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# **Greenmantle**

**by John Buchan**

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answered, 'For knocking about a German officer.' They couldn't

have me up for espionage, for as far as I knew they had no evidence.

I was simply a Dutchman that had got riled and had run amok. But if

they cut down a cobbler for laughing at a second lieutenant - which

is what happened at Zabern - I calculated that hanging would be too

good for a man that had broken a colonel's jaw.

To make things worse my job was not to escape - though that

would have been hard enough - but to get to Constantinople, more

than a thousand miles off, and I reckoned I couldn't get there as a

tramp. I had to be sent there, and now I had flung away my chance.

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If I had been a Catholic I would have said a prayer to St Teresa, for she would have understood my troubles.

My mother used to say that when you felt down on your luck it was a good cure to count your mercies. So I set about counting mine. The first was that I was well started on my journey, for I couldn't be above two score miles from the Danube. The second was that I had Stumm's pass. I didn't see how I could use it, but there it was. Lastly I had plenty of money - fifty-three English sovereigns and the equivalent of three pounds in German paper which I had changed at the hotel.

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old Stumm. That was the biggest mercy of all.

I thought I'd better get some sleep, so I found a dryish hole

below an oak root and squeezed myself into it. The snow lay deep

in these woods and I was sopping wet up to the knees. All the

same I managed to sleep for some hours, and got up and shook

myself just as the winter's dawn was breaking through the tree

tops. Breakfast was the next thing, and I must find some

sort of dwelling.

Almost at once I struck a road, a big highway running north and

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south. I trotted along in the bitter morning to get my circulation started, and presently I began to feel a little better. In a little I saw a church spire, which meant a village. Stumm wouldn't be likely to have got on my tracks yet, I calculated, but there was always the chance that he had warned all the villages round by telephone and that they might be on the look-out for me. But that risk had to be taken, for I must have food.

it was the day before Christmas, I remembered, and people would be holidaying. The village was quite a big place, but at this hour - just after eight o'clock - there was nobody in the street

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except a wandering dog. I chose the most unassuming shop I could

find, where a little boy was taking down the shutters - one of those

general stores where they sell everything. The boy fetched a very

old woman, who hobbled in from the back, fitting on her spectacles.

'Gruss Gott,' she said in a friendly voice, and I took off my cap. I

saw from my reflection in a saucepan that I looked moderately

respectable in spite of my night in the woods.

I told her the story of how I was walking from Schwandorf to

see my mother at an imaginary place called judenfeld, banking on

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the ignorance of villagers about any place five miles from their homes. I said my luggage had gone astray, and I hadn't time to wait for it, since my leave was short. The old lady was sympathetic and unsuspecting. She sold me a pound of chocolate, a box of biscuits, the better part of a ham, two tins of sardines and a rucksack to carry them. I also bought some soap, a comb and a cheap razor, and a small Tourists' Guide, published by a Leipzig firm. As I was leaving I saw what seemed like garments hanging up in the back shop, and turned to have a look at them. They were the kind of thing that Germans wear on their summer walking tours - long shooting capes made of a green stuff they call loden. I bought one,

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and a green felt hat and an alpenstock to keep it company. Then

wishing the old woman and her belongings a merry Christmas, I

departed and took the shortest cut out of the village. There were

one or two people about now, but they did not seem to notice me.

I went into the woods again and walked for two miles till I

halted for breakfast. I was not feeling quite so fit now, and I did

not make much of my provisions, beyond eating a biscuit and some

chocolate. I felt very thirsty and longed for hot tea. In an icy pool I

washed and with infinite agony shaved my beard. That razor was

the worst of its species, and my eyes were running all the time with



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the pain of the operation. Then I took off the postman's coat and cap, and buried them below some bushes. I was now a clean-shaven German pedestrian with a green cape and hat, and an absurd walking-stick with an iron-shod end - the sort of person who roams in thousands over the Fatherland in summer, but is a rarish bird in mid-winter.

The Tourists' Guide was a fortunate purchase, for it contained a big map of Bavaria which gave me my bearings. I was certainly not forty miles from the Danube - more like thirty. The road through the village I had left would have taken me to it. I had only to walk

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due south and I would reach it before night. So far as I could make

out there were long tongues of forest running down to the river,

and I resolved to keep to the woodlands. At the worst I would

meet a forester or two, and I had a good enough story for them.

