

"Oh, don't you know?"

"I'm asking."

The German shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll tell you one thing. This will illustrate. I had an Armenian clerk. He worked all day in my tent. A week ago I found him reading among my private papers. That proves you can't trust an Armenian."

"Ample evidence!" said Monty without a smile, but Fred laughed as we rode away, and the German stared after us with a new set of emotions pictured on his heavy face.

Late in the afternoon we passed through a village in which about two hundred Armenian men and women were holding a gathering in a church large enough to hold three times the number. One of them saw us coming, and they all trooped out to meet us, imagining we were officials of some kind.

"Effendi," said their pastor with a trembling hand on Monty's saddle, "the Turks in this village have been washing their white garments!"

We had heard in Tarsus what that ceremony meant.

"It means, effendi, they believe their purpose holy! What shall we do--what shall we do?"

"Why not go into Tarsus and claim protection at the British consulate?" suggested Fred.

"But our friends of Tarsus warn us the worst fury of all will be in the cities!"

"Take to the hills, then!" Monty advised him.

"But how can we, sir? How can we? We have homes--property--children! We are watched. The first attempt by a number of us to escape to the hills would bring destruction down on all!"

"Then escape to the hills by twos and threes. You ask my advice --I give it."

It looked like very good advice. The slopes of the foot-hills seemed covered by a carpet of myrtle scrub, in which whole armies could have lain in ambush. And above that the cliffs of the Kara Dagh rose rocky and wild, suggesting small comfort but sure hiding-places.

"You'll never make me believe you Armenians haven't hidden supplies," said Monty. "Take to the hills until the fury is over!"

But the old man shook his head, and his people seemed at one with him. These were not like our Zeitoonli, but wore the settled gloom of resignation that is poor half-brother to Moslem fanaticism, caught by subjection and infection from the bullying Turk. There was nothing we could do at that late hour to overcome the inertia produced by centuries, and we rode on, ourselves infected to the verge of misery. Only our Zeitoonli, striding along like men on holiday, retained their good spirits, and they tried to keep up ours by singing their extraordinary songs.

During the day we heard of the chicken, as Will called her, somewhere on ahead, and we spent that night at a kahveh, which is a place with all a khan's inconveniences, but no dignity whatever. There they knew nothing of her at all. The guests, and there were thirty besides ourselves, lay all around the big room on wooden platforms, and talked of nothing but robbers along the road in both directions. Every man in the place questioned each of us individually to find out why we had not been looted on our way of all we owned, and each man ended in a state of hostile incredulity because we vowed we had met no robbers at all. They shrugged their shoulders when we asked for news of Miss Gloria Vanderman.

There was no fear of Ibrahim and his friends decamping in the night, for the Zeitoonli kept too careful watch, waiting on them almost as thoughtfully as they fetched and carried for us, but never forgetting to qualify the service with a smile or a word to the Turks to imply that it was done out of pity for brutish helplessness.

These Zeitoonli of ours were more obviously every hour men of a different disposition to the meek Armenians of the places where the Turkish heel had pressed. But for our armed presence and the respect accorded to the Anglo-Saxon they would have had the whole mixed company down on them a dozen times that night.

"I'm wondering whether the Armenians within reach of the Turks are not going to suffer for the sins of mountaineers!" said Fred, as

we warmed ourselves at the great open fire at one end of the room.

"Rot!" Will retorted. "Sooner or later men begin to dare assert their love of freedom, and you can't blame 'em if they show it foolishly. Some folk throw tea into harbors--some stick a king's head on a pole--some take it out for the present in fresh-kid stuff. These Zeitoonli are men of spirit, or I'll eat my hat!"

But if we ourselves had not been men of spirit, obviously capable of strenuous self-defense, our Zeitoonli would have found themselves in an awkward fix that night.

We supped off yoghourt--the Turkish concoction of milk--cow's, goat's, mare's, ewe's or buffalo's (and the buffalo's is best)--that is about the only food of the country on which the Anglo-Saxon thrives. Whatever else is fit to eat the Turks themselves ruin by their way of cooking it. And we left before dawn in the teeth of the owner of the kahveh's warning.

"Dangerous robbers all along the road!" he advised, shaking his head until the fez grew insecure, while Fred counted out the coins to pay our bill. "Armenians are without compunction--bad folk! Ay, you have weapons, but so have they, and they have the advantage of surprise! May Allah the compassionate be witness, I have warned you!"

"There will be more than warnings to be witnessed!", growled Rustum Khan as he rode away. "Those others, who sharpened weapons all night long, and spoke of robbers, have been waiting three days at that kahveh till the murdering begins!"

That morning, on Rustum Khan's advice, we made our Turkish muleteers ride in front of us. The Zeitoon men marched next, swinging along with the hillman stride that eats up distance as the ticked-off seconds eat the day. And we rode last, admiring the mountain range on our left, but watchful of other matters, and in position to cut off retreat.

"The last time a Turk ran away from me he took my Gladstone bag with him!" said Fred. "No, only Armenians are dishonest. It was obedience to his prophet, who bade him take advantage of the giaour--quite a different thing! Ibrahim's sitting on my kit, and I'm watching him. You fellows suit yourselves!"

We passed a number of men on foot that morning all coming our way, but no Armenians among them. However, we exchanged no wayside gossip, because our Zeitoonli in front availed themselves of privilege and shouted to every stranger to pass at a good distance.

That is a perfectly fair precaution in a land where every one goes armed, and any one may be a bandit. But it leads to aloofness. Passers-by made circuits of a half-mile to avoid us, and when we spurred our mules to get word with them they mistook that for proof of our profession and bolted. We chased three men for twenty minutes for the fun of it, only desisting when one of them took cover behind a bush and fired a pistol at us with his eyes shut.

"Think of the lies he'll tell in the kahveh to-night about beating off a dozen robbers single-handed!" Will laughed.

"Let's chase the next batch, too, and give the kahveh gang an ear-full!"

"I rather think not," said Monty. "They'll say we're Armenian criminals. Let's not be the spark."

He was right, so we behaved ourselves, and within an hour we had trouble enough of another sort. We began to meet dogs as big as Newfoundlands, that attacked our unmounted Zeitoonli, refusing to be driven off with sticks and stones, and only retreating a little way when we rode down on them.

"Shoot the brutes!" Will suggested cheerfully, and I made ready to act on it.

"For the lord's sake, don't!" warned Monty, riding at a huge black mongrel that was tearing strips from the smock of one of our men. The owner of the dog, seeing its victim was Armenian, rather encouraged it than otherwise, leaning on a long pole and grinning in an unfenced field near by.

"The consul warned me they think more of a dog's life hereabouts than a man's. In half an hour there'd be a mob on our trail. Take the Zeitoonli up behind us."

Rustum Khan was bitter about what he called our squeamishness. But we each took up a man on his horse's rump, and the dogs decided the fun was no longer worth the effort, especially as we had riding whips. But skirmishing with the dogs and picking up the Armenians took time, so that our muleteers were all alone half a mile ahead of us, and had disappeared where the road dipped between two hillocks, when they met with the scare they looked for.

They came thundering back up the road, flogging and flopping on top of the loads like the wooden monkeys-on-a-stick the fakers used to sell for a penny on the curb in Fleet Street, glancing behind them at every second bound like men who had seen a thousand ghosts.

We brought them to a halt by force, but take them on the whole, now that they were in contact with us, they did not look so much frightened as convinced. They had made up their minds that it was not written that they should go any farther, and that was all about it.

"Ermenie!" said Ibrahim. And when we laughed at that he stroked his beard and vowed there were hundreds of Armenians ambushed by the roadside half a mile ahead. The others corrected him, declaring the enemy were thousands strong.

Finally Monty rode forward with me to investigate. We passed between the hillocks, and descended for another hundred yards along a gradually sloping track, when our mules became aware of company. We could see nobody, but their long ears twitched, and they began to make preparations preliminary to braying recognition of their kin.

Suddenly Monty detected movement among the myrtle bushes about fifty yards from the road, and my mule confirmed his judgment by braying like Satan at a side-show. The noise was answered instantly by a chorus of neighs and brays from an unseen menagerie, whereat the owners of the animals disclosed themselves--six men, all smiling, and unarmed as far as we could tell--the very same six gipsies who had pitched their tent in the midst of the khan yard at Tarsus.

Then in a clearing at a little distance we saw women taking down a long low black tent, and between us and them a considerable herd of horses, mostly without halters but headed into a bunch by gipsy children. Somebody on a gray stallion came loping down toward us, leaping low bushes, riding erect with pluperfect hands and seat.

"I've seen that stallion before!" said I.

"And the girl on his back is looking for somebody who owns her heart!" smiled Monty. "Hullo! Are you the lucky man?"'

She reined the stallion in, and took a good, long look at us, shading her eyes with her hand but showing dazzling white teeth between coral lips. Suddenly the smile departed, and a look of sullen disappointment settled on her face, as she wheeled the stallion with a swing of her lithe body from the hips, and loped away. Never, apparently, did two men make less impression on a maiden's heart. The six gipsies stood staring at us foolishly, until one of them at last held his hand up palm outward. We accepted that as a peace signal.

"Are you waiting here for us?" Monty asked in English, and the oldest of the six--a swarthy little man with rather bow legs--thought he had been asked his name.

"Gregor Jhaere," be answered.

For some vague reason Monty tried him next in Arabic and then in Hindustanee, but without result. At last he tried halting Turkish, and the gipsy replied at once in German. As Monty used to get two-pence or three-pence a day extra when he was in the British army, for knowing something of that tongue, we stood at once on common ground.

"Kagig told us to wait here and bring you to him," said Gregor Jhaere.

"Where is Kagig?" Monty asked, and the man smiled blankly--much more effectively than if he had shrugged his shoulders.

"We obey Kagig at times," he said, as if that admission settled the matter. Then there was interruption. Rustum Khan came spurring down the road with his pistol holsters unbuttoned and his saber clattering like a sutler's pots and pans, to see whether we needed help. He had no sooner reined in beside us than I caught sight of Will, drawn between curiosity and fear lest the muleteers might bolt, standing in his stirrups to peer at us from the top of the track between the hillocks. Somebody else caught sight of him too.

There came a shrill about from over where the women were packing up, and everybody turned to look, Gregor Jhaere included. As hard as the gray stallion could take her in a bee line toward Will the daughter of the dawn with flashing teeth and blazing eyes was riding ventre a terre.

"Maga!" Gregor shouted at her, and then some unintelligible gibberish. But she took no more notice of him than if he had been a crow on a branch. In a minute she was beside Will, talking to him, and from over the top of the rise we could hear Fred shouting sarcastic remonstrance.

"She is bad!" Gregor announced in English. It seemed to be all the English he knew.

"Are you her father?" Monty asked, and Gregor answered in very slipshod German:

"She is the daughter of the devil. She shall be soundly thrashed! The chalana!* And he a Gorgio!"**

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* Chalana--She jockey (a compliment).
** Gorgio--Gentile (an insult).

Suddenly Fred began to shout for help then, and we rode back, the gipsies following and Rustum Khan remaining on guard between them and their camp with his upbrushed black beard bristling defiance of Asia Minor. Our Turkish muleteers had decided to make a final bolt for it, and were using their whips on the Zeitoonli, who clung gamely to the reins. As soon as we got near enough to lend a hand the Turks resigned themselves with a kind of opportune fatalism. The Zeitoonli promptly turned the tables on them by laying hold of a leg of each and tipping them off into the mud. Ibrahim showed his teeth, and reached for a hidden weapon as he lay, but seemed to think better of it. It looked very much as if those four Zeitoonli knew in advance exactly what the interruption in our journey meant.

Will was out of the running entirely, or else the rest of us were, depending on which way one regarded it. He had eyes for nobody and nothing but the girl, nor she for any one but him, and nobody could rightfully blame either of them. Yankee though he is, Will sat his mule in the western cowboy style, and he was wearing a cowboy hat that set his youth off to perfection. She looked fit to flirt with the lord of the underworld, answering his questions in a way that would have made any fellow eager to ask more. Strangely enough, Gregor Jhaere, presumably father of the girl appeared to have lost his anger at her doings and turned his back.

Fred, smiling mischief, started toward them to horn in, as Will would have described it, but at that moment about a dozen of the gipsy women came padding uproad, fostered watchfully by Rustum Khan, who seemed convinced that murder was intended somehow, somewhere. They brought along horses with them--very good horses--and Fred prefers a horse trade to triangular flirtation on any day of any week.

The gipsies promptly fell to and off-saddled our loads under Gregor Jhaere's eye, transferring them to the meaner-looking among the beasts the women had brought, taking great care to drop nothing in the mud. And at a word from Gregor two of the oldest hags came to lift us from our saddles one by one, and hold us suspended in mid-air while the saddles were transferred to better mounts. But there is an indignity in being held out of the mud by women that goes fiercely against the white man's grain, and I kicked until they set me back in the saddle.

Monty solved the problem by riding to higher, clean ground near the roadside, where we could stand on firm grass.

Seeing us dismounted, the gipsies underwent a subtle mental change

peculiar to all barbarous people. To the gipsy and the cossack, and all people mainly dependent on the horse, to be mounted is to signify participation in affairs. To be dismounted means to stand aside and "let George do it."

Gregor Jhaere became a different man. He grew noisy and in response to his yelped commands they swooped in unprovoked attack on our unhappy muleteers. Before we could interfere they had thrown each Turk face downward, our Zeitoonli helping, and were searching them with swift intruding fingers for knives, pistols, money.

The Turk leaves his money behind when starting on a journey at some other man's expense; but they did draw forth a most astonishing assortment of weapons. They were experts in disarmament. Maga Jhaere lost interest in Will for a moment, and pricked her stallion to a place where she could judge the assortment better. Without any hesitation she ordered one of the old women to pass up to her a mother-o'-pearl ornamented Smith & Wesson, which she promptly hid in her bosom. Judging by the sounds he made, that pistol was the apple of Ibrahim's old eye, but he had seen the last of it. When we interfered, and he could get to her stirrup to demand it back, Maga spat in his face; which was all about it, except that Monty made generous allowance for the thing when paying the reckoning presently. As our servants, those Turks were, of course, entitled to our protection, and besides that weapon we had to pay for five knives that were gone beyond hope of recovery.

Monty paid our Turks off (for it was evident that even had they been willing they would not have been allowed to proceed with us another mile). Then, as Ibrahim mounted and marshaled his party in front of him, he forgot manners as well as the liberal payment.

"Mashallah!" (God be praised!) he shouted, with the slobber of excitement on his lips and beard. "Now I go to make Armenians pay for this! Let the shapkali,* too, avoid me! Ya Ali, ya Mahoma, Alahu!" (Oh, Ali, oh, Mahomet, God is God!)

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* Shapkali--hatted man-foreigner.

"Let's hope they haven't a spark of honesty!" said Monty cryptically, watching them canter away.

"Why on earth--?"

"Let's hope they ride back to the consul and swear they haven't received one piaster of their pay. That would let him know we're clear away!"

"Optimist!" jeered Will. "That consul's a Britisher. He'd take their lie literally, and deduce we're no good!"

For the moment the girl on the gray stallion had ridden away from Will and was giving regal orders to the mob of women and shrill children, who obeyed her as if well used to it. Gregor Jhaere and his men stood staring at us, Gregor shaking his head as if our letting the Turks go free had been a bad stroke of policy.

"Aren't you afraid to travel with all that mob of women and cattle?"

asked Monty. "We've heard of robbers on the road."

"We are the robbers, effendi!" said Gregor with an air of modesty. The others smirked, but he seemed disinclined to over-insist on the gulf between us.

"Hear him!" growled Rustum Khan. "A thief, who boasts of thieving in the presence of sahibs! So is corruption, stinking in the sun!"

He added something in another language that the gipsies understood, for Gregor started as if stung and swore at him, and Maga Jhaere left her women-folk to ride alongside and glare into his eyes. They were enemies, those two, from that hour forward. He, once Hindu, now Moslem, had no admiration whatever to begin with for unveiled women. And, since the gipsy claims to come from India and may therefore be justly judged by Indian standards, and has no caste, but is beneath the very lees of caste, he loathed all gipsies with the prejudice peculiar to men who have deserted caste in theory and in self-protection claim themselves above it. It was a case of height despising deep in either instance, she as sure of her superiority as he of his.

There might have been immediate trouble if Monty had not taken his new, restless, fresh horse by the mane and swung into the saddle.

"Forward, Rustum Khan!" be ordered. "Ride ahead and let those keen eyes of yours keep us out of traps!"

The Rajput obeyed, but as he passed Will he checked his mare a moment, and waiting until Will's blue eyes met his he raised a warning finger.

"Kubadar, sahib!"

Then he rode on, like a man who has done his duty.

"What the devil does he mean?" demanded Will.

"Kubadar means, 'Take care'!" said Monty. "Come on, what are we waiting for?"

That was the beginning, too, of Will's feud with the Rajput, neither so remorseless nor so sudden as the woman's, because he had a different code to guide him and also had to convince himself that a quarrel with a man of color was compatible with Yankee dignity. We could have wished them all three either friends, or else a thousand miles apart two hundred times before the journey ended.

As we rode forward with even our Zeitoonli mounted now on strong mules, Maga Jhaere sat her stallion beside Will with an air of owning him. She was likely a safer friend than enemy, and we did nothing to interfere. Monty pressed forward. Fred and I fell to the rear.

"Haide!"* shouted Gregor Jhaere, and all the motley swarm of women and children caught themselves mounts--some already loaded with the gipsy baggage, some with saddles, some without, some with grass halters for bridles. In another minute Fred and I were riding surrounded by a smelly swarm of them, he with big fingers already on the keys of his beloved concertina, but I less enamored than he of the company.

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* Haide!--Turkish, "Come on!"

Women and children, loaded, loose and led horses were all mixed together in unsortable confusion, the two oldest hags in the world trusting themselves on sorry, lame nags between Fred and me as if proximity to us would solve the very riddle of the gipsy race. And last of all came a pack of great scrawny dogs that bayed behind us hungrily, following for an hour until hope of plunder vanished.

"That little she-devil who has taken a fancy to Will," said Fred with a grin, "is capable of more atrocities than all the Turks between here and Stamboul! She looks to me like Santanita, Cleopatra, Salome, Caesar's wife, and all the Borgia ladies rolled in one. There's something added, though, that they lacked."

"Youth," said I. "Beauty. Athletic grace. Sinuous charm."

"No, probably they all had all those."

"Then horsemanship."

"Perhaps. Didn't Cleopatra ride?"

"Then what?" said I, puzzled.

"Indiscretion!" he answered, jerking loose the catch of his infernal instrument.

"Don't be afraid, old ladies," he said, glancing at the harridans between us. "I'm only going to sing!"

He makes up nearly all of his songs, and some of them, although irreverent, are not without peculiar merit; but that was one of his worst ones.

The preachers prate of fallen man
And choirs repeat the chant,
While unco' guid with unction urge
Repression of the joys that surge,
And jail for those who can't.
The poor deluded duds forget
That something drew the sting
When Adam tiptoed to his fall,
And made it hardly hurt at all.
Of Mother Eve I sing!

CHORUS
Oh, Mother Eve, dear Mother Eve,
The generations come and go,
But daughter Eve's as live as you
Were back in Eden years ago!

Oh, hell's not hell with Eve to tell
Again the ancient tale,
But Eden's grassy ways and bowers
Deprived of Eve to ease the hours
Would very soon grow stale!

Red cherry lips that leap to laugh,
And chic and flick and flair
Can make black white for any one--
The task of Sisyphus good fun!
So what should Adam care!

CHORUS
Oh, daughter Eve, dear daughter Eve,
The tribulations go and come,
But no adventure's ever tame
With you to make surprises hum!

Chapter Five
"Effendi, that is the heart of Armenia burning."

THE PATTERAN

(I)

Aye-yee--I see--a cloud afloat in air af amethyst
I know its racing shadow falls on banks of gold
Where rain-rejoicing gravel warms the feeding roots
And smells more wonderful than wine.
I know the shoots of myrtle and of asphodel now stir the mould
Where wee cool noses sniff the early mist.
Aye-yee--the sparkle of the little springs I see
That tinkle as they hunt the thirsty rill.
I know the cobwebs glitter with the jeweled dew.
I see a fleck of brown--it was a skylark flew
To scatter bursting music, and the world is still
To listen. Ah, my heart is bursting too--Aye-yee!

Chorus:
(It begins with a swinging crash, and fades away.)

Aye-yee, aye-yah--the kites see far
(But also to the foxes views unfold)--
No hour alike, no places twice the same,
Nor any track to show where morning came,
Nor any footprint in the moistened mould
To tell who covered up the morning star.
    Aye-yee--aye-yah!

(2)
Aye-yee--I see--new rushes crowding upwards in the mere
Where, gold and white, the wild duck preens himself
Safe hidden till the sun-drawn, lingering mists melt.
I know the secret den where bruin dwelt.
I see him now sun-basking on a shelf
Of windy rock. He looks down on the deer,
Who flit like flowing light from rock to tree
And stand with ears alert before they drink.
I know a pool of purple rimmed with white
Where wild-fowl, warming for the morning flight,

Wait clustering and crying on the brink.
And I know hillsides where the partridge breeds. Aye-yee!

Chorus:
Aye-yee, aye-yah--the kites see far
(But also to the owls the visions change)--
No dawn is like the next, and nothing sings
Of sameness--very hours have wings
And leave no word of whose hand touched the range
Of Kara Dagh with opal and with cinnabar.
    Aye-yee, aye-yah!

(3)
Aye-yee--I see--new distances beyond a blue horizon flung.
I laugh, because the people under roofs believe
That last year's ways are this!
No roads are old! New grass has grown!
All pools and rivers hold New water!
And the feathered singers weave
New nests, forgetting where the old ones hung!
Aye-yah--the muddy highway sticks and clings,
But I see in the open pastures new
Unknown to busne* in the houses pent!
I hear the new, warm raindrops drumming on the tent,
I feel already on my feet delicious dew,
I see the trail outflung! And oh, my heart has wings!

Chorus:
Aye-yee, aye-yah--the kites see far
(But also on the road the visions pass)--
The universe reflected in a wayside pool,
A tinkling symphony where seeping waters drool,
The dance, more gay than laughter, of the wind-swept grass--
Oh, onward! On to where the visions are!
    Aye-yee--aye-yah!

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* Busne--Gipsy word--Gentile, or non-gipsy.

Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Bohemia, Persia, Armenia were all one hunting-ground to the troupe we rode with. Even the children seemed to have a smattering of most of the tongues men speak in those intriguing lands. Will and the girl beside him conversed in German, but the old hag nearest me would not confess acquaintance with any language I knew. Again and again I tried her, but she always shook her head.

Fred, with his ready gift of tongues, attempted conversation with ten or a dozen of them, but whichever language he used in turn appeared to be the only one which that particular individual did not know. All he got in reply was grins, and awkward silence, and shrugs of the shoulders in Gregor's direction, implying that the head of the firm did the talking with strangers. But Gregor rode alone with Monty, out of ear-shot.

Maga (for so they all called her) flirted with Will outrageously, if that is flirting that proclaims conquest from the start, and sets

flashing white teeth in defiance of all intruders. Even the little children had hidden weapons, but Maga was better armed than any one, and she thrust the new mother-o-pearl-plated acquisition in the face of one of the men who dared drive his horse between hers and Will's. That not serving more than to amuse him, she slapped him three times back-handed across the face, and thrusting the pistol back into her bosom, drew a knife. He seemed in no doubt of her willingness to use the steel, and backed his horse away, followed by language from her like forked lightning that disturbed him more than the threatening weapon. Gipsies are great believers in the efficiency of a curse.

Nothing could be further from the mark than to say that Will tried to take advantage of Maga's youth and savagery. Fred and I had shared a dozen lively adventures with him without more than beginning yet to plumb the depths of his respect for Woman. Only an American in all the world knows how to meet Young Woman eye to eye with totally unpatronizing frankness, and he was without guile in the matter. But not so she. We did not know whether or not she was Gregor Jhaere's daughter; whether or not she was truly the gipsy that she hardly seemed. But she was certainly daughter of the Near East that does not understand a state of peace between the sexes. There was nothing lawful in her attitude, nor as much as the suspicion that Will might be merely chivalrous.

"America's due for sex-enlightenment!" said I.

"Warn him if you like," Fred laughed, "and then steer clear! Our America is proud besides imprudent!"

Fred off-shouldered all responsibility and forestalled anxiety on any one's account by playing tunes, stampeding the whole cavalcade more than once because the horses were unused to his clanging concertina, but producing such high spirits that it became a joke to have to dismount in the mud and replace the load on some mule who had expressed enjoyment of the tune by rolling in slime, or by trying to kick clouds out of the sky.

And strangely enough he brought about the very last thing he intended with his music--stopped the flirtation's immediate progress. Maga seemed to take to Fred's unchastened harmony with all the wildness that possessed her. Some chord he struck, or likelier, some abandoned succession of them touched off her magazine of poetry. And so she sang.

The only infinitely gorgeous songs I ever listened to were Maga's. Almighty God, who made them, only really knows what country the gipsies originally came from, but there is not a land that has not felt their feet, nor a sorrow they have not witnessed. Away back in the womb of time there was planted in them a rare gift of seeing what the rest of us can only sometimes hear, and of hearing what only very few from the world that lives in houses can do more than vaguely feel when at the peak of high emotion. The gipsies do not understand what they see, and hear, and feel; but they are aware of infinities too intimate for ordinary speech. And it was given to Maga to sing of all that, with a voice tuned like a waterfall's for open sky, and trees, and distances--not very loud, but far-carrying, and flattened in quarter-tones where it touched the infinite.

Fred very soon ceased from braying with his bellowed instrument. Her songs were too wild for accompaniment--interminable stanzas of

unequal length, with a refrain at the end of each that rose through a thousand emotions to a crash of ecstasy, and then died away to dreaminess, coming to an end on an unfinished rising scale.

All the gipsies and our Zeitoonli and Rustum Khan's lean servant joined in the refrains, so that we trotted along under the snow-tipped fangs of the Kara Dagh oblivious of the passage of time, but very keenly conscious of touch with a realm of life whose existence hitherto we had only vaguely guessed at.

The animals refused to weary while that singing testified of tireless harmonies, as fresh yet as on the day when the worlds were born. We rattled forward, on and upward, as if the panorama were unrolling and we were the static point, getting out of nobody's way for the best reason in the world--that everybody hid at first sight or sound of us, except when we passed near villages, and then the great fierce-fanged curs chased and bayed behind us in short-winded fury.

"The dogs bark," quoted Fred serenely, "but the caravan moves on!"

An hour before dark we swung round a long irregular spur of the hills that made a wide bend in the road, and halted at a lonely kahveh --a wind-swept ruin of a place, the wall of whose upper story was patched with ancient sacking, but whose owner came out and smiled so warmly on us that we overlooked the inhospitable frown of his unplastered walls, hoping that his smile and the profundity of his salaams might prove prophetic of comfort and cleanliness within. Vain hope!

Maga left Will's side then, for there was iron-embedded custom to be observed about this matter of entering a road-house. In that land superstition governs just as fiercely as the rest those who make mock of the rule-of-rod religions, and there is no man or woman free to behave as be or she sees fit. Every one drew aside from Monty, and he strode in alone through the split-and-mended door, we following next, and the gipsies with their animals clattered noisily behind us. The women entered last, behind the last loaded mule, and Maga the very last of all, because she was the most beautiful, and beauty might bring in the devil with it only that the devil is too proud to dawdle behind the old hags and the horses.

We found ourselves in an oblong room, with stalls and a sort of pound for animals at one end and an enormous raised stone fireplace at the other. Wooden platforms for the use of guests faced each other down the two long sides, and the only promise of better than usual comfort lay in the piles of firewood waiting for whoever felt rich and generous enough to foot the bill for a quantity.

But an agreeable surprise made us feel at home before ever the fire leaped up to warm the creases out of saddle-weary limbs. We had given up thinking of Kagig, not that we despaired of him, but the gipsies, and especially Maga, had replaced his romantic interest for the moment with their own. Now all the man's own exciting claim on the imagination returned in full flood, as he arose leisurely from a pile of skins and blankets near the hearth to greet Monty, and shouted with the manner of a chieftain for fuel to be piled on instantly--"For a great man comes!" he announced to the rafters. And the kahveh servants, seven sons of the owner of the place, were swift and abject in the matter of obeisance. They were Turks. All

Turks are demonstrative in adoration of whoever is reputed great. Monty ignored them, and Kagig came down the length of the room to offer him a hand on terms of blunt equality.

"Lord Montdidier," he said, mispronouncing the word astonishingly, "this is the furthest limit of my kingdom yet. Kindly be welcome!"

"Your kingdom?" said Monty, shaking hands, but not quite accepting the position of blood-equal. He was bigger and better looking than Kagig, and there was no mistaking which was the abler man, even at that first comparison, with Kagig intentionally making the most of a dramatic situation.

Kagig laughed, not the least nervously.

"Mirza," he said in Persian, "duzd ne giriftah padshah ast!" (Prince, the uncaught thief is king.)

He was wearing a kalpak--the head-gear of the cossack, which would make a high priest look outlawed, and a shaggy goat-skin coat that had seen more than one campaign. Unmistakably the garment had been slit by bullets, and repaired by fingers more enthusiastic than adept. There was a pride of poverty about him that did not gibe well with his boast of being a robber.

"That's the first gink we've met in this land who didn't claim to be something better than he looked!" Will whispered.

"Hopeless, I suppose!" Fred answered. "Never mind. I like the man."

It was evident that Monty liked him, too, for all his schooled reserve. Kagig ordered one of the owner's sons to sweep a place near the fire, and there he superintended the spreading of Monty's blankets, close enough to his own assorted heap for conversation without mutual offense. Will cleaned for himself a section of the opposite end of the platform, and Fred and I spread our blankets next to his. That left Rustum Khan in a quandary. He stood irresolute for a minute, eying first the gipsies, who had stalled most of their animals and were beginning to occupy the platform on the other side; then considering the wide gap between me and Monty. The dark-skinned man of breeding is far more bitterly conscious of the color-line than any white knows how to be.

We watched, disinclined to do the choosing for him, racial instinct uppermost. Rustum Khan strolled back to where his mare was being cleaned by the lean Armenian servant, gave the boy a few curt orders, and there among the shadows made his mind up. He returned and stood before Monty, Kagig eying him with something less than amiability. He pointed toward the ample room remaining between Monty and me.

"Will the sahib permit? My izzat (honor) is in question."

"Izzat be damned!" Monty answered.

Rustum Khan colored darkly.

"I shared a tent with you once on campaign, sahib, in the days before --the good days before--those old days when--"

"When you and I served one Raj, eh? I remember," Monty answered.

"I remember it was your tent, Rustum Khan. Unless memory plays tricks with me, the Orakzai Pathans had burned mine, and I had my choice between sharing yours or sleeping in the rain."

"Truly, huzoor."

"I don't recollect that I mouthed very much about honor on that occasion. If anybody's honor was in question then, I fancy it was yours. I might have inconvenienced myself, and dishonored you, I suppose, by sleeping in the wet. You can dishonor the lot of us now, if you care to, by--oh, tommyrot! Tell your man to put your blankets in the only empty place, and behave like a man of sense!"

"But, huzoor--"

Monty dismissed the subject with a motion of his hand, and turned to talk with Kagig, who shouted for yoghourt to be brought at once; and that set the sons of the owner of the place to hurrying in great style. The owner himself was a true Turk. He had subsided into a state of kaif already over on the far side of the fire, day-dreaming about only Allah knew what rhapsodies. But the Turks intermarry with the subject races much more thoroughly than they do anything else, and his sons did not resemble him. They were active young men, rather noisy in their robust desire to be of use.

The gipsies, with Gregor Jhaere nearest to the owner of the kahveh and the fireplace, occupied the whole long platform on the other side, each with his women around him--except that I noticed that Maga avoided all the men, and made herself a blanket nest in deep shadow almost within reach of a mule's heels at the far end. I believed at the moment that she chose that position so as to be near to Will, but changed my mind later. Several times Gregor shouted for her, and she made no answer.

The place had no other occupants. Either we were the only travelers on that road that night or, as seemed more likely, Kagig had exercised authority and purged the kahveh of other guests. Certainly our coming had been expected, for there was very good yoghourt in ample quantity, and other food besides--meat, bread, cheese, vegetables.

When we had all eaten, and lay back against the stone wall looking at the fire, with great fanged shadows dancing up and down that made the scene one of almost perfect savagery, Gregor called again for Maga. Again she did not answer him. So be rose from his place and reached for a rawhide whip.

"I said she shall be thrashed!" be snarled in Turkish, and he made the whip crack three times like sudden pistol-shots. Will did not catch the words, and might not have understood them in any case, but Rustum Khan, beside me, both heard and understood.

"Atcha!" he grunted. "Now we shall see a kind of happenings. That girl is not a true gipsy, or else my eyes lie to me. They stole her, or adopted her. She lacks their instincts. The gitanas, as they call their girls, are expected to have aversion to white men. They are allowed to lure a white man to his ruin, but not to make hot love to him. She has offended against the gipsy law. The attaman* must punish. Watch the women. They take it all as a matter of course."

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*Attaman, gipsy headman.

"Maga!" thundered Gregor Jhaere, cracking the great whip again. I thought that Kagig looked a trifle restless, but nobody else went so far as to exhibit interest, except that the old Turk by the fire emerged far enough out of kaif to open one eye, like a sly cat's.

The attaman shouted again, and this time Maga mocked him. So he strode down the room in a rage to enforce his authority, and dragged her out of the shadow by an arm, sending her whirling to the center of the floor. She did not lose her feet, but spun and came to a stand, and waited, proud as Satanita while he drew the whip slowly back with studied cruelty. The old Turk opened both eyes.

Nothing is more certain than that none of us would have permitted the girl to be thrashed. I doubt if even Rustum Khan, no admirer of gipsies or unveiled women, would have tolerated one blow. But Will was nearest, and he is most amazing quick when his nervous New England temper is aroused. He had the whip out of Gregor's hand, and stood on guard between him and the girl before one of us had time to move. The old Turk closed his eyes again, and sighed resignedly.

"Our preux chevalier--preux but damned imprudent!" murmured Fred. "Let's hope there's a gipsy here with guts enough to fight for title to the girl. It looks to me as if Will has claimed her by patteran* law. The only man with right to say whether or not a woman shall be thrashed is her owner. Once that right is established--"

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* Patteran, a gipsy word: trail.

"Touch her and I'll break your neck!" warned Will, without undue emotion, but truthfully beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The gipsy stood still, simmering, and taking the measure of the capable American muscles interposed between him and his legal prey. Every gipsy eye in the room was on him, and it was perfectly obvious that whatever the eventual solution of the impasse, the one thing he could not do was retreat. We were fewer in number, but much better armed than the gipsy party, so that it was unlikely they would rally to their man's aid. Kagig was an unknown quantity, but except that his black eyes glittered rather more brightly than usual he made no sign; and we kept quiet because we did not want to start a free-for-all fight. Will was quite able to take care of any single opponent, and would have resented aid.

Suddenly, however, Gregor Jhaere reached inside his shirt. Maga screamed. Rustum Khan beside me swore a rumbling Rajput oath, and we all four leapt to our feet. Maga drew no weapon, although she certainly had both dagger and pistol handy. Instead, she glanced toward Kagig, who, strangely enough, was lolling on his blankets as if nothing in the world could interest him less. The glance took as swift effect as an electric spark that fires a mine. He stiffened instantly.

"Yok!" he shouted, and at once there ceased to be even a symptom

of impending trouble. Yok means merely no in Turkish, but it conveyed enough to Gregor to send him back to his place between his women and the Turk unashamedly obedient, leaving Maga standing beside Will. Maga did not glance again at Kagig, for I watched intently. There was simply no understanding the relationship, although Fred affected his usual all-comprehensive wisdom.

"Another claimant to the title!" he said. "A fight between Will and Kagig for that woman ought to be amusing, if only Will weren't a friend of mine. Watch America challenge him!"

But Will did nothing of the kind. He smiled at Maga, offered her a cigarette, which she refused, and returned to his place beyond Fred, leaving her standing there, as lovely in the glowing firelight as the spirit of bygone romance. At that Kagig shouted suddenly for fuel, and three of the Turk's seven hoydens ran to heap it on.