On the highroad there might be awkward questions.

When I started out again I felt very stiff and the cold seemed to

be growing intense. This puzzled me, for I had not minded it much

up to now, and, being warm-blooded by nature, it never used to

worry me. A sharp winter night on the high-veld was a long sight

chillier than anything I had struck so far in Europe. But now my

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teeth were chattering and the marrow seemed to be freezing in my bones.

The day had started bright and clear, but a wrack of grey clouds

soon covered the sky, and a wind from the east began to whistle.

As I stumbled along through the snowy undergrowth I kept longing

for bright warm places. I thought of those long days on the veld

when the earth was like a great yellow bowl, with white roads

running to the horizon and a tiny white farm basking in the heart

of it, with its blue dam and patches of bright green lucerne. I

thought of those baking days on the east coast, when the sea was

like mother-of-pearl and the sky one burning turquoise. But most

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of all I thought of warm scented noons on trek, when one dozed in  
the shadow of the wagon and sniffed the wood-smoke from the fire  
where the boys were cooking dinner.

From these pleasant pictures I returned to the beastly present -  
the thick snowy woods, the lowering sky, wet clothes, a hunted  
present, and a dismal future. I felt miserably depressed, and I  
couldn't think of any mercies to count. It struck me that I might be  
falling sick.

About midday I awoke with a start to the belief that I was being

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pursued. I cannot explain how or why the feeling came, except that it is a kind of instinct that men get who have lived much in wild countries. My senses, which had been numbed, suddenly grew keen, and my brain began to work double quick.

I asked myself what I would do if I were Stumm, with hatred in my heart, a broken jaw to avenge, and pretty well limitless powers.

He must have found the car in the sandpit and seen my tracks in the wood opposite. I didn't know how good he and his men might be at following a spoor, but I knew that any ordinary Kaffir could have nosed it out easily. But he didn't need to do that. This was a

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civilized country full of roads and railways. I must some time and  
somewhere come out of the woods. He could have all the roads  
watched, and the telephone would set everyone on my track within  
a radius of fifty miles. Besides, he would soon pick up my trail in  
the village I had visited that morning. From the map I learned that  
it was called Greif, and it was likely to live up to that name with me.

Presently I came to a rocky knoll which rose out of the forest.

Keeping well in shelter I climbed to the top and cautiously looked  
around me. Away to the east I saw the vale of a river with broad

fields and church-spires. West and south the forest rolled unbroken

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in a wilderness of snowy tree-tops. There was no sign of life anywhere, not even a bird, but I knew very well that behind me in the woods were men moving swiftly on my track, and that it was pretty well impossible for me to get away.

There was nothing for it but to go on till I dropped or was taken. I shaped my course south with a shade of west in it, for the map showed me that in that direction I would soonest strike the Danube. What I was going to do when I got there I didn't trouble to think. I had fixed the river as my immediate goal and the future must take care of itself.

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I was now certain that I had fever on me. It was still in my bones, as a legacy from Africa, and had come out once or twice when I was with the battalion in Hampshire. The bouts had been short for I had known of their coming and dosed myself. But now I had no quinine, and it looked as if I were in for a heavy go. It made me feel desperately wretched and stupid, and I all but blundered into capture.

For suddenly I came on a road and was going to cross it blindly, when a man rode slowly past on a bicycle. Luckily I was in the



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shade of a clump of hollies and he was not looking my way, though he was not three yards off. I crawled forward to reconnoitre. I saw about half a mile of road running straight through the forest and every two hundred yards was a bicyclist. They wore uniform and appeared to be acting as sentries.

This could only have one meaning. Stumm had picketed all the roads and cut me off in an angle of the woods. There was no chance of getting across unobserved. As I lay there with my heart sinking, I had the horrible feeling that the pursuit might be following me from behind, and that at any moment I would be enclosed

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between two fires.

For more than an hour I stayed there with my chin in the snow.

I didn't see any way out, and I was feeling so ill that I didn't seem

to care. Then my chance came suddenly out of the skies.

The wind rose, and a great gust of snow blew from the east. In five

minutes it was so thick that I couldn't see across the road. At first I

thought it a new addition to my troubles, and then very slowly I saw

the opportunity. I slipped down the bank and made ready to cross.