Instantly the leaping flames transformed the great, uncomfortable, draughty barn into a hall of gorgeous color and shadows without limit. There was no other illumination, except for the glow here and there of pipes and cigarettes, or matches flaring for a moment. Barring the tobacco, we lay like a baron's men-at-arms in Europe of the Middle Ages, with a captive woman to make sport with in the midst, only rather too self-reliant for the picture.

Feeling himself warm, and rested, and full enough of food, Fred flung a cigarette away and reached for his inseparable concertina. And with his eyes on the great smoked beams that now glowed gold and crimson in the firelight, he grew inspired and made his nearest to sweet rnusic. It was perfectly in place--simple as the savagery that framed us--Fred's way of saying grace for shelter, and adventure, and a meal. He passed from Annie Laurie to Suwannee River, and all but made Will cry.

During two-three-four tunes Maga stood motionless in the midst of us, hands on her hips, with the fire-light playing on her face, until at last Fred changed the nature of the music and seemed to be trying to recall fragments of the song she had sung that afternoon. Presently he came close to achievement, playing a few bars over and over, and leading on from those into improvization near enough to the real thing to be quite recognizable.

Music is the sure key to the gipsy heart, and Fred unlocked it. The men and women, and the little sleepy children on the long wooden platform opposite began to sway and swing in rhythm. Fred divined what was coming, and played louder, wilder, lawlessly. And Maga did an astonishing thing. She sat down on the floor and pulled her shoes and stockings off, as unselfconsciously as if she were alone.

Then Fred began the tune again from the beginning, and he had it at his finger-ends by then. He made the rafters ring. And without a word Maga kicked the shoes and stockings into a corner, flung her outer, woolen upper-garment after them, and began to dance.

There is a time when any of us does his best. Money--marriage--praise --applause (which is totally another thing than praise, and more like whisky in its workings)--ambition--prayer--there is a key to the heart of each of us that can unlock the flood-tides of emotion and carry us nolens volens to the peaks of possibility. Either Will,

or else Fred's music, or the setting, or all three unlocked her gifts that night. She danced like a moth in a flame--a wandering woman in the fire unquenchable that burns convention out of gipsy hearts, and makes the patteran--the trail--the only way worth while.

Opposite, the gipsies sprawled in silence on their platform, breathing a little deeper when deepest approval stirred them, a little more quickly when her Muse took hold of Maga and thrilled her to expression of the thoughts unknown to people of the dinning walls and streets.

We four leaned back against our wall in a sort of silent revelry, Fred alone moving, making his beloved instrument charm wisely, calling to her just enough to keep a link, as it were, through which her imagery might appeal to ours. Some sort of mental bridge between her tameless paganism and our twentieth-century twilight there had to be, or we never could have sensed her meaning. The concertina's wailings, mid-way between her intelligence and ours, served well enough.

My own chief feeling was of exultation, crowing over the hooded city-folk, who think that drama and the tricks of colored light and shade have led them to a glimpse of the hem of the garment of Unrest --a cheap mean feeling, of which I was afterward ashamed.

Maga was not crowing over anybody. Neither did she only dance of things her senses knew. The history of a people seized her for a reed, and wrote itself in figures past imagining between the crimson firelight; and the shadows of the cattle stalls.

Her dance that night could never have been done with leather between bare foot and earth. It told of measureless winds and waters--of the distances, the stars, the day, the night-rain sweeping down--dew dropping gently--the hundred kinds of birds-the thousand animals and creeping things--and of man, who is lord of all of them, and woman, who is lord of man--man setting naked foot on naked earth and glorying with the thrill of life, new, good, and wonderful.

One of the Turk's seven sons produced a saz toward the end--a little Turkish drum, and accompanied with swift, staccato stabs of sound that spurred her like the goads of overtaking time toward the peak of full expression--faster and faster--wilder and wilder--freer and freer of all limits, until suddenly she left the thing unfinished, and the drum-taps died away alone.

That was art--plain art. No human woman could have finished it. It was innate abhorrence of the anticlimax that sent her, having looked into the eyes of the unattainable, to lie sobbing for short breath in her corner in the dark, leaving us to imagine the ending if we could.

And instead of anticlimax second climax came. Almost before the echoes of the drum-taps died among the dancing shadows overhead a voice cried from the roof in Armenian, and Kagig rose to his feet.

"Let us climb to the roof and see, effendim," he said, pulling on his tattered goat-skin coat.

"See what, Ermenie?" demanded Rustum Khan. The Rajput's eyes were still ablaze with pagan flame, from watching Maga.

"To see whether thou hast manhood behind that swagger!" answered Kagig, and led the way. No man ever yet explained the racial aversions.

"Kopek!--dog, thou!" growled the Rajput, but Kagig took no notice and led on, followed by Monty and the rest of us. Maga and the gipsies came last, swarming behind us up the ladder through a hole among the beams, and clambering on to the roof over boxes piled in the draughty attic. Up under the stars a man was standing with an arm stretched out toward Tarsus.

"Look!" he said simply.

To the westward was a crimson glow that mushroomed angrily against the sky, throbbing and swelling with hot life like the vomit of a crater. We watched in silence for three minutes, until one of the gipsy women began to moan.

"What do you suppose it is?" I asked then.

"I know what it is," said Kagig simply.

"Tell then."

"'Effendi, that is the heart of Armenia burning. Those are the homes of my nation--of my kin!"

"And good God, where d'you suppose Miss Vanderman is?" Fred exclaimed.

Will was standing beside Maga, looking into her eyes as if he hoped to read in them the riddle of Armenia.

Chapter Six
"Passing the buck to Allah!"

LAUS LACHRIMABILIS

So now the awaited ripe reward -
Your cactus crown! Since I have urged
"Get ready for the untoward"
Ye bid me reap the wrath I dirged;
And I must show the darkened way,
Who beckoned vainly in the light!
I'll lead. But salt of Dead Sea spray
Were sweeter on my lips to-night!

Oh, days of aching sinews, when I trod the choking dust
With feet afire that could not tire, atremble with the trust
More mighty in my inner man than fear of men without,
The word I heard on Kara Dagh and did not dare to doubt -
Timely warning, clear to me as starlight after rain
When, sleepless on eternal hills, I saw the purpose plain
And left, swift-foot at dawn, obedient, to break
The news ye said was no avail--advice ye would not take!

Oh,--nights of tireless talking by the hearth of hidden fires--

On roofs, behind the trade-bales--among oxen in the byres--
Out in rain between the godowns, where the splashing puddles warn
Of tiptoeing informers; when I faced the freezing dawn
With set price on my head, but still the set resolve untamed,
Not melted by the mockery, by no suspicion shamed,
To hide by day in holes, abiding dark and wind and rain
That loosed me straining to the task ye ridiculed again!

Oh, weeks of empty waiting, while the enemy designed
In detail how to loot the stuff ye would not leave behind!
Worse weeks of empty agony when, helpless and alone,
I watched in hiding for the crops from that seed I had sown;

For dust-clouds that should prove at last Armenia awake--
A nation up and coming! I had labored for your sake,
I had hungered, I had suffered. Ye had well rewarded then
If ye had come, and hanged me just to prove that ye were men!

But all the pride was promises, the criticism jeers;
Ye had no heart for sacrifice, and I no time for tears.
I offered--nay, I gave! I squandered body and breath and soul,
I bared the need, I showed the way, I preached a goodly goal,
I urged you choose a leader, since your faith in me was dim,
I swore to serve the chief ye chose, and teach my lore to him,
So he should reap where I had sown. And yet ye bade me wait--
And waited till, awake at last, ye bid me lead too late!

And so, in place of ripe reward,
Your cactus crown! And I, who urged
"Get ready for the untoward"
Must drink the dregs of wrath I dirged!
Ye bid me set time's finger back!
And stage anew the opened fight!
I'll lead. But slime of Dead Sea wrack
Were sweeter on my lips this night!

The first thought that occurred to each of us four was that Kagig had probably lied, or that he had merely voiced his private opinion, based on expectation. The glare in the distance seemed too big and solid to be caused by burning houses, even supposing a whole village were in flames. Yet there was not any other explanation we could offer. A distant cloud of black smoke with bulging red under-belly rolled away through the darkness like a tremendous mountain range.

We stood in silence trying to judge how far away the thing might be, Kagig standing alone with his foot on the parapet, his goat-skin coat hanging like a hussar's dolman, and Monty pacing up and down along the roof behind us all. The gipsies seemed able to converse by nods and nudges, with now and then one word whispered. After a little while Maga whispered in Will's ear, and he went below with her. All the gipsies promptly followed. Otherwise in the darkness we might not have noticed where Will went.

"That proves she is no gipsy!" vowed Rustum Khan, standing between Fred and me. "They, would have trusted one of their own kind."

"They call her Maga Jhaere," said I. "The attaman's name is Jhaere. Don't you suppose he's her father?"

"If he were her father he would have no fear," the Rajput answered. "All gipsies are alike. Their women will dance the nautch, and promise unchastity as if that were a little matter. But when it comes to performance of promises the gitana* is true to the Rom.** It is because she is no gipsy that they follow her now to watch. And it is because men say that Americans are Mormons and polygamous, and very swift in the use of revolvers, that all follow instead of one or two!"

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* Gitana, gipsy young woman.
** Rom--Gipsy husband, or family man.

"Go down then, and make sure they don't murder him!" commanded Monty, and Rustum Khan turned to obey with rather ill grace. He contrived to convey by his manner that he would do anything for Monty, even to the extent of saving the life of a man he disliked. At the moment when he turned there came the sound of a troop of horses galloping toward us.

"I will first see who comes," he said.

"The blood of Yerkes sahib on your head, Rustum Khan!" Monty answered. At that he went below.

But neither were we destined to remain up there very long. We heard colossal thumping in the kahveh beneath us and presently the Rajput's head reappeared through the opening in the roof.

"The fools are barricading the door," he shouted. "They make sure that an enemy outside could burn us inside without hindrance!"

At that Kagig came along the roof to our corner and looked into Monty's eyes. Fred and I stood between the two of them and the parapet, because for the first few seconds we were not sure the Armenian did not mean murder. His eyes glittered, and his teeth gleamed. It was not possible to guess whether or not the hand under his goat-skin coat clutched a weapon.

"It is now that you Eenglis sportmen shall endure a test!" he remarked.

Exactly as in the Yeni Khan in Tarsus when we first met him there was a moment now of intense repulsion, entirely unaccountable, succeeded instantly by a wave of sympathy. I laughed aloud, remembering how strange dogs meeting in the street to smell each other are swept by unexplainable antipathies and equally swift comradeship. He thought I laughed at him.

"Neye geldin?" he growled in Turkish. "Wherefore didst thou come? To cackle like a barren hen that sees another laying? Nichevo," he added, turning his back on me. And that was insolence in Russian, meaning that nobody and nothing could possibly be of less importance. He seemed to keep a separate language for each set of thoughts. "Let us go below. Let us stop these fools from making too much trouble," he added in English. "One man ought to stay on the roof. One ought to be sufficient."

Since he had said I did not matter, I remained, and it was therefore I who shouted down a challenge presently in round English at a party who clattered to the door on blown horses, and thundered on it as if they had been shatirs* hurrying to herald the arrival of the sultan himself. There was nothing furtive about their address to the decrepit door, nor anything meek. Accordingly I couched the challenge in terms of unmistakable affront, repeating it at intervals until the leader of the new arrivals chose to identify himself.

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* Shatir, the man who runs before a personage's horse.

"I am Hans von Quedlinburg!" he shouted. But I did not remember the name.

"Only a thief would come riding in such a hurry through the night!" said I. "Who is with you?"

Another voice shouted very fast and furiously in Turkish, but I could not make head or tail of the words. Then the German resumed the song and dance.

"Are you the party who talked with me at my construction camp?"

"We talk most of the time. We eat food. We whistle. We drink. We laugh!" said I.

"Because I think you are the people I am seeking. These are Turkish officials with me. I have authority to modify their orders, only let me in!"

"How many of you?" I asked. I was leaning over at risk of my life, for any fool could have seen my head to shoot at it against the luminous dark sky; but I could not see to count them.

"Never mind how many! Let us in! I am Hans von Quedlinburg. My name is sufficient."

So I lied, emphatically and in thoughtful detail.

"You are covered," I said, "by five rifles from this roof. If you don't believe it, try something. You'd better wait there while I wake my chief."

"Only be quick!" said the German, and I saw him light a cigarette, whether to convince me he felt confident or because he did feel so I could not say. I went below, and found Monty and Kagig standing together close to the outer door. They had not heard the whole of the conversation because of the noise the owner's sons had made removing, at their orders, the obstructions they had piled against the door in their first panic. Every one else had returned to the sleeping platforms, except the Turkish owner, who looked awake at last, and was hovering here and there in ecstasies of nervousness.

I repeated what the German had said, rather expecting that Kagig at any rate would counsel defiance. It was he, however, who beckoned the Turk and bade him open the door.

"But, effendi--"

"Chabuk! Quickly, I said!"

"Che arz kunam?" the Turk answered meekly, meaning "What petition shall I make?" the inference being that all was in the hands of Allah.

"Of ten men nine are women!" sneered Kagig irritably, and led the way to our place beside the fire. The Turk fumbled interminably with the door fastenings, and we were comfortably settled in our places before the new arrivals rode in, bringing a blast of cold air with them that set the smoke billowing about the room and made every man draw up his blankets.

"Shut that door behind them!" thundered Kagig. "If they come too slowly, shut the laggards out!"

"Who is this who is arrogant?" the German demanded in English.

He was a fine-looking man, dressed in civilian clothes cut as nearly to the military pattern as the tailor could contrive without transgressing law, but with a too small fez perched on his capable-looking head in the manner of the Prussian who would like to make the Turks believe he loves them. Rustum Khan cursed with keen attention to detail at sight of him. The man who had entered with him became busy in the shadows trying to find room to stall their horses, but Von Quedlinburg gave his reins to an attendant, and stood alone, akimbo, with the firelight displaying him in half relief.

"I am a man who knows, among other things, the name of him who bribed the kaimakam.* on Chakallu," Kagig answered slowly, also in English.

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* Kaimakam, headman (Turkish).

The German laughed.

"Then you know without further argument that I am not to be denied!" he answered. "What I say to-night the government officials will confirm to-morrow! Are you Kagig, whom they call the Eye of Zeitoon?"

"I am no jackal," said Kagig dryly, punning on the name Chakallu, which means "place of jackals."

The German coughed, set one foot forward, and folded both arms on his breast. He looked capable and bold in that attitude, and knew it. I knew at last who he was, and wondered why I had not recognized him sooner--the contractor who had questioned us near the railway encampment along the way, and had offered us directions; but his manner was as different now from then as a bully's in and out of school. Then he had sought to placate, and had almost cringed to Monty. Everything about him now proclaimed the ungloved upper hand.

His party, finding no room to stall their horses, had begun to turn ours loose, and there was uproar along the gipsy side of the room--no action yet, but a threatening snarl that promised plenty of it. Will was half on his feet to interfere, but Monty signed to him to keep cool; and it was Monty's aggravatingly well-modulated voice

that laid the law down.

"Will you be good enough," be asked blandly, "to call off your men from meddling with our mounts?" He could not be properly said to drawl, because there was a positive subacid crispness in his voice that not even a Prussian or a Turk on a dark night could have over-looked.

The German laughed again.

"Perhaps you did not hear my name," he said. "I am Hans von Quedlinburg. As over-contractor on the Baghdad railway I have the privilege of prior accommodation at all road-houses in this province--for myself and my attendants. And in addition there are with me certain Turkish officers, whose rights I dare say you will not dispute."

Monty did not laugh, although Fred was chuckling in confident enjoyment of the situation.

"You need a lesson in manners," said Monty.

"What do you mean?" demanded Hans von Quedlinburg.

Monty rose to his feet without a single unnecessary motion.

"I mean that unless you call off your men--at once this minute from interfering with our animals I shall give you the lesson you need."

The German saluted in mock respect. Then he patted his breast-pocket so as to show the outline of a large repeating pistol. Monty took two steps forward. The German drew the pistol with an oath. Will Yerkes, beyond Fred and slightly behind the German, coughed meaningly. The German turned his head, to find that he was covered by a pistol as large as his own.

"Oh, very well," he said, "what is the use of making a scene?" He thrust his pistol back under cover and shouted an order in Turkish. Monty returned to his place and sat down. The newcomers at the rear of the room tied their horses together by the bridles, and Hans von Quedlinburg resumed his well-fed smile.

"Let it be clearly understood," he said, "that you have interfered with official privilege."

"As long as you do your best in the way of manners you may go on with your errand," said Monty.

Suddenly Fred laughed aloud.

"The martyred biped!" he yelped.

He was right. Peter Measel, missionary on his own account, and sometime keeper of most libelous accounts, stepped out from the shadows and essayed to warm himself, walking past the German with a sort of mincing gait not calculated to assert his manliness. Hans von Quedlinburg stretched out a strong arm and hurled him back again into the darkness at the rear.

"Tchuk-tchuk! Zuruck!" he muttered.

It clearly disconcerted him to have his inferiors in rank assert themselves. That accounted, no doubt, for the meek self-effacement of the Turks who had come with him. Peter Measel did not appear to mind being rebuked. He crossed to the other side of the room, and proceeded to look the gipsies over with the air of a learned ethnologist.

"You speak of my errand," said Hans von Quedlinburg, "as if you imagine I come seeking favors. I am here incidentally to rescue you and your party from the clutches of an outlaw. The Turkish officials who are with me have authority to arrest everybody in this place, yourselves included. Fortunately I am able to modify that. Kagig --that rascal beside you--is a well-known agitator. He is a criminal. His arrest and trial have been ordered on the charge, among other things, of stirring up discontent among the Armenian laborers on the railway work. These gipsies are all his agents. They are all under arrest. You yourselves will be escorted to safety at the coast."

"Why should we need an escort to safety?" Monty demanded.

"Were you on the roof?" the German answered. "And is it possible you did not see the conflagration? An Armenian insurrection has been nipped in the bud. Several villages are burning. The other inhabitants are very much incensed, and all foreigners are in danger --yourselves especially, since you have seen fit to travel in company with such a person as Kagig."