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I almost blundered into one of the bicyclists. He cried out and fell off his machine, but I didn't wait to investigate. A sudden access of strength came to me and I darted into the woods on the farther side. I knew I would be soon swallowed from sight in the drift, and I knew that the falling snow would hide my tracks. So I put my best foot forward.

I must have run miles before the hot fit passed, and I stopped from sheer bodily weakness. There was no sound except the crush of falling snow, the wind seemed to have gone, and the place was very solemn and quiet. But Heavens! how the snow fell! It was

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partly screened by the branches, but all the same it was piling itself  
up deep everywhere. My legs seemed made of lead, my head burned,  
and there were fiery pains over all my body. I stumbled on blindly,  
without a notion of any direction, determined only to keep going  
to the last. For I knew that if I once lay down I would never rise again.

When I was a boy I was fond of fairy tales, and most of the  
stories I remembered had been about great German forests and  
snow and charcoal burners and woodmen's huts. Once I had longed  
to see these things, and now I was fairly in the thick of them. There  
had been wolves, too, and I wondered idly if I should fall in with a

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pack. I felt myself getting light-headed. I fell repeatedly and laughed sillily every time. Once I dropped into a hole and lay for some time at the bottom giggling. If anyone had found me then he would have taken me for a madman.

The twilight of the forest grew dimmer, but I scarcely noticed it.

Evening was falling, and soon it would be night, a night without morning for me. My body was going on without the direction of my brain, for my mind was filled with craziness. I was like a drunk man who keeps running, for he knows that if he stops he will fall, and I had a sort of bet with myself not to lie down - not at any rate just yet. If I lay down I should feel the pain in my head worse.

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Once I had ridden for five days down country with fever on me  
and the flat bush trees had seemed to melt into one big mirage and  
dance quadrilles before my eyes. But then I had more or less kept  
my wits. Now I was fairly daft, and every minute growing dafter.

Then the trees seemed to stop and I was walking on flat ground.

it was a clearing, and before me twinkled a little light. The change

restored me to consciousness, and suddenly I felt with horrid

intensity the fire in my head and bones and the weakness of my

limbs. I longed to sleep, and I had a notion that a place to sleep was

before me. I moved towards the light and presently saw through a

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screen of snow the outline of a cottage.

I had no fear, only an intolerable longing to lie down. Very

slowly I made my way to the door and knocked. My weakness was

so great that I could hardly lift my hand.

There were voices within, and a corner of the curtain was lifted

from the window. Then the door opened and a woman stood

before me, a woman with a thin, kindly face.

'Gruss Gott,' she said, while children peeped from behind her

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skirts.

'Gruss Gott,' I replied. I leaned against the door-post, and speech

forsook me.

She saw my condition. 'Come in, Sir,' she said. 'You are sick and

it is no weather for a sick man.'

I stumbled after her and stood dripping in the centre of the little

kitchen, while three wondering children stared at me. It was a poor

place, scantily furnished, but a good log-fire burned on the hearth.



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The shock of warmth gave me one of those minutes of self-

possession which comes sometimes in the middle of a fever.

'I am sick, mother, and I have walked far in the storm and lost

my way. I am from Africa, where the climate is hot, and your cold

brings me fever. It will pass in a day or two if you can give me a bed.'

'You are welcome,' she said; 'but first I will make you coffee.'

I took off my dripping cloak, and crouched close to the hearth.

She gave me coffee - poor washy stuff, but blessedly hot. Poverty

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was spelled large in everything I saw. I felt the tides of fever

beginning to overflow my brain again, and I made a great attempt

to set my affairs straight before I was overtaken. With difficulty I

took out Stumm's pass from my pocket-book.

'That is my warrant,' I said. 'I am a member of the Imperial

Secret Service and for the sake of my work I must move in the

dark. If you will permit it, mother, I will sleep till I am better, but

no one must know that I am here. If anyone comes, you must deny

my presence.'

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She looked at the big seal as if it were a talisman.

'Yes, yes,' she said, 'you will have the bed in the garret and be

left in peace till you are well. We have no neighbours near, and the

storm will shut the roads. I will be silent, I and the little ones.'

My head was beginning to swim, but I made one more effort.

'There is food in my rucksack - biscuits and ham and chocolate.

Pray take it for your use. And here is some money to buy Christmas

fare for the little ones.' And I gave her some of the German notes.

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After that my recollection becomes dim. She helped me up a ladder to the garret, undressed me, and gave me a thick coarse nightgown. I seem to remember that she kissed my hand, and that she was crying. 'The good Lord has sent you,' she said. 'Now the little ones will have their prayers answered and the Christkind will not pass by our door.'

## CHAPTER EIGHT

The Essen Barges

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I lay for four days like a log in that garret bed. The storm died  
down, the thaw set in, and the snow melted. The children played  
about the doors and told stories at night round the fire. Stumm's  
myrmidons no doubt beset every road and troubled the lives of  
innocent wayfarers. But no one came near the cottage, and the  
fever worked itself out while I lay in peace.

It was a bad bout, but on the fifth day it left me, and I lay, as  
weak as a kitten, staring at the rafters and the little skylight. It was  
a leaky, draughty old place, but the woman of the cottage had

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heaped deerskins and blankets on my bed and kept me warm. She came in now and then, and once she brought me a brew of some bitter herbs which greatly refreshed me. A little thin porridge was all the food I could eat, and some chocolate made from the slabs in my rucksack.

I lay and dozed through the day, hearing the faint chatter of children below, and getting stronger hourly. Malaria passes as quickly as it comes and leaves a man little the worse, though this was one of the sharpest turns I ever had. As I lay I thought, and my thoughts followed curious lines. One queer thing was that

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Stumm and his doings seemed to have been shot back into a  
lumber-room of my brain and the door locked. He didn't seem to be  
a creature of the living present, but a distant memory on which I  
could look calmly. I thought a good deal about my battalion and  
the comedy of my present position. You see I was getting better,  
for I called it comedy now, not tragedy.

But chiefly I thought of my mission. All that wild day in the  
snow it had seemed the merest farce. The three words Harry Bullivant  
had scribbled had danced through my head in a crazy fandango.  
They were present to me now, but coolly and sanely in all their

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meagreness.

I remember that I took each one separately and chewed on it for

hours. \_Kasredin - there was nothing to be got out of that. \_Cancer -

there were too many meanings, all blind. \_V. \_I - that was the worst

gibberish of all.

Before this I had always taken the I as the letter of the alphabet. I

had thought the v. must stand for von, and I had considered the

German names beginning with I - Ingolstadt, Ingeburg, Ingenohl,

and all the rest of them. I had made a list of about seventy at the



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British Museum before I left London.

Now I suddenly found myself taking the I as the numeral One.

Idly, not thinking what I was doing, I put it into German.

Then I nearly fell out of the bed. Von Einem - the name I had

heard at Gaudian's house, the name Stumm had spoken behind his

hand, the name to which Hilda was probably the prefix. It was a

tremendous discovery - the first real bit of light I had found. Harry

Bullivant knew that some man or woman called von Einem was at

the heart of the mystery. Stumm had spoken of the same personage

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with respect and in connection with the work I proposed to do in

raising the Moslem Africans. If I found von Einem I would be

getting very warm. What was the word that Stumm had whispered

to Gaudian and scared that worthy? It had sounded like \_uhnmantl. If

I could only get that clear, I would solve the riddle.

I think that discovery completed my cure. At any rate on the

evening of the fifth day - it was Wednesday, the 29th of December

- I was well enough to get up. When the dark had fallen and it was

too late to fear a visitor, I came downstairs and, wrapped in my

green cape, took a seat by the fire.

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As we sat there in the firelight, with the three white-headed children staring at me with saucer eyes, and smiling when I looked their way, the woman talked. Her man had gone to the wars on the Eastern front, and the last she had heard from him he was in a Polish bog and longing for his dry native woodlands. The struggle meant little to her. It was an act of God, a thunderbolt out of the sky, which had taken a husband from her, and might soon make her a widow and her children fatherless. She knew nothing of its causes and purposes, and thought of the Russians as a gigantic nation of savages, heathens who had never been converted, and

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who would eat up German homes if the good Lord and the brave

German soldiers did not stop them. I tried hard to find out if she

had any notion of affairs in the West, but she hadn't, beyond the

fact that there was trouble with the French. I doubt if she knew of

England's share in it. She was a decent soul, with no bitterness

against anybody, not even the Russians if they would spare her man.