"What has Peter Measel got to do with it?" demanded Fred. "Has he been writing down all our sins in a new book?"

"He will identify you. He will also identify Kagig's agents. He brings a personal charge against a man named Rustum Khan, who must return to Tarsus to answer it. The charge is robbery with violence."

Rustum Khan snorted.

"The violence was only too gentle, and too soon ended. As for robbery, if I have robbed him of a little self-conceit, I will answer to God for that when my hour shall come! How is it your affair to drag that whimpering fool through Asia at your tail--you a German and he English?"

The German had a hot answer ready for that, but the Turks had discovered Maga Jhaere in hiding in the shadows between two old women. She screamed as they tried to drag her forth, and the scream brought us all to our feet. But this time it was Kagig who was swiftest, and we got our first proof of the man's enormous strength. Fred, Will and I charged together round behind the newcomers' horses, in order to make sure of cutting off retreat as well as rescuing Maga. Monty leveled a pistol at the German's head. But Kagig did not waste a fraction of a second on side-issues of any sort. He flew at the German's throat like a wolf at a bullock. The German fired at him, missed, and before he could fire again he was caught in a grip he could not break, and fighting for breath, balance and something more.

One of the gipsies, who had not seen the need of hurrying to Maga's aid, now proved the soundness of his judgment by divining Kagig's purpose and tossing several new faggots on the already prodigious fire.

"Good!" barked Kagig, bending the struggling German this and that way as it pleased him.

Seeing our man with the upper hand, Monty and Rustum Khan now hurried into the melee, where two Turkish officers and eight zaptieh were fighting to keep Maga from four gipsies and us three. Nobody had seen fit to shoot, but there was a glimmering of cold steel among the shadows like lightning before a thunder-storm. Monty used his fists. Rustum Khan used the flat of a Rajput saber. Maga, leaving most of her clothing in the Turk's hands, struggled free and in another second the Turks were on the defensive. Rustum Khan knocked the revolver out of an officer's hand, and the rest of them were struggling to use their rifles, when the German shrieked. All fights are full of pauses, when either side could snatch sudden victory if alert enough. We stopped, and turned to look, as if our own lives were not in danger.

Kagig had the German off his feet, face toward the flames, kicking and screaming like a madman. He whirled him twice--shouted a sort of war-cry--hove him high with every sinew in his tough frame cracking --and hurled him head-foremost into the fire.

The Turks took the cue to haul off and stand staring at us. We all withdrew to easier pistol range, for contrary to general belief, close quarters almost never help straight aim, especially when in a hurry. There is a shooting as well as a camera focus, and each man has his own.

Pretty badly burnt about the face and fingers, Hans von Quedlinburg crawled backward out of the fire, smelling like the devil, of singed wool. Kagig closed on him, and hurled him back again. This time the German plunged through the fire, and out beyond it to a space between the flames and the back wall, where it must have been hot enough to make the fat run. He stood with a forearm covering his face, while Kagig thundered at him voluminous abuse in Turkish. I wondered, first, why the German did not shoot, and then why his loaded pistol did not blow up in the heat, until I saw that in further proof of strength Kagig had looted his pistol and was standing with one foot on it.

Finally, when the beautiful smooth cloth of which his coat was made bad taken on a stinking overlay of crackled black, the German chose to obey Kagig and came leaping back through the fire, and lay groaning on the floor, where the kahveh's owner's seven sons poured water on him by Kagig's order. His burns were evidently painful, but not nearly so serious as I expected. I got out the first-aid stuff from our medicine bag, and Will, who was our self-constituted doctor on the strength of having once attended an autopsy, disguised as a reporter, in the morgue at the back of Bellevue Hospital in New York City, beckoned a gipsy woman, and proceeded to instruct her what to do.

However, Hans von Quedlinburg was no nervous weakling. He snatched the pot of grease from the woman's hands, daubed gobs of the stuff liberally on his face and hands, and sat up--resembling an unknown kind of angry animal with his eyebrows and mustache burned off except for a stray, outstanding whisker here and there. In a voice like a bull's at the smell of blood he reversed what he had shouted through the flames, and commanded his Turks to arrest the lot of us.

Kagig laughed at that, and spoke to him in English, I suppose in order that we, too, might understand.

"Those Turks are my prisoners!" he said. "And so are you!"

It was true about the Turks. They had not given up their weapons yet, but the gipsies were between them and the door, and even the gipsy women were armed to the teeth and willing to do battle. I caught sight of Maga's mother-o'-pearl plated revolver, and the Turkish officer at whom she had it leveled did not look inclined to dispute the upper hand.

"You Germans are all alike," sneered Kagig. "A dog could read your reasoning. You thought these foreigners would turn against me. It never entered your thick skull that they might rather defy you than see me made prisoner. Fool! Did men name me Eye of Zeitoon for nothing? Have I watched for nothing! Did I know the very wording of the letters in your private box for nothing? Are you the only spy in Asia? Am I Kagig, and do I not know who advised dismissing all Armenians from the railway work? Am I Kagig, and do I not know why? Kopek! (Dog!) You would beggar my people, in order to curry favor with the Turk. You seek to take me because I know your ways! Two months ago you knew to within a day or two when these new massacres would begin. One month, three weeks, and four days ago you ordered men to dig my grave, and swore to bury me alive in it! What shall hinder me from burning you alive this minute?"

There were five good hindrances, for I think that Rustum Khan would have objected to that cruelty, even had he been alone. Kagig caught Monty's eye and laughed.

"Korkakma!" he jeered. "Do not be afraid!" Then be glanced swiftly at the Turks, and at Peter Measel, who was staring all-eyes at Maga on the far side of the room.

"Order your pigs of zaptieh to throw their arms down!"

Instead, the German shouted to them to fire volleys at us. He was not without a certain stormy courage, whatever Kagig's knowledge of his treachery.

But the Turks did not fire, and it was perfectly plain that we four were the reason of it. They had been promised an easy prey--captured women--loot--and the remunerative task of escorting us to safety. Doubtless Von Quedlinburg had promised them our consul would be lavish with rewards on our account. Therefore there was added reason why they should not fire on Englishmen and an American. We had not made a move since the first scuffle when we rescued Maga, but the Turkish lieutenant had taken our measure. Perhaps he had whispered to his men. Perhaps they reached their own conclusions. The effect was the same in either case.

"Order them to throw their weapons down!" commanded Kagig, kicking the German in the ribs. And his coat had been so scorched in the fierce heat that the whole of one side of it broke off, like a cinder slab.

This time Hans von Quedlinburg obeyed. For one thing the pain of

his burns was beginning to tell on him, but he could see, too, that he had lost prestige with his party.

"Throw down your weapons!" he ordered savagely.

But he had lost more prestige than he knew, or else he had less in the beginning than be counted on. The Turkish lieutenant--a man of about forty with the evidence of all the sensual appetites very plainly marked on his face--laughed and brought his men to attention. Then he made a kind of half-military motion with his hand toward each of us in turn, ignoring Kagig but intending to convey that we at any rate need not feel anxious.

It was Maga Jhaere who solved the riddle of that impasse. She was hardly in condition to appear before a crowd of men, for the Turks bad torn off most of her clothes, and she had not troubled to find others. She was unashamed, and as beautiful and angry as a panther. With panther suddenness she snatched the lieutenant's sword and pistol.

It suited neither his national pride nor religious prejudices to be disarmed by a gipsy woman; but the Turk is an amazing fatalist, and unexpectedness is his peculiar quality.

"Che arz kunam?" he muttered--the perennial comment of the Turk who has failed, that always made Kagig bare his teeth in a spasm of contempt. "Passing the buck to Allah," as Will construed it.

But disarming the mere conscript soldiers was not quite so simple, although Maga managed it. They had less regard for their own skins than handicapped their officer, and yet more than his contempt for the female of any human breed.

They refused point-blank to throw their rifles down, bringing a laugh and a shout of encouragement from the German. But she screwed the muzzle of her pistol into the lieutenant's ear, and bade him enforce her orders, the gipsy women applauding with a chorus of "Ohs" and "Ahs." The lieutenant succumbed to force majeure, and his men, who were inclined to die rather than take orders from a woman, obeyed him readily enough. They laid their rifles down carefully, without a suggestion of resentment.

"So. The women of Zeitoon are good!" said Kagig with a curt nod of approval, and Maga tossed him a smile fit for the instigation of another siege of Troy.

The gipsy women picked the rifles up, and Maga went to hunt through the mule-packs for clothing. Then Kagig turned on us, motioning with his toe toward Hans von Quedlinburg, who continued to treat himself extravagantly from our jar of ointment.

"You do not know yet the depths of this man's infamy!" he said. "The world professes to loathe Turks who rob, sell and murder women and children. What of a German--a foreigner in Turkey, who instigates the murder--and the robbery--and the burning--and the butchery--for his own ends, or for his bloody country's ends? This man is an instigator!"

"You lie!" snarled Von Quedlinburg. "You dog of an Armenian, you lie!" Kagig ignored him.

"This is the German sportman who tried once to go to Zeitoon to shoot bears, as he said. But I knew he was a spy. I am not the Eye of Zeitoon merely because that title rolls nicely on the tongue. He has--perhaps he has it in his pocket now--a concession from the politicians in Stamboul, granting him the right to exploit Zeitoon --a place he has never seen! He has encouraged this present butchery in order that Turkish soldiers may have excuse to penetrate to Zeitoon that he covets. He wants you Eenglis sportmen out of the way. You were to be sent safely back to Tarsus, lest you should be witnesses of what must happen. Perhaps you do not believe all this?"'

He stooped down and searched the German's coat pockets with impatient fingers that tugged and jerked, tossing out handkerchief and wallet, cigars, matches that by a miracle had not caught in the heat, and considerable money to the floor. He took no notice of the money, but one of the old gipsy women crept out and annexed it, and Kagig made no comment.

"He has not his concession with him. I can prove nothing to-night. I said you shall stand a test. You must choose. This German and those Turks are my prisoners. You have nothing to do with it. You may go back to Tarsus if you wish, and tell the Turks that Kagig defies them! You shall have an escort as far as the nearest garrison. You shall have fifty men to take you back by dawn to-morrow."

At that Rustum Khan turned several shades darker and glared truculently.

"Who art thou, Armenian, to frame a test for thy betters?" he demanded, throwing a very military chest. And Will promptly bridled at the Rajput's attitude.

"You've no call to make yourself out any better than he is!" he interrupted. And at that Maga Jhaere threw a kiss from across the room, but one could not tell whether her own dislike of Rustum Khan, or her approval of Will's support of Kagig was the motive.

Fred began humming in the ridiculous way he has when be thinks that an air of unconcern may ease a situation, and of course Rustum Khan mistook the nasal noises for intentional insult. He turned on the unsuspecting Fred like a tiger. Monty's quick wit and level voice alone saved open rupture.

"What I imagine Rustum Khan means is this, Kagig: My friends and I have engaged you as guide for a hunting trip. We propose to hold you strictly to the contract."

Kagig looked keenly at each of us and nodded.

"In my day I have seen the hunters hunted!" he said darkly.

"In my day I have seen an upstart punished!" growled the Rajput, and sat down, back to the wall.

"Castles, and bears!" smiled Monty.

Kagig grinned.

"What if I propose a different quarry?"

"Propose and see!" Monty was on the alert, and therefore to all outward appearance in a sort of well-fed, catlike, dallying mood.

"This dog," said Kagig, and he kicked the German's ribs again, "has said nothing of any other person he must rescue. Bear me witness."

We murmured admission of the truth of that.

"Yet I am the Eye of Zeitoon, and I know. His purpose was to leave his prisoners here and hurry on to overtake a lady--a certain Miss Vanderman, who he thinks is on her way to the mission at Marash. He desired the credit for her rescue in order better to blind the world to his misdeeds! Nevertheless, now that she can be no more use to him, observe his chivalry! He does not even mention her!"

The German shrugged his shoulders, implying that to argue with such a savage was waste of breath.

"What do you know of Miss Vanderman's where-abouts?" demanded Will, and Maga Jhaere, at the sound of another woman's name, sat bolt upright between two other women whose bright eyes peeped out from under blankets.

"I had word of her an hour before you came, effendi," Kagig answered. "She and her party took fright this afternoon, and have taken to the hills. They are farther ahead than this pig dreamed"--once more he kicked Von Quedlinburg--"more than a day's march ahead from here."

"Then we'll hunt for her first," said Monty, and the rest of us nodded assent.

Kagig grinned.

"You shall find her. You shall see a castle. In the castle where you find her you shall choose again! It is agreed, effendi!"

Then he ordered his prisoners made fast, and the gipsies and our Zeitoonli servants attended to it, he himself, however, binding the German's hands and feet. Will went and put bandages on the man's burns, I standing by, to help. But we got no thanks.

"Ihr seit verruckt!" he sneered. "You take the side of bandits. Passt mal auf--there will be punishment!"

The Zeitoonli were going to tie Peter Measel, but he set up such a howl that Kagig at last took notice of him and ordered him flung, unbound, into the great wooden bin in which the horse-feed was kept for sale to wayfarers. There he lay, and slept and snored for the rest of that session, with his mouth close to a mouse-hole.

Then Kagig ordered our Zeitoonli to the roof on guard, and bade us sleep with a patriarchal air of authority.

"There is no knowing when I shall decide to march," be explained.

Given enough fatigue, and warmth, and quietness, a man will sleep under almost any set of circumstances. The great fire blazed, and flickered, and finally died down to a bed of crimson. The prisoners were most likely all awake, for their bonds were tight, but only

Kagig remained seated in the midst of his mess of blankets by the hearth; and I think he slept in that position, and that I was the last to doze off. But none of us slept very long.

There came a shout from the roof again, and once again a thundering on the door. The move--unanimous--that the gipsies' right hands made to clutch their weapons resembled the jump from surprise into stillness when the jungle is caught unawares. A second later when somebody tossed dry fagots on the fire the blaze betrayed no other expression on their faces than the stock-in-trade stolidity. Even the women looked as if thundering on a kahveh door at night was nothing to be noticed. Kagig did not move, but I could see that he was breathing faster than the normal, and he, too, clutched a weapon. Von Quedlinburg began shouting for help alternately in Turkish and in German, and the owner of the place produced a gun--a long, bright, steel-barreled affair of the vintage of the Comitajes and the First Greek War. He and his sons ran to the door to barricade it.

"Yavash!" ordered Kagig. The word means slowly, as applied to all the human processes. In that instance it meant "Go slow with your noise!" and mine host so understood it.

But the thundering on the great door never ceased, and the kahveh was too full of the noise of that for us to hear what the Zeitoonli called down from the roof. Kagig arose and stood in the middle of the room with the firelight behind him. He listened for two minutes, standing stock-still, a thin smile flickering across his lean face, and the sharp satyr-like tops of his ears seeming to prick outward in the act of intelligence.

"Open and let them in!" he commanded at last.

"I will not!" roared the owner of the place. "I shall be tortured, and all my house!"

"Open, I said!"

"But they will make us prisoner!"

Kagig made a sign with his right hand. Gregor Jhaere rose and whispered. One by one the remaining gipsies followed him into the shadows, and there came a noise of scuffling, and of oaths and blows. As Gregor Jhaere had mentioned earlier, they did obey Kagig now and then. The Turks came back looking crestfallen, and the fastenings creaked. Then the door burst open with a blast of icy air, and there poured in nineteen armed men who blinked at the firelight helplessly.

"Kagig--where is Kagig?"

"You cursed fools, where should I be!"

"Kagig? Is it truly you?" Their eyes were still blinded by the blaze.

"Shut that door again, and bolt it! Aye--Kagig, Kagig, is it you!"

"It is Kagig! Behold him! Look!"

They clustered close to see, smelling infernally of sweaty garments and of the mud from unholy lurking places.

"Kagig it is! And has all happened as I, Kagig, warned you it would happen?"

"Aye. All. More. Worse!"

"Had you acted beforehand in the manner I advised?"

"No, Kagig. We put it off. We talked, and disagreed. And then it was too late to agree. They were cutting throats while we still argued. When we ran into the street to take the offensive they were already shooting from the roofs!"

"Hah!"

That bitter dry expletive, coughed out between set teeth, could not be named a laugh.

"Kagig, listen!"

"Aye! Now it is 'Kagig, listen!' But a little while ago it was I who was sayin 'Listen!' I walked myself lame, and talked myself hoarse. Who listened to me? Why should I listen to you?"

"But, Kagig, my wife is gone!"

"Hah!"

"My daughter, Kagig!"

"Hah!'

A third man thrust himself forward and thumped the butt of a long rifle on the floor.

--

"They took my wife and two daughters before my very eyes, Kagig! It is no time for talking now--you have talked already too much, Kagi,--now prove yourself a man of deeds! With these eyes I saw them dragged by the hair down street! Oh, would God that I had put my eyes out first, then had I never seen it! Kagig--"

"Aye--Kagig!"

"You shall not sneer at me! I shot one Turk, and ten more pounced on them. They screamed to me. They called to me to rescue. What could I do? I shot, and I shot until the rifle barrel burned my fingers. Then those cursed Turks set the house on fire behind me, and my companions dragged me away to come and find others to unite with us and make a stand! We found no others! Kagig--I tell you --those bloody Turks are auctioning our wives and daughters in the village church! It is time to act!"

"Hah! Who was it urged you in season and out of season--day and night--month in, month out--to come to Zeitoon and help me fortify the place? Who urged you to send your women there long ago?"

"But Kagig, you do not appreciate. To you it is nothing not to have

women near you. We have mothers, sisters, wives--"

"Nothing to me, is it? These eyes have seen my mother, ravished by a Kurd in a Turkish uniform!"

"Well, that only proves you are one with us after all! That only proves--"

"One with you! Why did you not act, then, when I risked life and limb a thousand times to urge you?"

"We could not, Kagig. That would have precipitated--"

He interrupted the man with an oath like the aggregate of bitterness.

"Precipitated? Did waiting for the massacre like chickens waiting for the ax delay the massacres a day? But now it is 'Come and lead us, Kagig!' How many of you are there left to lead?"

"Who knows? We are nineteen--"

"Hah! And I am to run with nineteen men to the rape of Tarsus and Adana?"

"Our people will rally to you, Kagig!"

"They shall."

"Come, then!"

"They shall rally at Zeitoon!"

"Oh, Kagig--how shall they reich Zeitoon? The cursed Turks have ordered out the soldiers and are sending regiments--"

"I warned they would!"

"The cavalry are hunting down fugitives along the roads!"

"As I foretold a hundred times!"

"They were sent to protect Armenians--"

"That is always the excuse!"

"And they kill--kill--kill! A dozen of them hunted me for two miles, until I hid in a watercourse! Look at us! Look at our clothes! We are wet to the skin--tired--starving! Kagig, be a man!"

He went back to his mess of blankets and sat down on it, too bitter at heart for words. They reproached him in chorus, coming nearer to the fire to let the fierce heat draw the stink out of their clothes.

"Aye, Kagig, you must not forget your race. You must not forget the past, Kagig. Once Armenia was great, remember that! You must not only talk to us, you must act at last! We summon you to be our leader, Kagig, son of Kagig of Zeitoon!"

He stared back at them with burning eyes -raised both bands to beat

his temples--and then suddenly turned the palms of his hands toward the roof in a gesture of utter misery.

"Oh, my people!"

That glimpse he betrayed of his agony was but a moment long. The fingers closed suddenly, and the palms that had risen in helplessness descended to his knees clenched fists, heavy with the weight of purpose.

"What have you done with the ammunition?" he demanded.

"We had it in the manure under John Zimisces' cattle."

"I know that. Where is it now?"

"The Turks discovered it at dawn to-day. Some one had told. They burned Zimisces and his wife and sons alive in the straw!"

"You fools! They knew where the stuff was a week ago! A month ago I warned you to send it to Zeitoon, but somebody told you I was treacherous, and you fools listened! How much ammunition have you left now?"

"Just what we have with us. I have a dozen rounds."

"I ten."

"I nine."

"I thirty-three."

Each man had a handful, or two handfuls at the most. Kagig observed their contributions to the common fund with scoRN too deep for expression. It was as if the very springs of speech were frozen.

"We summon you to lead us, Kagig!"

Words came to him again.

"You summon me to lead? I will! From now I lead! By the God who gave my fathers bread among the mountains, I will, moreover, be obeyed! Either my word is law--"

"Kagig, it is law!"

"Or back you shall go to where the Turks are wearing white, and the gutters bubble red, and the beams are black against the sky! You shall obey me in future on the instant that I speak, or run back to the Turks for mercy from my hand! I have listened to enough talk!"

"Spoken like a man!" said Monty, and stood up.

We all stood up; even Rustum Khan, who did not pretend to like him, saluted the old warrior who could announce his purpose so magnificently. Maga Jhaere stood up, and sought Will's eyes from across the room. Fred, almost too sleepy to know what he was doing (for the tail end of the fever is a yearning for early bed) undid the catch of his beloved instrument, and made the rafters ring. In a minute we four were singing "For he's a jolly good fellow," and Kagig stood up,

looking like Robinson Crusoe in his goat-skins, to acknowledge the compliment.

The noise awoke Peter Measel, and when we had finished making fools of ourselves I walked over to discover what he was saying. He was praying aloud--nasally--through the mouse-hole--for us, not himself. I looked at my watch. It was two hours past midnight.

"You fellows," I said, "it's Sunday. The martyred biped has just waked up and remembered it. He is praying that we may be forgiven for polluting the Sabbath stillness with immoral tunes!"

My words had a strange effect. Monty, and Fred, and Will laughed. Rustum Khan laughed savagely. But all the Armenians, including Kagig, knelt promptly on the floor and prayed, the gipsies looking on in mild amusement tempered by discretion. And out of the mouse-hole in the horse-feed bin came Peter Measel's sonorous, overriding periods:

"And, O Lord, let them not be smitten by Thine anger. Let them not be cut down in Thy wrath! Let them not be cast into hell! Give them another chance, O Lord! Let the Ten Commandments be written on their hearts in letters of fire, but let not their souls be damned for ever more! If they did not know it was the Sabbath Day, O Lord, forgive them! Amen!"

It was a most amazing night.

Chapter Seven
"We hold you to your word!"

LIBERA NOS, DOMINE!

A priest, a statesman, and a soldier stood
Hand in each other's hand, by ruin faced,
Consulting to find succor if they could,
Till soon the lesser ones themselves abased,
Their sword and parchment on an altar laid
In deep humility the while the priest he prayed.

He prayed first for his church, that it might be
Upholden and acknowledged and revered,
And in its opal twilight men might see
Salvation if in truth enough they feared,
And if enough acknowledgment they gave
To ritual, and rosary, and creed that save.

Then prayed he for the state, that it should wean
Well-tutored counselors to do their part
Full profit and prosperity to glean
With dignity, although with contrite heart
And wisdom that Tradition wisdom ranks,
That church and state might stand and men give thanks.

Last prayed he for the soldier--longest, too,
That all the honor and the aims of war

Subserving him might carry wrath and rue
Unto repentance, and in trembling awe
The enemy at length should fault confess
And yield, to crave a peace of righteousness.

Behind them stood a patriot unbowed,
Not arrogant in gilt or goodly cloth,
Nor mincing meek, and yet not poorly proud;
With eyes afire that glittered not with wrath;
Aware of evil hours, and undismayed
Because he loved too well. He also prayed.

"Oh, Thou, who gavest, may I also give,
Withholding not--accepting no reward;
For I die gladly if the least ones live.
Twice righteous and two-edged be the sword,
'Neath freedom's banner drawn to prove Thy word
And smite me if I'm false!" His prayer was heard.

The remainder of that night was nightmare pure and simple--mules and horses squealing in instinctive fear of action they felt impending --gipsies and Armenians dragging packs out on the floor, to repack everything a dozen times for some utterly godless reason--Rustum Khan seizing each fugitive Armenian in turn to question him, alternating fierce threats with persuasion--Kagig striding up and down with hands behind him and his scraggly black beard pressed down on his chest --and the great fire blazing with reports like cannon shots as one of the Turk's sons piled on fuel and the resinous wet wood caught.

The Turk and his other six sons ran away and hid themselves as a precaution against our taking vengeance on them. With situations reversed a Turk would have taken unbelievable toll in blood and agony from any Armenian he could find, and they reasoned we were probably no better than themselves. The marvel was that they left one son to wait on us, and take the money for room and horse-feed.

"Remember!" warned Monty, as we four sidled close together with our backs against the wall. "Until we're in actual personal danger this trouble is the affair of Kagig and his men!"

"I get you. If we horn in before we have to we'll do more harm than good. Give the Turks an excuse to call us outlaws and shoot instead of rescue us. Sure. But what about Miss Vanderman?" said Will.

"I foresee she's doomed!" Fred stared straight in front of him. "It looks as if we'll lose our little Willy too! One woman at a time, especially when the lady totes a mother-o'-pearl revolver and about a dozen knives! If you come out of this alive, Bill, you'll be wiser!"

"Fond of bull, aren't you! You'd jest on an ant-heap."

"There's nothing to discuss," said I. "If there's a lady in danger somewhere ahead, we all know what we're going to do about it."

Monty nodded.

"If we can find her and get word to the consul, that 'ud be one more

lever for him to pull on."

"D'you suppose they'd dare molest an Englishwoman?" I asked, with the sudden goose-flesh rising all over me.

"She's American," said Will between purposely set lips. But I did not see that that qualified the unpleasantness by much.

One of the Armenians, whom Rustum Khan had finished questioning, went and stood in Kagig's way, intercepting his everlasting sentry-go.

"What is it, Eflaton?"

"My wife, Kagig!"

"Ah! I remember your wife. She fed me often."

"You must come with me and find her, Kagig--my wife and two daughters, who fed you often!"

"The daughters were pretty," said Kagig. "So was the wife. A young woman yet. A brave, good woman. Always she agreed with me, I remember. Often I heard her urge you men to follow me to Zeitoon and help to fortify the place!"

"Will you leave a good woman in the hands of Turks, Kagig? Come--come to the rescue!"

"It is too bad," said Kagig simply. "Such women suffer more terribly than the hags who merely die by the sword. Ten times by the count --during ten succeeding massacres I have seen the Turks sell Armenian wives and daughters at auction. I am sorry, Eflaton."

"My God!" groaned Will. "How long are we four loafers going to sit here and leave a white woman in danger on the road ahead?" He got up and began folding his blankets.

The Armenian whom Kagig had called Eflaton threw himself to the floor and shrieked in agony of misery. Rustum Khan stepped over him and came and stood in front of Monty.

"These men are fools," he said. "They know exactly what the Turks will do. They have all seen massacres before. Yet not one of them was ready when the hour set for this one came. They say--and they say the truth, that the Turks will murder all Europeans they catch outside the mission stations, lest there be true witnesses afterward whom the world will believe."

"But a woman--scarcely a white woman?" This from Will, with the tips of his ears red and the rest of his face a deathly white.

"Depending on the woman," answered Rustum Khan. "Old--unpleasing--" He made an upward gesture with his thumb, and a noise between his teeth suggestive of a severed wind-pipe. "If she were good-looking --I have heard say they pay high prices in the interior, say at Kaisarieh or Mosul. Once in a harem, who would ever know? The road ahead is worse than dangerous. Whoever wishes to save his life would do best to turn back now and try to ride through to Tarsus."

"Try it, then, if you're afraid!" sneered Will, and for a moment I thought the Rajput would draw steel.

"I know what this lord sahib and I will do," he said, darkening three or four shades under his black beard. "It was for men bewitched by gipsy-women that I feared!"

Will was standing. Nothing but Monty's voice prevented blows. He rapped out a string of sudden rhetoric in the Rajput's own guttural tongue, and Rustum Khan drew back four paces.

"Send him back, Colonel sahib!" he urged. "Send that one back! He and Umm Kulsum will be the death of us!"

Fred went off into a peal of laughter that did nothing to calm the Rajput's ruffled temper.

"Who was Umm Kulsum?" I asked him, divining the cause.

"The most immoral hag in Asian legend! The aggregated essence of all female evil personified in one procuress!"

"Say, I'll have to teach that gink--"

Monty got up and stood between them, but it was a new alarm that prevented blows. A fist-blow in the Rajput's face would have meant a blood-feud that nothing less than a man's life could settle, and Monty looked worried. There came a new thundering on the door that brought everybody to his feet as if murder were the least of the charges against us. Only Kagig appeared at ease and unconcerned.

"Open to them!" he shouted, and resumed his pacing to and fro.

Our Armenian servants ran to the door, and in a minute returned to say that fifty mounted men from Zeitoon were drawn up outside. Kagig gave a curt laugh and strode across to us.

"I said you Eenglis sportmen should see good sport."

Monty nodded, with a hand held out behind him to warn us to keep still.

"I said you shall shoot many pigs!"

"Lead on, then."

"Turks are pigs!"

Monty dd not answer. To have disagreed would have been like flapping a red cloth at a tiger. Yet to have agreed with him at once might have made him jump to false conclusions. The consul's last words to us had been insistent on the unwisdom of posing as anything but hunters, legitimately entitled to protection from the Turkish government.

"I would like you gentlemen for allies!"

"You are our servant at present."

"Would you think of holding me to that?" demanded Kagig with a gesture of extreme irritation. It is only the West that can joke at itself

in the face of crisis.

"If not to that," said Monty blandly, "then what agreements do you keep?"

Kagig saw the point. He drew a deep impatient breath and drove it out again hissing through his teeth. Then he took grim hold of himself.

"Effendi," he said, addressing himself to Monty, but including all of us with eyes that seemed to search our hearts, "you are a lord, a friend of the King of Eengland. If I were less than a man of my word I could make you prisoner and oblige your friend the King of Eengland to squeeze these cursed Turks!"

Rustum Khan heard what he said, and made noise enough drawing his saber to be heard outside the kahveh, but Kagig did not turn his head. Three gipsies attended to Rustum Khan, slipping between him and their master, and our four Zeitoonli servants cautiously approached the Rajput from behind.

"Peace!" ordered Monty. "Continue, Kagig."

Kagig held both hands toward Monty, palms upward, as if he were offering the keys of Hell and Heaven.

"You are sportmen, all of you. Shall I keep my word to you? Or shall I serve my nation in its agony?"

Monty glanced swiftly at us, but we made no sign. Will actually looked away. It was a rule we four had to leave the playing of a hand to whichever member of the partnership was first engaged; and we never regretted it, although it often called for faith in one another to the thirty-third degree. The next hand might fall to any other of us, but for the present it was Monty's play.

"We hold you to your word!" said Monty.

Kagig gasped. "But my people!"

"Keep your word to them too! Surely you haven't promised them to make us prisoner?"

"But if I am your servant--if I must obey you for two piasters a day, how shall I serve my nation?"

"Wait and see!" suggested Monty blandly.

Kagig bowed stiffly, from the neck.

"It would surprise you, effendi," he said grimly, "to know how many long years I have waited, in order that I may see what other men will do!"

Monty never answered that remark. There came a yell of "Fire!" and in less than ten seconds flames began to burst through the door that shut off the Turks' private quarters, and to lick and roar among the roof beams. The animals at the other end of the room went crazy, and there was instant panic, the Armenians outside trying to get in to help, and fighting with the men and animals and women and children who choked the way. Then the hay in the upper story caught alight,

and the heat below became intolerable. Monty saw and instantly pounced on an ax and two crow-bars in the corner.

"Through the wall!" he ordered.

Fred, Will and I did that work, he and Kagig looking on. It was much easier than at first seemed likely. Most of the stones were stuck with mud, not plaster, and when the first three or four were out the rest came easily. In almost no time we had a great gap ready, and the extra draft we made increased the holocaust, but seemed to lift the heat higher. Then some of the Zeitoonli saw the gap, and began to hurry blindfolded horses through it and in a very little while the place seemed empty. I saw the Turkish owner and several of his sons looking on in fatalistic calm at about the outside edge of the ring of light, and it occurred to me to ask a question.

"Hasn't that Turk a harem?" I asked.

In another second we four were hurrying around the building, and Will and I burst in the door at the rear with our crow-bars. Monty and Fred rushed past us, and before I could get the smoke out of my eyes and throat they were hurrying out again with two old women in their arms--the women screaming, and they laughing and coughing so that they could hardly run. Then Will made my blood run cold with a new alarm.

"The biped!" he shouted. "The Measel in the corn-bin!"

They dropped the old ladies, and all four of us raced back to our hole in the wall--plunged into the hell-hot building, pulled the lid off the corn-bin (it was fastened like an ancient Egyptian coffin-lid with several stout Wooden pegs), dragged Measel out, and frog-marched him, kicking and yelling, to the open, where Fred collapsed.

"Measel," said Will, stooping to feel Fred's heart, "if you're the cause of my friend Oakes' death, Lord pity you!"

Fred sat up, not that he wished to save the "biped" any anguish, but the wise man vomits comfortably when he can, the necessity being bad enough without additional torment.

"See!" said a voice out of darkness. "He empties himself! That is well. It is only the end of the fever. Now he will be a man again. But the sahibs should have left that writer of characters in the corn-bin, where he could have shared the fate of his master without troubling us again!"

Rustum Khan strode into the light, with half his fierce beard burned away from having been the last to leave by the front entrance, and a decided limp from having been kicked by a frantic mule.

"What have you done with the German?" demanded Monty.

"I, sahib? Nothing. In truth nothing. It was the seven sons of the Turk--abetted I should say by gipsies. It was the German who set the place alight. The girl, Maga Jhaere they call her, saw him do it. She watched like a cat, the fool, hoping to amuse herself, while he burned off his ropes with a brand that fell his way out of the fire. When another brand jumped half across the room he set

the place alight with it, tossing it over the party wall. He was an able rascal, sahib."

"Was?" demanded Monty.

"Aye, sahib, was! In another second he released the Turkish lieutenant and shouted in his ear to escape and say that Armenians burned this kahveh! Gregor Jhaere slew the Turk, however. And Maga followed the German into the open, where she denounced him to some of the Zeitoonli who recently arrived. They took him and threw him back into the fire--where he remained. I begin to like these Zeitoonli. I even like the gipsies more than formerly. They are men of some discernment, and of action!"

"Man of blood!" growled Monty. "What of the Turkish owner and his seven sons?"

"They shall burn, too, if the sahib say so!"

"If they burn, so shall you! Where is Kagig?"

"Seeing that the sahibs' horses are packed and saddled. I came to find the sahibs. According to Kagig it is time to go, before Turks come to take vengeance for a burned road-house. They will surely say Armenians burned it, whether or not there is a German to support their accusation!"

Then we heard Kagig's high-pitched "Haide--chabuk!" and picked up Peter Measel, and ran around the building to where the horses were already saddled, and squealing in fear of the flames. We left the Turk, and his wives and seven sons, to tell what tale they pleased.

Chapter Eight
"I go with that man!"

LO HERE! LO THERE!

Ye shall not judge men by the drinks they take,
Nor by unthinking oath, nor what they wear,
For look! the mitered liars protest make
And drinking know they lie, and knowing swear.
No oath is round without the rounded fruit,
Nor pompous promise hides the ultimate.
In scarlet as in overalls and tailored suit
To-morrows truemen and the traitors wait
Untold by trick of blazonry or voice.
But harvest ripens and there come the reaping days
When each shall choose one path to bide the choice,
And ye shall know men when they face dividing ways.

To those who have never ridden knee to knee with outlaws full pelt into unknown darkness, with a burning house behind, and a whole horizon lit with the rolling glow of murdered villages, let it be written that the sensation of so doing is creepy, most amazing wild, and

not without unrighteous pleasure.

There was a fierce joy that burned without consuming, and a consciousness of having crossed a rubicon. Points of view are left behind in a moment, although the proof may not be apparent for days or weeks, and I reckon our mental change from being merely hunters of an ancient castle and big game-tourists-trippers, from that hour. As we galloped behind Kagig the mesmerism of respect for custom blew away in the wind. We became at heart outlaws as we rode--and one of us a privy councilor of England!

The women, Maga included, were on in front. The night around and behind us was full of the thunder of fleeing cattle, for the Zeitoonli had looted the owner of the kahveh's cows and oxen along with their own beasts and were driving them helter-skelter. The crackling flames behind us were a beacon, whistling white in the early wind, that we did well to hurry from.