That night I realized the crazy folly of war. When I saw the

splintered shell of Ypres and heard hideous tales of German doings,

I used to want to see the whole land of the Boche given up to fire

and sword. I thought we could never end the war properly without

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giving the Huns some of their own medicine. But that woodcutter's cottage cured me of such nightmares. I was for punishing the guilty but letting the innocent go free. It was our business to thank God and keep our hands clean from the ugly blunders to which Germany's madness had driven her. What good would it do Christian folk to burn poor little huts like this and leave children's bodies by the wayside? To be able to laugh and to be merciful are the only things that make man better than the beasts.

The place, as I have said, was desperately poor. The woman's face had the skin stretched tight over the bones and that

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transparency which means under-feeding; I fancied she did not have the liberal allowance that soldiers' wives get in England. The children looked better nourished, but it was by their mother's sacrifice. I did my best to cheer them up. I told them long yarns about Africa and lions and tigers, and I got some pieces of wood and whittled them into toys. I am fairly good with a knife, and I carved very presentable likenesses of a monkey, a springbok, and a rhinoceros. The children went to bed hugging the first toys, I expect, they ever possessed.

It was clear to me that I must leave as soon as possible. I had to

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get on with my business, and besides, it was not fair to the woman.

Any moment I might be found here, and she would get into

trouble for harbouring me. I asked her if she knew where the

Danube was, and her answer surprised me. 'You will reach it in an

hour's walk,' she said. 'The track through the wood runs straight

to the ferry.'

Next morning after breakfast I took my departure. It was drizzling

weather, and I was feeling very lean. Before going I presented

my hostess and the children with two sovereigns apiece. 'It is

English gold,' I said, 'for I have to travel among our enemies and

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use our enemies' money. But the gold is good, and if you go to any town they will change it for you. But I advise you to put it in your stocking-foot and use it only if all else fails. You must keep your home going, for some day there will be peace and your man will come back from the wars.'

I kissed the children, shook the woman's hand, and went off down the clearing. They had cried 'Auf Wiedersehen,' but it wasn't likely I would ever see them again.

The snow had all gone, except in patches in the deep hollows.

The ground was like a full sponge, and a cold rain drifted in my



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eyes. After half an hour's steady trudge the trees thinned, and presently I came out on a knuckle of open ground cloaked in dwarf junipers. And there before me lay the plain, and a mile off a broad brimming river.

I sat down and looked dismally at the prospect. The exhilaration of my discovery the day before had gone. I had stumbled on a worthless piece of knowledge, for I could not use it. Hilda von Einem, if such a person existed and possessed the great secret, was probably living in some big house in Berlin, and I was about as likely to get anything out of her as to be asked to dine with the

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Kaiser. Blenkiron might do something, but where on earth was

Blenkiron? I dared say Sir Walter would value the information, but

I could not get to Sir Walter. I was to go on to Constantinople,

running away from the people who really pulled the ropes. But if I

stayed I could do nothing, and I could not stay. I must go on and I

didn't see how I could go on. Every course seemed shut to me, and

I was in as pretty a tangle as any man ever stumbled into.

For I was morally certain that Stumm would not let the thing

drop. I knew too much, and besides I had outraged his pride. He

would beat the countryside till he got me, and he undoubtedly

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would get me if I waited much longer. But how was I to get over the border? My passport would be no good, for the number of that pass would long ere this have been wired to every police-station in Germany, and to produce it would be to ask for trouble. Without it I could not cross the borders by any railway. My studies of the Tourists' Guide had suggested that once I was in Austria I might find things slacker and move about easier. I thought of having a try at the Tyrol and I also thought of Bohemia. But these places were a long way off, and there were several thousand chances each day that I would be caught on the road.

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This was Thursday, the 30th of December, the second last day of the year. I was due in Constantinople on the 17th of January.

Constantinople! I had thought myself a long way from it in Berlin, but now it seemed as distant as the moon.

But that big sullen river in front of me led to it. And as I looked my attention was caught by a curious sight. On the far eastern horizon, where the water slipped round a corner of hill, there was a long trail of smoke. The streamers thinned out, and seemed to come from some boat well round the corner, but I could see at least two boats in view. Therefore there must be a long train of barges,

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with a tug in tow.

I looked to the west and saw another such procession coming

into sight. First went a big river steamer - it can't have been much

less than 1,000 tons - and after came a string of barges. I counted

no less than six besides the tug. They were heavily loaded and their

draught must have been considerable, but there was plenty of depth

in the flooded river.