It was Monty who called Kagig's attention to the idiocy of tiring out the cattle before dawn, and then Kagig rode like an arrow until he could make the gipsies hear him. One long keening shout that penetrated through the drum of hoofs brought them to a walk, but they kept Maga in front with them, screened from our view until morning by a close line of mounted women and a group of men. The Turkish prisoners were all behind among the fifty Armenians from Zeitoon, looking very comfortless trussed up on the mounts that nobody else had coveted, with hands made fast behind their backs.

A little before dawn, when the saw-tooth tips of the mountain range on our left were first touched with opal and gold, we turned off the araba track along which we had so far come and entered a ravine leading toward Marash. Fred was asleep on horseback, supported between Will and me and snoring like a throttled dog. The smoke of the gutted kahveh had dwindled to a wisp in the distance behind us, and there was no sight or sound of pursuit.

No wheeled vehicle that ever man made could have passed up this new track. It was difficult for ridden horses, and our loaded beasts had to be given time. We seemed to be entering by a fissure into the womb of the savage hills that tossed themselves in ever-increasing grandeur up toward the mist-draped heights of Kara Dagh. Oftener than not our track was obviously watercourse, although now and then we breasted higher levels from which we could see, through gaps between hill and forest, backward along the way we had come. There was smoke from the direction of Adana that smudged a whole sky-line, and between that and the sea about a dozen sooty columns mushroomed against the clouds.

There was not a mile of the way we came that did not hold a hundred hiding-places fit for ambuscade, but our party was too numerous and well-armed to need worry on that account. Monty and Kagig drew ahead, quite a little way behind the gipsies still, but far in front of us, who had to keep Fred upright on his horse.

"My particular need is breakfast," said I.

"And Will's is the woman!" said Fred, admitting himself awake at last. Will had been straining in the stirrups on the top of every rise his horse negotiated ever since the sun rose. It certainly was a mystery

why Maga should have been spirited away, after the freedom permitted her the day before.

"Rustum Khan has probably made off with her, or cut her head off!" remarked Fred by way of offering comfort, yawning with the conscious luxury of having slept. "I don't see Rustum Khan. Let's hope it's true! That 'ud give the American lady a better chance for her life in case we should overtake her!"

Will and Fred have always chosen the most awkward places and the least excuse for horseplay, and the sleep seemed to have expelled the last of the fever from Fred's bones, so that he felt like a schoolboy on holiday. Will grabbed him around the neck and they wrestled, to their horses' infinite disgust, panting and straining mightily in the effort to unseat each other. It was natural that Will should have the best of it, he being about fifteen years younger as well as unweakened by malaria. The men of Zeitoon behind us checked to watch Fred rolled out of his saddle, and roared with the delight of fighting men the wide world over to see the older campaigner suddenly recover his balance and turn the tables on the younger by a trick.

And at that very second, as Will landed feet first on the gravel panting for breath, Maga Jhaere arrived full gallop from the rear, managing her ugly gray stallion with consummate ease. Her black hair streamed out in the wind, and what with the dew on it and the slanting sun-rays she seemed to be wearing all the gorgeous jewels out of Ali Baba's cave. She was the loveliest thing to look at --unaffected, unexpected, and as untamed as the dawn, with parted lips as red as the branch of budding leaves with which she beat her horse.

But the smile turned to a frown of sudden passion as she saw Will land on the ground and Fred get ready for reprisals. She screamed defiance--burst through the ranks of the nearest Zeitoonli--set her stallion straight at us--burst between Fred and me--beat Fred savagely across the face with her sap-softened branch--and wheeled on her beast's haunches to make much of Will. He laughed at her, and tried to take the whip away. Seeing he was neither hurt nor indignant, she laughed at Fred, spat at him, and whipped her stallion forward in pursuit of Kagig, breaking between him and Monty to pour news in his ear.

"A curse on Rustum Khan!" laughed Fred, spitting out red buds. "He didn't do his duty!"

He had hardly said that when the Rajput came spurring and thundering along from the rear. He seemed in no hurry to follow farther, but drew rein between us and saluted with the semi-military gesture with which he favored all who, unlike Monty, had not been Colonels of Indian regiments.

"I tracked Umm Kulsum through the dark!" he announced, rubbing the burned nodules out of his singed beard and then patting his mare's neck. "I saw her ride away alone an hour before you reached that fork in the road and turned up this watercourse. 'By the teeth of God,' said I, 'when a good-looking woman leaves a party of men to canter alone in the dark, there is treason!' and I followed."

I offered the Rajput my cigarette case, and to my surprise he accepted

one, although not without visible compunction. As a Muhammadan by creed he was in theory without caste and not to be defiled by European touch, but the practises of most folk fall behind their professions.
A hundred yards ahead of us Maga was talking and gesticulating furiously, evidently railing at Kagig's wooden-headedness or unbelief. Monty sat listening, saying nothing.

"What did you see, Rustum Khan?" asked Fred.

"At first very little. My eyes are good, but that gipsy-woman's are better, and I was kept busy following her; for I could not keep close, or she might have heard. The noise of her own clumsy stallion prevented her from hearing the lighter footfalls of my mare, and by that I made sure she was not expecting to meet an enemy. 'She rides to betray us to her friends!' said I, and I kept yet farther behind her, on the alert against ambush."

"Well?"

"She rode until dawn, I following. Then, when the light was scarcely born as yet, she suddenly drew rein at an open place where the track she had been following emerged out of dense bushes, and dismounted. >From behind the bushes I watched, and presently I, too, dismounted to hold my mare's nostrils and prevent her from whinnying. That woman, Maga Jhaere, knelt, and pawed about the ground like a dog that hunts a buried bone!"

In front of us Maga was still arguing. Suddenly Kagig turned on her and asked her three swift questions, bitten off like the snap of a closing snuff-box lid. Whether she answered or not I could not see, but Monty was smiling.

"I suspect she was making signals!" growled Rustum Khan. "To whom --about what I do not know. After a little while she mounted and rode on, choosing unerringly a new track through the bushes. I went to where she had been, and examined the ground where she had made her signals. As I say, my eyes are good, but hers are better. I could see nothing but the hoof-marks of her clumsy gray brute of a stallion, and in one place the depressions on soft earth where she had knelt to paw the ground!"

Monty was beginning to talk now. I could see him smiling at Kagig over Maga's head, and the girl was growing angry. Rustum Khan was watching them as closely as we were, pausing between sentences.

"It may be she buried something there, but if so I did not find it. I could not stay long, for when she rode away she went like wind, and I needed to follow at top speed or else be lost. So I let my mare feel the spurs a time or two, and so it happened that I gained on the woman; and I suppose she heard me. Whether or no, she waited in ambush, and sprang out at me as I passed so suddenly that I know not what god of fools and drunkards preserved her from being cut down! Not many have ridden out at me from ambush and lived to tell of it! But I saw who she was in time, and sheathed my steel again, and cursed her for the gipsy that she half is. The other half is spawn of Eblis!"

A hundred yards ahead of us Kagig had reached a decision, but it seemed to be not too late yet in Maga's judgment to try to convert

him. She was speaking vehemently, passionately, throwing down her reins to expostulate with both hands.

"Kagig isn't the man you'd think a young woman would choose to be familiar with," Fred said quietly to me, and I wondered what he was driving at. He is always observant behind that superficial air of mockery he chooses to assume, but what he had noticed to set him thinking I could not guess.

Rustum Khan threw away the cigarette I had given him, and went on with his tale.

"That woman has no virtue."

"How do you know?" demanded Will.

"She laughed when I cursed her! Then she asked me what I had seen."

"What did you say?"

"To test her I said I had seen her lover, and would know him again by his smell in the dark!"

"What did she say to that?'

"She laughed again. I tell you the woman has no shame! Then she said if I would tell that tale to Kagig as soon as I see him she would reward me with leave to live for one whole week and an extra hour in which to pray to the devil----meaning, I suppose, that she intends to kill me otherwise. Then she wheeled her stallion--the brute was trying to tear out the muscles of my thigh all that time --and rode away--and I followed--and here I am!"

"How much truth is there in your assertion that you saw her lover?" Will demanded.

"None. I but said it to test her."

"Why in thunder should she want it believed?"

"God knows, who made gipsies!"

At that moment the advance-guard rode into an open meadow, crossed by a shallow, singing stream at which Kagig ordered a halt to water horses. So we closed up with him, and he repeated to us what he had evidently said before to Monty.

"Maga says--I let her go scouting--she says she met a man who told her that Miss Gloria Vanderman and a party of seven were attacked on the road, but escaped, and now have doubled on their tracks so that they are far on their return to Tarsus."

Rustum Khan met Monty's eyes, and his lips moved silently.

"What do you know, sirdar?" Monty asked him.

"The woman lies!"

Maga was glaring at Rustum Khan as a leopardess eyes an enemy. As

he spoke she made a significant gesture with a finger across her throat, which the Rajput, if he saw, ignored.

"To what extent?" demanded Kagig calmly.

"Wholly! I followed her. She met no man, although she pawed the ground at a place where eight ridden horses had crossed soft ground a day ago."

Kagig nodded, recognizing truth--a rather rare gift.

If the Rajput's guess was wrong and Maga did know shame, at any rate she did not choose that moment to betray it.

"Oh, very well!" she sneered. "There were eight horses. They were galloping. The track was nine hours old."

Kagig nodded without any symptom of annoyance or reproach.

"There is an ancient castle in the hills up yonder," he said, "in which there may be many Armenians hiding."

He took it for granted we would go and find out, and Maga recognized the drift.

"Very well," she said. "Let that one go, and that one," pointing at Fred and me.

"You'll appreciate, of course," said Monty, "that it's out of the question for us to go forward until we know where that lady is."

Kagig bowed gravely.

"I am needed at Zeitoon," he answered.

Then Maga broke in shrilly, pointing at Will:

"Take that one for hostage!" she advised. "Bring him along to Zeitoon. Then the rest will follow!"

Kagig looked gravely at her.

"I shall take this one," he answered, laying a respectful hand on Monty's sleeve. "Effendi, you are an Eenglis lord. Be your life and comfort on my head, but I need a hostage for my nation's sake. You others--I admit the urgency--shall hunt the missionary lady. If I have this one"--again he touched Monty--"I know well you will come seeking him! You, effendi, you understand my--necessity?"

Monty nodded, smiling gravely. There was a fire at the back of Monty's eyes and something in his bearing I had never seen before.

"Then I go with my colonel sahib!" announced Rustum Khan. "That gipsy woman will kill him otherwise!"

"Better help hunt for the lady, Rustum Khan."

"Nay, colonel sahib bahadur--thy blood on my head! I go with thee --into hell and out beyond if need be!"

"You fellows agreeable?" asked Monty. "There is no disputing Kagig's decision. We're at his mercy."

"We've got to find Miss Vanderman!" said Will.

"You are not at my mercy, effendi," grumbled Kagig. The man was obviously distressed. "You are rather at my discretion. I am responsible. For my nation's sake and for my honor I dare not lose you. Who has not seen how a cow will follow the calf in a wagon? So in your case, if I hold the one--the chief one--the noble one--the lord--the cousin of the Eenglis king" (Monty's rank was mounting like mercury in a tube as Kagig warmed to the argument) --"you others will certainly hunt him up-hill and down-dale. Thus will my honor and my country's cause both profit!"

Monty smiled benignantly.

"It's all one, Kagig. Why labor the point? I'm going with you. Rustum Khan prefers to come with me." Kagig looked askance at Rustum Khan, but made no comment. "One hostage is enough for your purpose. Let me talk with my friends a minute."

Kagig nodded, and we four drew aside.

"Now," demanded Fred, who knew the signs, "what special quixotry do you mean springing?"

"Shut up, Fred. There's no need for you fellows to follow Kagig another yard. He'll be quite satisfied if he has me in keeping. That will serve all practical purposes. What you three must do is find Miss Vanderman if you can, and take her back to Tarsus. There you can help the consul bring pressure to bear on the authorities."

"Rot!" retorted Fred. "Didums, you're drunk. Where did you get the drink?"

Monty smiled, for he held a card that could out-trump our best one, and he knew it. In fact he led it straight away.

"D'you mean to say you'd consider it decent to find that young woman in the mountains and drag her to Zeitoon at Kagig's tail, when Tarsus is not more than three days' ride away at most? You know the Turks wouldn't dare touch you on the road to the coast."

"For that matter," said Fred, "the Turks 'ud hardly dare touch Miss Vanderman herself."

"Then leave her in the hills!" grinned Monty. "Kagig tells me that the Kurds are riding down in hundreds from Kaisarich way. He says they'll arrive too late to loot the cities, but they're experts at hunting along the mountain range. Why not leave the lady to the tender ministrations of the Kurds!"

"One 'ud think you and Kagig knew of buried treasure! Or has he promised to make you Duke of Zeitoon?" asked Will. "Tisn't right, Monty. You've no call to force our band in this way."

"Name a better way," said Monty.

None of us could. The proposal was perfectly logical.

Three of us, even supposing Kagig should care to lend us some of his Zeitoonli horsemen, would be all too few for the rescue work. Certainly we could not leave a lady unprotected in these hills, with the threat of plundering Kurds overhanging. If we found her we could hardly carry her off up-country if there were any safer course.

"Time--time is swift!" said Kagig, pulling out a watch like a big brass turnip and shaking it, presumably to encourage the mechanism.

"The fact is," said Monty, drawing us farther aside, for Rustum Khan was growing restive and inquisitive, "I've not much faith in Kagig's prospects at Zeitoon. He has talked to me all along the road, and I don't believe he bases much reliance on his men. He counts more on holding me as hostage and so obliging the Turkish government to call off its murderers. If you men can rescue that lady in the hills and return to Tarsus you can serve Kagig best and give me my best chance too. Hurry back and help the consul raise Cain!"

That closed the arguments, because Maga Jhaere slipped past Kagig and approached us with the obvious intention of listening. She had discovered a knowledge of English scarcely perfect but astonishingly comprehensive, which she had chosen to keep to herself when we first met--a regular gipsy trick. Fred threw down the gauntlet to her, uncovering depths of distrust that we others had never suspected under his air of being amused.

"Now, miss!" he said, striding up to her. "Let us understand each other! This is my friend." He pointed to Monty. "If harm comes to him that you could have prevented, you shall pay!"

Maga tossed back her loose coils of hair and laughed.

"Never fear, sahib!" Rustum Khan called out. "If ought should happen to my Colonel sahib that Umm Kulsum shall be first to die. The women shall tell of her death for a generation, to frighten naughty children!"

"You hear that?" demanded Fred.

Maga laughed again, and swore in some outlandish tongue.

"I hear! And you hear this, you old--" She called Fred by a name that would make the butchers wince in the abattoirs at Liverpool. "If anything happens to that man,--she pointed to Will, and her eyes blazed with lawless pleasure in his evident discomfort--"I myself --me--this woman--I alone will keel--keel--keel--torture first and afterwards keel your friend 'at you call Monty! I am Maga! You have heard me say what I will do! As for that Rustum Khan--you shall never see him no more ever!"

Kagig pulled out the enormous watch again. He seemed oblivious of Maga's threats--not even aware that she had spoken, although she was hissing through impudent dazzling teeth within three yards of him.

"The time," he said, "has fleed--has fled--has flown. Now we must go, effendi!"

"I go with that man!" announced Maga, pointing at Will, but obviously well aware that nothing of the kind would be permitted.

"Maga, come!" said Kagig, and got on his horse. "You gentlemen may take with you each one Zeitoonli servant. No, no more. No, the ammunition in your pockets must suffice. Yes, I know the remainder is yours; come then to Zeitoon and get it! Haide--Haide! Mount! Ride! Haide, Zeitoonli! To Zeitoon! Chabuk!"

Chapter Nine
"And you left your friend to help me?"

WITH NEW TONGUES

Oh, bard of Avon, thou whose measured muse
Most sweetly sings Elizabethan views
To shame ungentle smiths of journalese
With thy sublimest verse, what words are these
That shine amid the lines like jewels set
But ere thine hour no bard had chosen yet?
Didst thou in masterly disdain of too much law
Not only limn the truths no others saw
But also, lord not slave of written word,
Lend ear to what no other poet heard
And, liberal minded on the Mermaid bench
With bow for blade and chaff for serving wench
Await from overseas slang-slinging Jack
Who brought the new vocabulary back?

So we three stood still in a row disconsolate, with three ragged men of Zeitoon holding our horses and theirs, and watched Monty ride away in the midst of Kagig's motley command, he not turning to wave back to us because he did not like the parting any better than we did, although he had pretended to be all in favor of it.

Kagig had left us one mule for our luggage, and the beast was unlikely to be overburdened, for at the last minute he had turned surly, and as he sat like a general of division to watch his patch-and-string command go by he showed how Eye of Zeitoon only failed him for a title in giving his other eye--the one he kept on us--too little credit. It was a good-looking crowd of irregulars that he reviewed, and every bearded, goat-skin clad veteran in it had a word to say to him, and he an answer--sometimes a sermon by way of answer. But he saw every item that we removed from the common packs, and sternly reproved us when we tried to exceed what he considered reasonable. At that he based our probable requirements on what would have been surfeit of encumbrance for himself.

"Empty your pockets, effendim!" he ordered at last. "Six cartridges each for rifle, and six each for pistol must be all. Your cartridges I know they are. But my people are in extremity!"

When he rode away at last, sitting his horse in the fashion of a Don Cossack and shepherding Maga in front of him because she kept checking her gray stallion for another look at Will, he left us no alternative than to take to the mountains swiftly unless we cared to starve. We watched Monty's back disappear over a rise, with Rustum Khan close behind, and then Fred signed to one of the three Zeitoonli to lead on.

All three of the men Kagig had left with us were surly, mainly, no doubt, because they disliked separation from their friends. But there was fear, too, expressed in their manner of riding close together, and in the fidgety way in which they watched the smoke of burning Armenian villages that smudged the sky to our left.

"If they try to bolt after Kagig and leave us in the lurch I'm going to waste exactly one cartridge as a warning," Fred announced. "After that--!"

"Probably Kagig 'ud skin them if they turned up without us," remarked Will.

There was something in that theory, for we learned later what Kagig's ferocity could be when driven hard enough. But from first to last those men of Zeitoon never showed a symptom of treachery, although their resentment at having to turn their backs toward home appeared to deepen hourly.

With strange unreason they made no haste, whereas we were in a frenzy of impatience; and when Fred sought to improve their temper by singing the songs that had hitherto acted like charms on Kagig's whole command, they turned in their saddles and cursed him for calling attention to us.

"Inch goozek?" demanded one of them (What would you like?), and with a gesture that made the blood run cold he suggested the choice between hanging and disembowelment.

Will solved the speed problem by striving to push past them along the narrow track; and they were so determined to keep in front of us that within half an hour from the start our horses were sweating freely. Then we began to climb, dismounting presently to lead our horses, and all notions of speed went the way of other vanity.

Several times looking back toward our right hand we caught sight of Kagig's string threading its way over a rise, or passing like a line of ants under the brow of a gravel bank. But they were too far away to discern which of the moving specks might be Monty, although Kagig was now and then unmistakable, his air of authority growing on him and distinguishing him as long as he kept in sight.

We saw nothing of the footprints in soft earth that Maga had read so offhandedly. In fact we took another way, less cluttered up with roots and bushes, that led not straight, but persistently toward an up-towering crag like an eye-tooth. Below it was thick forest, shaped like a shovel beard, and the crag stuck above the beard like an old man's last tooth.

But mountains have a discouraging way of folding and refolding so that the air-line from point to point bears no relation to the length of the trail. The last kites were drooping lazily toward their perches

for the night when we drew near the edge of the forest at last, and were suddenly brought to a halt by a challenge from overhead. We could see nobody. Only a hoarse voice warned us that it was death to advance another yard, and our tired animals needed no persuasion to stand still.

There, under a protruding lock as it were of the beard, we waited in shadow while an invisible somebody, whose rifle scraped rather noisily against a branch, eyed every inch of us at his leisure.

"Who are you?" he demanded at last in Armenian, and one of our three men enlightened him in long-drawn detail.

The explanation did not satisfy. We were told to remain exactly where we were until somebody else was fetched. After twenty minutes, when it was already pitch-dark, we heard the breaking of twigs, and low voices as three or four men descended together among the trees. Then we were examined again from close quarters in the dark, and there are few less agreeable sensations. The goose-flesh rises and the clammy cold sweat takes all the comfort out of waning courage.

But somebody among the shadowy tree-trunks at last seemed to think he recognized familiar attitudes, and asked again who we might be. And, weary of explanations that only achieved delay our man lumped us all in one invoice and snarled irritably:

"These are Americans!"

The famous "Open sesame" that unlocked Ali Baba's cave never worked swifter then. Reckless of possible traps no less than five men flung themselves out of Cimmerian gloom and seized us in welcoming arms. I was lifted from the saddle by a man six inches shorter than myself, whose arms could have crushed me like an insect.

"We might have known Americans would bring us help!" he panted in my ear. His breath came short not from effort, but excitement.

Fred was in like predicament. I could just see his shadow struggling in the embrace of an enthusiastic host, and somewhere out of sight Will was answering in nasal indubitable Yankee the questions of three other men.

"This way! Come this way! Bring the horses, oh, Zeitoonli! Americans! Americans! God heard us--there have come Americans!"

Threading this and that way among tree-trunks that to our unaccustomed eyes were simply slightly denser blots on blackness, Will managed to get between Fred and me.

"We're all of us Yankees this trip!" he whispered, and I knew he was grinning, enjoying it hugely. So often he had been taken for an Englishman because of partnership with us that he had almost ceased to mind; but he spared himself none of the amusement to be drawn out of the new turn of affairs, nor us any of the chaff that we had never spared him.

"Take my advice," he said, "and try to act you're Yanks for all you've got. If you can make blind men believe it, you may get out of this with whole skins!"

I expected the retort discourteous to that from Fred, who was between Will and me, shepherded like us by hard-breathing, unseen men. But he was much too subtly skilful in piercing the chain-mail of Will's humor--even in that hour.

"Sure!" he answered. "I guess any gosh-durned rube in these parts 'll know without being told what neck o' the woods I hail from. Schenectady's my middle name! I'm--"

"Oh, my God!" groaned Will. "We don't talk that way in the States. The missionaries--"

"I'm the guy who put the 'oh!' in Ohio!" continued Fred. "I'm running mate to Colonel Cody, and I've ridden herd on half the cows in Hocuspocus County, Wis.! I can sing The Star-Spangled Banner with my head under water, and eat a chain of frankforts two links a minute! I'm the riproaring original two-gun man from Tabascoville, and any gink who doubts it has no time to say his prayers!"

There were paragraphs more of it, delivered at uneven intervals between deep gasps for breath as we made unsteady progress up-hill among roots and rocks left purposely for the confusion of an enemy. At first it filled Will with despair that set me laughing at him. Then Will threw seriousness to the winds and laughed too, so that the spell of impending evil, caused as much as anything by forced separation from Monty, was broken.

But it did better than put us in rising spirits. It convinced the Armenians! That foolish jargon, picked up from comic papers and the penny dreadfuls, convince more firmly than any written proof the products of the mission schools, whose one ambition was to be American themselves, and whose one pathetic peak of humor was the occasional glimpse of United States slang dropped for their edification by missionary teachers!

"By jimminy!" remarked an Armenian near me.

"Gosh-all-hemlocks!" said another.

Thenceforward nothing undermined their faith in us. Plenty of amused repudiation was very soon forthcoming from another source, but it passed over their heads. Fred and I, because we used fool expressions without relation to the context or proportion, were established as the genuine article; Will, perhaps a rather doubtful quantity with his conservative grammar and quiet speech, was accepted for our sakes. They took an arm on either side of us to help us up the hill, and in proof of heart-to-heart esteem shouted "Oopsidaisy!" when we stumbled in the pitchy dark. When we were brought to a stand at last by a snarled challenge and the click of rifles overhead, they answered with the chorus of Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, a classic that ought to have died an unnatural death almost a quarter of a century before.

Suddenly we smelt Standard oil, and a man emerged through a gap in ancient masonry less than six feet away carrying a battered, cheap "hurricane" lantern whose cracked glass had been reenforced with patches of brown paper. He was armed to the teeth--literally. He had a long knife in his mouth, a pistol in his left hand, and a rifle slung behind him, but after one long look at us, holding the lantern

to each face in turn, he suddenly discarded all appearances of ferocity.

"You know about pistols?" he demanded of me in English, because I was nearest, and thrust his Mauser repeater under my nose. "Why won't this one work? I have tried it every way."

"Lordy!" remarked Will.

"Lead on in!" I suggested. Then, remembering my new part, "It'll have to be some defect if one of us can't fix it!"

The gap-guard purred approval and swung his lantern by way of invitation to follow him as he turned on a naked heel and led the way. We entered one at a time through a hole in the wall of what looked like the dungeon of an ancient castle, and followed him presently up the narrow stone steps leading to a trap-door in the floor above. The trap-door was made of odds and ends of planking held in place by weights. When he knocked on it with the muzzle of his rifle we could hear men lifting things before they could open it.

When a gap appeared overhead at last there was no blaze of light to make us blink, but a row of heads at each edge of the hole with nothing but another lantern somewhere in the gloom behind them. One by one we went up and they made way for us, closing in each time to scan the next-comer's face; and when we were all up they laid the planks again, and piled heavy stones in place. Then an old man lighted another lantern, using no match, although there was a box of them beside him on the floor, but transferring flame patiently with a blade of dry grass. Somebody else lit a torch of resinous wood that gave a good blaze but smoked abominably.

"What has become of our horses?" demanded Fred, looking swiftly about him.

We were in a great, dim stone-walled room whose roof showed a corner of star-lit sky in one place. There were twenty men surrounding us, but no woman. Two trade-blankets sewn together with string hanging over an opening in the wall at the far end of the room suggested, nevertheless, that the other sex might be within ear-shot.

"The horses?" Fred demanded again, a bit peremptorily.

One of the men who had met us smirked and made apologetic motions with his hands.

"They will be attended to, effendi--"

"I know it! I guarantee it! By the ace of brute force, if a horse is missing--! Arabaiji!"

One of our three Zeitoonli stepped forward.

"Take the other two men, Arabaiji, and go down to the horses. Groom them. Feed them. If any one prevents you, return and tell me." Then he turned to our hosts. "Some natives of Somaliland once ate my horse for supper, but I learned that lesson. So did they! I trust I needn't be severe with you!"

There was no furniture in the room, except a mat at one corner.

They were standing all about us, and perfectly able to murder us if so disposed, but none made any effort to restrain our Zeitoonli.

"Now we're three to their twenty!" I whispered, and Will nodded. But Fred carried matters with a high hand.

"Send a man down with them to show them where the horses are, please!"

There seemed to be nobody in command, but evidently one man was least of all, for they all began at once to order him below, and he went, grumbling.

"You see, effendi, we have no meat at all," said the man who had spoken first.

"But you don't look hungry," asserted Fred.

They were a ragged crowd, unshaven and not too clean, with the usual air of men whose only clothes are on their backs and have been there for a week past. All sorts of clothes they wore--odds and ends for the most part, probably snatched and pulled on in the first moment of a night alarm.

"Not yet, effendi. But we have no meat, and soon we shall have eaten all the grain."

"Well," said Fred, "if you need horse-meat, gosh durn you, take it from the Turks!"

"Gosh durn you!" grinned three or four men, nudging one another.

They were lost between a furtive habit born of hiding for dear life, a desire to be extremely friendly, and a new suspicion of Fred's high hand. Fred's next words added disconcertment.

"Where is Miss Vanderman?" he demanded, suddenly.

Before any one had time to answer Will made a swift move to the wall, and took his stand where nobody could get behind him. He did not produce his pistol, but there was that in his eye that suggested it. I followed suit, so that in the event of trouble we stood a fair chance of protecting Fred.

"What do you mean?" asked three Armenians together.

"Did you never see men try to cover a secret before?" Will whispered.

"Or give it away?" I added. Six of the men placed themselves between Fred and the opening where the blankets hung, ostentatiously not looking at the blankets.

"Have you an American lady with you?" Fred asked, and as he spoke he reached a hand behind him. But it was not his pistol that he drew. He carries his concertina slung to him by a strap with the care that some men lavish on a camera. He took it in both hands, and loosed the catch.

"Have you an American lady named Miss Vanderman with you?" he repeated.

"Effendi, we do not understand."

He repeated in Armenian, and then in Turkish, but they shook their heads.

"Very well," he said, "I'll soon find out. A mission-school pupil might sing My Country, 'Tis of Thee or Suwannee River or Poor Blind Joe. You know Poor Blind Joe, eh? Sung it in school? I thought so. I'll bet you don't know this one."

He filled his impudent instrument with wind and forthwith the belly of that ancient castle rang to the strains of a tune no missionaries sing, although no doubt the missionary ladies are familiar with it yet from where the Arctic night shuts down on Behring Sea to the Solomon Islands and beyond--a song that achieved popularity by lacking national significance, and won a war by imparting recklessness to typhus camps. I was certain then, and still dare bet to-day that those ruined castle walls re-echoed for the first time that evening to the clamor of '--a hot time in the old town to-night!"

Seeing the point in a flash, we three roared the song together, and then again, and then once more for interest, the Armenians eying us spell-bound, at a loss to explain the madness. Then there began to be unexplained movements behind the blanket hanging; and a minute later a woman broke through -an unmistakable Armenian, still good-looking but a little past the prime of life, and very obviously mentally distressed. She scarcely took notice of us, but poured forth a long flow of rhetoric interspersed with sobs for breath. I could see Fred chuckling as he listened. All the facial warnings that a dozen men could make at the woman from behind Fred's back could not check her from telling all she knew.

Nor were Will and I, who knew no Armenian, kept in doubt very long as to the nature of her trouble. We heard another woman's voice, behind two or three sets of curtains by the sound of it, that came rapidly nearer; and there were sounds of scuffling. Then we heard words.

"Please play that tune again, whoever you are! Do you hear me? Do you understand?"

"Boston!" announced Will, diagnosing accents.

"You bet your life I understand!" Fred shouted, and clanged through half a dozen bars again.

That seemed satisfactory to the owner of the voice. The scuffling was renewed, and in a moment she had burst through the crude curtains with two women clinging to her, and stood there with her brown hair falling on her shoulders and her dress all disarrayed but looking simply serene in contrast to the women who tried to restrain her. They tried once or twice to thrust her back through the curtain, although clearly determined to do her no injury; but she held her ground easily. At a rough guess it was tennis and boating that had done more for her muscles than ever strenuous housework did for the Armenians.

"Who are you?" she asked, and Will laughed with delight.

"I reckon you'll be Miss Vanderman?' suggested Fred in outrageous Yankee accent. She stared hard at him.

"I am Miss Vanderman. Who are you, please.

I sat down on the great stone they had rolled over the trap, for even in that flickering, smoky light I could see that this young woman was incarnate loveliness as well as health and strength. Will was our only ladies' man (for Fred is no more than random troubadour, decamping before any love-affair gets serious). The thought conjured visions of Maga, and what she might do. For about ten seconds my head swam, and I could hardly keep my feet.

Will left the opening bars of the overture to Fred, with rather the air of a man who lets a trout have line. And Fred blundered in contentedly.

"I'll allow my name is Oakes--Fred Oakes," he said.

"Please explain!" She looked from one to the other of us.

"We three are American towerists, going the grand trip." (Remember, a score of Armenians were listening. Fred's intention was at least as much to continue their contentment as to extract humor from the situation.) "You being reported missing we allowed to pick you up and run you in to Tarsus. Air you agreeable?"

The women were still clinging to her as if their whole future depended on keeping her prisoner, yet without hurt. She looked down at them pathetically, and then at the men, who were showing no disposition to order her release.

"I don't understand in the least yet. I find you bewildering. Can you contrive to let us talk for a few minutes alone?"

"You bet your young life I can!"

Fred stepped to the wall beside us, but we none of us drew pistol yet. We had no right to presume we were not among friends.

"Thirty minutes interlude!" he announced. "The man who stands in this room one minute from now, or who comes back to the room without my leave, is not my friend, and shall learn what that means!"

He repeated the soft insinuation in Armenian, and then in Turkish because he knows that language best. There is not an Armenian who has not been compelled to learn Turkish for all official purposes, and unconsciously they gave obedience to the hated conquerors' tongue, repressing the desire to argue that wells perennially in Armenian breasts. They had not been long enough enjoying stolen liberty to overcome yet the full effects of Turkish rule.

"And oblige me by leaving that lady alone with us!" Fred continued. "Let those dames fall away!"

Somebody said something to the women. Another Armenian remarked more or less casually that we should be unable to escape from the room in any case. The others rolled the great stone from the trap and shoved the smaller stones aside, and then they all filed down

the stone stairs, leaving us alone--although by the trembling blankets it was easy to tell that the women had not gone far. The last man who went below handed the spluttering torch to Miss Vanderman, as if she might need it to defend herself, and she stood there shaking it to try and make it smoke less until the planks were back in place. She was totally unconscious of it, but with the torch-light gleaming on her hair and reflected in her blue eyes she looked like the spirit of old romance come forth to start a holy war.

"Now please explain!" she begged, when I had pushed the last stone in place. "First, what kind of Americans can you possibly be? Do you all use such extraordinary accents, and such expressions?"

"Don't I talk American to beat the band?" objected Fred. "Sit down on this rock a while, and I'll convince you."

She sat on the rock, and we gathered round her. She was not more than twenty-two or three, but as perfectly assured and fearless as only a well-bred woman can be in the presence of unshaven men she does not know. Fred would have continued the tomfoolery, but Will oared in.

"I'm Will Yerkes, Miss Vanderman."

"Oh!"

"I know Nurse Vanderman at the mission."

"Yes, she spoke of you."

"Fred Oakes here is--"

"Is English as they make them, yes, I know! Why the amazing efforts to--"

"I stand abashed, like the leopard with the spots unchangeable!" said Fred, and grinned most unashamedly.

"They're both English."

"Yes, I see, but why--"

"It's only as good Americans that we three could hope to enter here alive. They're death on all other sorts of non-Armenians now they've taken to the woods. We supposed you were here, and of course we had to come and get you."

She nodded. "Of course. But how did you know?"

"That's a long story. Tell us first why you're here, and why you're a prisoner."

"I was going to the mission at Marash--to stay a year there and help, before returning to the States. They warned me in Tarsus that the trip might be dangerous, but I know how short-handed they are at Marash, and I wouldn't listen. Besides, they picked the best men they could find to bring me on the way, and I started. I had a Turkish permit to travel--a teskere they call it--see, I have it here. It was perfectly ridiculous to think of my not going."

"Perfectly!" Fred agreed. "Any young woman in your place would have come away!"

She laughed, and colored a trifle. "Women and men are equals in the States, Mr. Oakes."

"And the Turk ought to know that! I get you, Miss Vanderman! I see the point exactly!"

"At any rate, I started. And we slept at night in the houses of Armenians whom my guides knew, so that the journey wasn't bad at all. Everything was going splendidly until we reached a sort of crossroads--if you can call those goat-tracks roads without stretching truth too far--and there three men came galloping toward us on blown horses from the direction of Marash. We could hardly get them to stop and tell us what the trouble was, they were in such a hurry, but I set my horse across the path and we held them up."

"As any young lady would have done!" Fred murmured.

"Never mind. I did it! They told us, when they could get their breath and quit looking behind them like men afraid of ghosts, that the Turks in Marash--which by all accounts is a very fanatical place--had started to murder Armenians. They yelled at me to turn and run.

" 'Run where?' I asked them. 'The Turks won't murder me!'

"That seemed to make them think, and they and my six men all talked together in Armenian much too fast for me to understand a word of it. Then they pointed to some smoke on the sky-line that they said was from burning Armenian homes in Marash.

" 'Why didn't you take refuge in the mission?' I asked them. And they answered that it was because the mission grounds were already full of refugees.

"Well, if that were true--and mind you, I didn't believe it--it was a good reason why I should hurry there and help. If the mission staff was overworked before that they would be simply overwhelmed now. So I told them to turn round and come to Marash with me and my six men."

"And what did they say?" we demanded together.