A moment's reflection told me what I was looking at. Once

Sandy, in one of the discussions you have in hospital, had told us

just how the Germans munitioned their Balkan campaign. They

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were pretty certain of dishing Serbia at the first go, and it was up to them to get through guns and shells to the old Turk, who was running pretty short in his first supply. Sandy said that they wanted the railway, but they wanted still more the river, and they could make certain of that in a week. He told us how endless strings of barges, loaded up at the big factories of Westphalia, were moving through the canals from the Rhine or the Elbe to the Danube. Once the first reached Turkey, there would be regular delivery, you see - as quick as the Turks could handle the stuff. And they didn't return empty, Sandy said, but came back full of Turkish cotton and Bulgarian beef and Rumanian corn. I don't know where Sandy got

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the knowledge, but there was the proof of it before my eyes.

It was a wonderful sight, and I could have gnashed my teeth to

see those loads of munitions going snugly off to the enemy. I

calculated they would give our poor chaps hell in Gallipoli. And

then, as I looked, an idea came into my head and with it an eighth

part of a hope.

There was only one way for me to get out of Germany, and that

was to leave in such good company that I would be asked no

questions. That was plain enough. If I travelled to Turkey, for

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instance, in the Kaiser's suite, I would be as safe as the mail; but if I

went on my own I was done. I had, so to speak, to get my passport

inside Germany, to join some caravan which had free marching

powers. And there was the kind of caravan before me - the Essen

barges.

It sounded lunacy, for I guessed that munitions of war would be

as jealously guarded as old Hindenburg's health. All the safer, I

replied to myself, once I get there. If you are looking for a deserter

you don't seek him at the favourite regimental public-house. If

you're after a thief, among the places you'd be apt to leave



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unsearched would be Scotland Yard.

It was sound reasoning, but how was I to get on board? Probably

the beastly things did not stop once in a hundred miles, and Stumm

would get me long before I struck a halting-place. And even if I

did get a chance like that, how was I to get permission to travel?

One step was clearly indicated - to get down to the river bank at

once. So I set off at a sharp walk across squelchy fields, till I struck

a road where the ditches had overflowed so as almost to meet in the

middle. The place was so bad that I hoped travellers might be few.

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And as I trudged, my thoughts were busy with my prospects as a stowaway. If I bought food, I might get a chance to lie snug on one of the barges. They would not break bulk till they got to their journey's end.

Suddenly I noticed that the steamer, which was now abreast me, began to move towards the shore, and as I came over a low rise, I saw on my left a straggling village with a church, and a small landing-stage. The houses stood about a quarter of a mile from the stream, and between them was a straight, poplar-fringed road.

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Soon there could be no doubt about it. The procession was coming to a standstill. The big tug nosed her way in and lay up alongside the pier, where in that season of flood there was enough depth of water. She signalled to the barges and they also started to drop anchors, which showed that there must be at least two men aboard each. Some of them dragged a bit and it was rather a cock-eyed train that lay in mid-stream. The tug got out a gangway, and from where I lay I saw half a dozen men leave it, carrying something on their shoulders.

It could be only one thing - a dead body. Someone of the crew

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must have died, and this halt was to bury him. I watched the procession move towards the village and I reckoned they would take some time there, though they might have wired ahead for a grave to be dug. Anyhow, they would be long enough to give me a chance.

For I had decided upon the brazen course. Blenkiron had said you couldn't cheat the Boche, but you could bluff him. I was going to put up the most monstrous bluff. If the whole countryside was hunting for Richard Hannay, Richard Hannay would walk through as a pal of the hunters. For I remembered the pass Stumm had

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given me. If that was worth a tinker's curse it should be good

enough to impress a ship's captain.

Of course there were a thousand risks. They might have heard of

me in the village and told the ship's party the story. For that reason

I resolved not to go there but to meet the sailors when they were

returning to the boat. Or the captain might have been warned and

got the number of my pass, in which case Stumm would have his

hands on me pretty soon. Or the captain might be an ignorant

fellow who had never seen a Secret Service pass and did not know

what it meant, and would refuse me transport by the letter of his

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instructions. In that case I might wait on another convoy.

I had shaved and made myself a fairly respectable figure before I

left the cottage. It was my cue to wait for the men when they left

the church, wait on that quarter-mile of straight highway. I judged

the captain must be in the party. The village, I was glad to observe,

seemed very empty. I have my own notions about the Bavarians as

fighting men, but I am bound to say that, judging by my observations,

very few of them stayed at home.

That funeral took hours. They must have had to dig the grave,

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for I waited near the road in a clump of cherry-trees, with my feet

in two inches of mud and water, till I felt chilled to the bone. I

prayed to God it would not bring back my fever, for I was only

one day out of bed. I had very little tobacco left in my pouch, but I

stood myself one pipe, and I ate one of the three cakes of chocolate

I still carried.

At last, well after midday, I could see the ship's party returning.

They marched two by two and I was thankful to see that they had

no villagers with them. I walked to the road, turned up it, and met

the vanguard, carrying my head as high as I knew how.

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'Where's your captain?' I asked, and a man jerked his thumb

over his shoulder. The others wore thick jerseys and knitted caps,

but there was one man at the rear in uniform.

He was a short, broad man with a weather-beaten face and an

anxious eye.

'May I have a word with you, Herr Captain?' I said, with what I

hoped was a judicious blend of authority and conciliation.



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He nodded to his companion, who walked on.

'Yes?' he asked rather impatiently.

I proffered him my pass. Thank Heaven he had seen the kind of thing before, for his face at once took on that curious look which one person in authority always wears when he is confronted with another. He studied it closely and then raised his eyes.

'Well, Sir?' he said. 'I observe your credentials. What can I do for you?'

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'I take it you are bound for Constantinople?' I asked.

'The boats go as far as Rustchuk,' he replied. 'There the stuff is transferred to the railway.'

'And you reach Rustchuk when?'

'In ten days, bar accidents. Let us say twelve to be safe.'

'I want to accompany you,' I said. 'In my profession, Herr

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Captain, it is necessary sometimes to make journeys by other than the common route. That is now my desire. I have the right to call upon some other branch of our country's service to help me. Hence my request.'

Very plainly he did not like it.

'I must telegraph about it. My instructions are to let no one aboard, not even a man like you. I am sorry, Sir, but I must get authority first before I can fall in with your desire. Besides, my boat is ill-found. You had better wait for the next batch and ask Dreyser

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to take you. I lost Walter today. He was ill when he came aboard -

a disease of the heart - but he would not be persuaded. And last

night he died.'

'Was that him you have been burying?' I asked.

'Even so. He was a good man and my wife's cousin, and now I

have no engineer. Only a fool of a boy from Hamburg. I have just

come from wiring to my owners for a fresh man, but even if he

comes by the quickest train he will scarcely overtake us before

Vienna or even Buda.'

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I saw light at last.

'We will go together,' I said, 'and cancel that wire. For behold,

Herr Captain, I am an engineer, and will gladly keep an eye on your

boilers till we get to Rustchuk.'

He looked at me doubtfully.

'I am speaking truth,' I said. 'Before the war I was an engineer in

Damaraland. Mining was my branch, but I had a good general

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training, and I know enough to run a river-boat. Have no fear. I

promise you I will earn my passage.'

His face cleared, and he looked what he was, an honest, good-

humoured North German seaman.

'Come then in God's name,' he cried, 'and we will make a

bargain. I will let the telegraph sleep. I require authority from the

Government to take a passenger, but I need none to engage a new

engineer.'

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He sent one of the hands back to the village to cancel his wire.

In ten minutes I found myself on board, and ten minutes later we

were out in mid-stream and our tows were lumbering into line.

Coffee was being made ready in the cabin, and while I waited for it

I picked up the captain's binoculars and scanned the place I had left.

I saw some curious things. On the first road I had struck on

leaving the cottage there were men on bicycles moving rapidly.

They seemed to wear uniform. On the next parallel road, the one

that ran through the village, I could see others. I noticed, too, that

several figures appeared to be beating the intervening fields.

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Stumm's cordon had got busy at last, and I thanked my stars that

not one of the villagers had seen me. I had not got away much too

soon, for in another half-hour he would have had me.