"They laughed. They said nothing at all to me. Perhaps they thought I was mad. They talked together for five minutes, and then without consulting me they seized my bridle and galloped up a goat-path that led after a most interminable ride to this place."

"Where they hold you to ransom?"

"Not at all. They've been very kind to me. I think that at the bottom of their thoughts there may be some idea of exchanging me for some of their own women whom the Turks have made away with. But a stronger motive than that is the determination to keep me safe and be able to produce me afterward in proof of their bona fides. They've got me here as witness, for another thing. And then, I've started a sort of hospital in this old keep. There are literally hundreds of men and women hiding in these hills, and the women are

beginning to come to me for advice, and to talk with me. I'm pretty nearly as useful here as I would be at Marash."

"And you're--let's see--nineteen-twenty--one--two--not more than twenty-two," suggested Fred.

"Is intelligence governed by age and sex in England." she retorted, and Fred smiled in confession of a hit.

"Go on," said Will. "Tell us."

"There's nothing more to tell. When I started to run toward the--ah --music, the women tried to prevent me. They knew Americans had come, and they feared you might take me away."

"They were guessing good!" grinned Will.

She shook her head, and the loosened coils of hair fell lower. One could hardly have blamed a man who had desired her in that lawless land and sought to carry her off. The Armenian men must have been temptation proof, or else there had been safety in numbers.

"I shall stay here. How could I leave them? The women need me. There are babies--daily--almost hourly--here in these lean hills, and no organized help of any kind until I came."

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Nearly two days. Wait till I've been here a week and you'll see."

"We can't wait to see!" Will answered. "We've a friend of our own in a tight place. The best we can do is to rescue you--"

"I don't need to be rescued!"

"--to rescue you--take you back to Tarsus, where you'll be safe until the trouble's over--and then hurry to the help of our own man."

"Who is your own man? Tell me about him."

"He's a prince."

"Really?"

"No, really an earl--Earl of Montdidier. White. White all through to the wish-bone. Whitest man I ever camped with. He's the goods."

"If you'd said less I'd have skinned you for an ingrate!" Fred announced. "Monty is a man men love."

Miss Vanderman nodded. "Where is he?"

"On the way to a place called Zeitoon," answered Will.

"He's a hostage, held by Armenians in the hope of putting pressure on the Turks. Kagig--the Armenians, that's to say--let us go to rescue you, knowing that he was sufficiently important for their purpose."

"And you left your friend to help me?"

"Of course. What do you suppose?"

"And if I were to go with you to Tarsus, what then?"

"He says we're to ride herd on the consulate and argue."

"Will you?"

"Sure we'll argue. We'll raise particular young hell. Then back we go to Zeitoon to join him!"

"Would you have gone to Tarsus except on my account?"

Will hesitated.

"No. I see. Of course you wouldn't. Well. What do you take me for? You did not know me then. You do now. Do you think I'd consent to your leaving your fine friend in pawn while you dance attendance on me? Thank you kindly for your offer, but go back to him! If you don't I'll never speak to one of you again!"

Chapter Ten
"When I fire this Pistol--"

THESE LITTLE ONES

If Life were what the liars say
And failure called the tune
Mayhap the road to ruin then
Were cluttered deep wi' broken men;
We'd all be seekers blindly led
To weave wi' worms among the dead,
If Life were what the liars say
And failure called the tune.

But Life is Father of us all
(Dear Father, if we knew!)
And underneath eternal arms
Uphold. We'll mock the false alarms,
And trample on the neck of pain,
And laugh the dead alive again,
For Life is Father to us all,
And thanks are overdue!

If Truth were what the learned say
And envy called the tune
Mayhap 'twere trite what treason saith
That man is dust and ends in death;
We'd slay with proof of printed law
Whatever was new that seers saw,
If Truth were what the learned say
And envy called the tune.

But Truth is Brother of us all
(Oh, Brother, if we knew!)
Unspattered by the muddied lies
That pass for wisdom of the wise--
Compassionate, alert, unbought,
Of purity and presence wrought,--
Big Brother that includes us all
Nor knows the name of Few!

If Love were what the harlots say
And hunger called the tune
Mayhap we'd need conserve the joys
Weighed grudgingly to girls and boys,
And eat the angels trapped and sold
By shriven priests for stolen gold,
If Love were what the harlots say
And hunger called the tune.

But Love is Mother of us all
(Dear Mother, if we knew!)--
So wise that not a sparrow falls,
Nor friendless in the prison calls
Uncomforted or uncaressed.
There's magic milk at Mercy's breast,
And little ones shall lead us all
When Trite Love calls the tune!

Naturally, being what we were, with our friend Monty held in durance by a chief of outlaws, we were perfectly ready to kidnap Miss Vanderman and ride off with her in case she should be inclined to delay proceedings. It was also natural that we had not spoken of that contingency, nor even considered it.

"We never dreamed of your refusing to come with us," said Will.

"We still don't dream of it!" Fred asserted, and she turned her head very swiftly to look at him with level brows. Next she met my eyes. If there was in her consciousness the slightest trace of doubt, or fear, or admission that her sex might be less responsible than ours, she did not show it. Rather in the blue eyes and the athletic poise of chin, and neck, and shoulders there was a dignity beyond ours.

Will laughed.

"Don't let's be ridiculous," she said. "I shall do as I see fit."

Fred's neat beard has a trick of losing something of its trim when he proposes to assert himself, and I recognized the symptoms. But at the moment of that impasse the Armenians below us had decided that self-assertion was their cue, and there came great noises as they thundered with a short pole on the trap and made the stones jump that held it down.

At that signal several women emerged from behind the hanging blankets --young and old women in various states of disarray--and stood in attitudes suggestive of aggression. One did not get the idea that Armenians, men or women, were sheeplike pacifists. They watched Miss Vanderman with the evident purpose of attacking us the moment

she appealed to them.

"If you don't roll the stones away I think there'll be trouble," she said, and came and stood between Will and me. Fred got behind me, and began to whisper. I heard something or other about the trap, and supposed he was asking me to open it, although I failed to see why the request should be kept secret; but the women forestalled me, and in a moment they had the stones shoved aside and the men were emerging one by one through the opening.

Then at last I got Fred's meaning. There was a second of indecision during which the Armenians consulted their women-folk, in two minds between snatching Miss Vanderman out of our reach or discovering first what our purpose might be. I took advantage of it to slip down the stone stairs behind them.

The opening in the castle wall was easy to find, for the star-lit sky looked luminous through the hole. Once outside, however, the gloom of ancient trees and the castle's shadow seemed blacker than the dungeon had been. I groped about, and stumbled over loose stones fallen from the castle wall, until at last one of our own Zeitoonli discovered me and, thinking I might be a trouble-maker, tripped me up. Cursing fervently from underneath his iron-hard carcass I made him recognize me at last. Then he offered me tobacco, unquestionably stolen from our pack, and sat down beside me on a rock while I recovered breath.

It took longer to do that than he expected, for he had enjoyed the advantage of surprise while hampered by no compunctions on the ground of moderation. When the agony of windlessness was gone and I could question him he assured me that the horses were well enough, but that he and his two companions were hungry. Furthermore, he added, the animals were very closely watched--so much so that the other two, Sombat and Noorian, were standing guard to watch the watchers.

"But I am sure they are fools," he added.

This man Arabaiji had been an excellent servant, but decidedly supercilious toward the others from the time when he first came to us in the khan at Tarsus. Regarding himself as intelligent, which he was, he usually refused to concede that quality, or anything resembling it, to his companions.

"That is why I was looking for you when you hit me in the dark with that club of a fist of yours," I answered. "I wanted to speak with you alone because I know you are not a fool."

He felt so flattered that he promptly let his pipe go out.

"While Sombat and Noorian are keeping an eye on the horses, I want you to watch for trouble up above here," I said. "In case the people of this place should seek to make us prisoner, then I want you to gallop, if you can get your horse, and run otherwise, to the nearest--"

He checked me with a gesture and one word.

"Kagig!"

"What about him?" I demanded.

"If I were to bring Turks here, Kagig would never rest until my fingers were pulled off one by one!"

"If you were to bring Turks here, or appeal to Turks," said I, "Kagig would never get you."

"How not?"

"Unless he should find your dead carcass after my friends and I had finished with it!"

"What then?"

He lighted his pipe again by way of reestablishing himself in his own esteem, and it glowed and crackled wetly in the dark beside me in response to the workings of his intelligence.

"In case of trouble up here, and our being held prisoner, go and find other Armenians, and order them in Kagig's name to come and rescue us."

"Those who obey Kagig are with Kagig," he answered.

"Surely not all?"

"All that Kagig could gather to him after eleven years!"

"In that case go to Kagig, and tell him."

"Kagig would not come. He holds Zeitoon."

"Are you a fool?"

"Not I! The other two are fools."

"Then do you understand that in case these people should make us prisoner--"

He nodded. "They might. They might propose to sell you to the Turks, perhaps against their own stolen women-folk."

"Then don't you see that if you were gone, and I told them you had gone to bring Kagig, they would let us go rather than face Kagig's wrath?"

"But Kagig would not come."

"I know that. But how should they know it?"

I knew that be nodded again by the motion of the glowing tobacco in his pipe. It glowed suddenly bright, as a new idea dawned on him. He was an honest fellow, and did not conceal the thought.

"Kagig would not send me back to you," he said. "He is short of men at Zeitoon."

"Never mind," said I. "In case of trouble up above here, but not otherwise, will you do that?"

"Gladly. But give it me in writing, lest Kagig have me beaten for running from you without leave."

That was my turn to jump at a proposal. I tore a sheet from my memorandum book, and scribbled in the dark, knowing be could not read what I had written.

"This writing says that you did not run away until you had made quite sure we were in difficulties. So, if you should run too soon, and we should not be in difficulties after all, Kagig would learn that sooner or later. What would Kagig do in that case?"

"He would throw me over the bridge at Zeitoon--if he could catch me! Nay! I play no tricks."

"Good. Then go and hide. Hide within call. Within an hour, or at most two hours we shall know how the land lies. If all should be well I will change that writing for another one, and send you to Kagig in any case. No more words now--go and hide!"

He put his pipe out with his thumb, and took two strides into a shadow, and was gone. Then I went back through the gap in the dungeon wall, and stumbled to the stairs. Apparently not missing me yet, they had covered up the trap, and I had to hammer on it for admission. They were not pleased when my head appeared through the hole, and they realized that I had probably held communication with our men. I suppose Fred saw by my face that I had accomplished what I went for, because he let out a laugh like a fox's bark that did nothing toward lessening the tension.

On the other hand it was quite clear that during my absence Miss Vanderman had not been idle. Excepting the two men who had admitted me, every one was seated--she on the floor among the women, with her back to the wall, and the rest in a semicircle facing them. Two of the women had their arms about her, affectionately, but not without a hint of who controlled the situation.

"What have you been doing?" Fred demanded, and be laughed at Gloria Vanderman with an air of triumph.

"Making preparations," I said, "to take Miss Vanderman to Tarsus."

I wish I could set down here a chart of the mixed emotions then expressed on that young lady's face. She did not look at Will, knowing perhaps that she already had him captive of her bow and spear. Neither did Will look at us, but sat tracing figures with a forefinger in the dust between his knees, wondering perhaps how to excuse or explain, and getting no comfort.

If my guess was correct, Gloria Vanderman was about equally distracted between the alternative ignominy of submitting her free will to Armenians or else to us. Compassion for the women in their predicament weighed one way--knowledge that our friend Monty was in durance vile contingent on her actions pulled heavily another Fred was frankly enjoying himself, which influenced her strongly toward the Armenian side, she being young and, doubtless the idol of a hundred heart-sick Americans, contemptuous of forty-year-old bachelors.

"Of course we shall not let you go!" one of the Armenians assured her in quite good English, and I began fumbling at the pistol in my inner pocket, for if Arabaiji was to run to Zeitoon, then the sooner the better. But it needed only that imputation of helplessness to tip the beam of Miss Gloria's judgment.

"You can attend to the sick ones. You can play music for us all. Doubtless these other two have qualifications."

I was too busy admiring Gloria to know what effect that announcement had on Fred and Will. She shook herself free from the women, and stood up, splendid in the flickering yellow light. There was a sort of swift move by every one to be ready against contingencies, and I judged it the right moment to spring my own surprise.

"When I fire this pistol," I said, producing it, "a man will start at once for Zeitoon to warn Kagig. He has a note in his pocket written to Kagig. Judge for yourselves how long it will take Kagig and his men to reach this place!"

The nearest man made a very well-judged spring at me and pinned my elbows from behind. Another man knocked the pistol from my hand. The women seized Gloria again. But Fred was too quick--drew his own pistol, and fired at the roof.

"Twice, Fred!" I shouted, and he fired again.

"There!" said I. "Do what you like. The messenger has gone!"

And then Gloria shook herself free a last time, and took command.

"Is that true?" she demanded.

I nodded. "The best of our three men was to start on his way the minute he heard the second shot."

Then I was sure she was Boadicea reincarnate, whether the old-time British queen did or did not have blue eyes and brown hair.

"I will not have brave men brought back here on my account! Kagig must be a patriot! He needs all his men! I don't blame him for making a hostage of Lord Montdidier! I would do the same myself!"

Will had evidently given her a pretty complete synopsis of our adventure while I was outside talking with Arabaiji. It is always a mystery to the British that Americans should hold themselves a race apart and rally to each other as if the rest of the Anglo-Saxon race were foreigners, but those two had obeyed the racial rule. They understood each other--swiftly--a bar and a half ahead of the tune.

"This old castle is no good!" she went on, not raising her voice very high, but making it ring with the wholesomeness of youth, and youth's intolerance of limits. "The Turks could come to this place and burn it within a day if they chose!"

"The Turks won't trouble. They'll send their friends the Kurds instead," Fred assured her.

"Ah-h-h-gh !" growled the Armenians, but she waved them back to silence.

"How much food have you? Almost none! How much ammunition?"

"Ah-h-h-h!" they chorused in a very different tone of voice.

"D'you mean you've got cartridges here?" Fred demanded.

"Fifty cases of cartridges for government Mauser rifles!" bragged the man who was nearest to Will.

"Gee! Kagig 'ud give his eyes for them!" (Will devoted his eyes to the more poetic purpose of exchanging flashed encouragement with Gloria.)

"Men, women and children--how many of you are there?"

"Who knows? Who has counted? They keep coming."

"No, they don't. You've set a guard to keep any more away for fear the food won't last--I know you have! Well--what does it matter how many you are? I say let us all go to Zeitoon and help Kagig!"

"Oh, bravo!" shouted Fred, but it was Will's praise that proved acceptable and made her smile.

"Second the motion!"

I added a word or two by way of make-weight, that did more as a matter of fact than her young ardor to convince those very skeptical men and women. No doubt she broke up their determination to sit still, but it was my words that set them on a course.

"Kagig will be angry when he comes. He's a ruthless man," said I, and the Armenians, men as well as women, sought one another's eyes and nodded.

"Kagig must be more of a ruthless bird than we guessed!" Will whispered.

Counting women, there was less than a score of refugees in the room, and if we had only had them to convince, our work was pretty nearly done. There was the guard among the trees down-hill that we knew about still to be converted, or perhaps coerced. But just at the moment when we felt we held the winning hand, there came a ladder thrust down through the hole in the corner of the roof, and a man whom they all greeted as Ephraim began to climb down backward. He was so loaded with every imaginable kind of weapon that he made more noise than a tinker's cart.

Nor was Ephraim the only new arrival. Man after man came down backward after him, each man cursed richly for treading on his predecessor's fingers--a seeming endless chain of men that did not cease when the room was already uncomfortably overcrowded. Some of these men wore clothes that suggested Russia, but the majority were in rags. The ladder swayed and creaked under them, and finally, at a word from Ephraim, the last-comers sat on the upper rungs, bending the frail thing with their weight into a complaining loop.

Several of the newcomers had torches, and their acrid smoke turned

the twice-breathed air of the place into evil-tasting fog.

Three men put their faces close to Ephraim's and proceeded to enlighten him as to what had passed. He seemed to be recognized as some sort of chieftain, and carried himself with a commanding air, but so many men talked at once, and all in Armenian, that we could not pick out more than a word or two here and there. Even Fred, with his gift of tongues, could hardly make head or tail of it.

We three pressed through the swarm and took our stand beside Gloria, not hesitating to thrust the other women aside. They dragged at their men-folk to call attention to us, but the argument was too hot to be missed, and the women clawed and screamed in vain.

"I believe we could get out!" I shouted in Will's ear. But he shook his head. At least six men were standing on the trap, and we could not have driven them off it because there was no other space on the floor that they could occupy. So I turned to Fred.

"Couldn't we shake those ruffians off the ladder, and climb up it and escape?" I shouted. But Fred shook his head, and went on listening, trying to follow the course of the dispute.

At last somebody with louder lungs than any other man made Ephraim understand that it was I who sent the messenger to Zeitoon. Instantly that solved the problem to his mind. I should be hanged, and that would be all about it. He gesticulated. The men swarmed down off the ladder to the already overcrowded floor, and mistaking Will for me several men started to thrust him forward. A face appeared through the hole in the roof and its owner was sent running for a rope. I had not recovered my pistol, and my rifle was slung at my back where I could not possibly get at it for the crowd. But Fred had a Colt repeater handy in his hip-pocket and he promptly screwed the muzzle of it into Ephraim's ear. What he said to him I don't know, but Ephraim's convictions underwent a change of base and he began to yell for silence. The men who had seized Will let go of him just as the rope with a disgusting noose in the end was lowered through the roof. And then Ossa was imposed on Pelion.

A new face appeared at the hole. Not that we could see the face. We could only see the form of a man who shook the bloody stump of a forearm at us, and shrieked unintelligible things. After thirty seconds even the men in the far corner were aware of him, and then there was stony silence while he had his say. He repeated his message a dozen times, as if he had it by heart exactly, spitting foam out of his mouth and never ceasing to shake the butchered stump of an arm. At about the dozenth time he fainted and fell headlong down the ladder bringing up on the shoulders of the men below.

"What does he say?" I bellowed in Fred's car. But Fred was forcing his way closer to Gloria, to tell her.

"He says the Kurds are coming! He says two regiments of Kurdish cavalry have been

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