## CHAPTER NINE

### The Return of the Straggler

Before I turned in that evening I had done some good hours' work

in the engine-room. The boat was oil-fired, and in very fair order,



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so my duties did not look as if they would be heavy. There was nobody who could be properly called an engineer; only, besides the furnace-men, a couple of lads from Hamburg who had been a year ago apprentices in a ship-building yard. They were civil fellows, both of them consumptive, who did what I told them and said little. By bedtime, if you had seen me in my blue jumper, a pair of carpet slippers, and a flat cap - all the property of the deceased Walter - you would have sworn I had been bred to the firing of river-boats, whereas I had acquired most of my knowledge on one run down the Zambesi, when the proper engineer got drunk and fell overboard among the crocodiles.

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The captain - they called him Schenk - was out of his bearings in the job. He was a Frisian and a first-class deep-water seaman, but, since he knew the Rhine delta, and because the German mercantile marine was laid on the ice till the end of war, they had turned him on to this show. He was bored by the business, and didn't understand it very well. The river charts puzzled him, and though it was pretty plain going for hundreds of miles, yet he was in a perpetual fidget about the pilotage. You could see that he would have been far more in his element smelling his way through the shoals of the Ems mouth, or beating against a northeaster in the

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shallow Baltic. He had six barges in tow, but the heavy flood of the

Danube made it an easy job except when it came to going slow.

There were two men on each barge, who came aboard every morning

to draw rations. That was a funny business, for we never lay to

if we could help it. There was a dinghy belonging to each barge,

and the men used to row to the next and get a lift in that barge's

dinghy, and so forth. Six men would appear in the dinghy of the

barge nearest us and carry off supplies for the rest. The men were

mostly Frisians, slow-spoken, sandy-haired lads, very like the breed

you strike on the Essex coast.

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It was the fact that Schenk was really a deep-water sailor, and so a novice to the job, that made me get on with him. He was a good fellow and quite willing to take a hint, so before I had been twenty-four hours on board he was telling me all his difficulties, and I was doing my best to cheer him. And difficulties came thick, because the next night was New Year's Eve.

I knew that that night was a season of gaiety in Scotland, but Scotland wasn't in it with the Fatherland. Even Schenk, though he was in charge of valuable stores and was voyaging against time, was quite clear that the men must have permission for some kind of

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beano. just before darkness we came abreast a fair-sized town,

whose name I never discovered, and decided to lie to for the night.

The arrangement was that one man should be left on guard in each

barge, and the other get four hours' leave ashore. Then he would

return and relieve his friend, who should proceed to do the same

thing. I foresaw that there would be some fun when the first batch

returned, but I did not dare to protest. I was desperately anxious to

get past the Austrian frontier, for I had a half-notion we might be

searched there, but Schenk took his \_Sylvesterabend business so

seriously that I would have risked a row if I had tried to argue.

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The upshot was what I expected. We got the first batch aboard about midnight, blind to the world, and the others straggled in at all hours next morning. I stuck to the boat for obvious reasons, but next day it became too serious, and I had to go ashore with the captain to try and round up the stragglers. We got them all in but two, and I am inclined to think these two had never meant to come back. If I had a soft job like a river-boat I shouldn't be inclined to run away in the middle of Germany with the certainty that my best fate would be to be scooped up for the trenches, but your Frisian has no more imagination than a haddock. The absentees were both watchmen from the barges, and I fancy the monotony of the life

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had got on their nerves.

The captain was in a raging temper, for he was short-handed to begin with. He would have started a press-gang, but there was no superfluity of men in that township: nothing but boys and grandfathers.

As I was helping to run the trip I was pretty annoyed also, and I sluiced down the drunkards with icy Danube water, using all the worst language I knew in Dutch and German. It was a raw morning, and as we raged through the river-side streets I remember I heard the dry crackle of wild geese going overhead, and wished I could get a shot at them. I told one fellow - he was the most

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troublesome - that he was a disgrace to a great Empire, and was

only fit to fight with the filthy English.

'God in Heaven!' said the captain, 'we can delay no longer. We

must make shift the best we can. I can spare one man from the deck

hands, and you must give up one from the engine-room.'

That was arranged, and we were tearing back rather short in the

wind when I espied a figure sitting on a bench beside the booking-

office on the pier. It was a slim figure, in an old suit of khaki: some

cast-off duds which had long lost the semblance of a uniform. It had



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a gentle face, and was smoking peacefully, looking out upon the river and the boats and us noisy fellows with meek philosophical eyes. If I had seen General French sitting there and looking like nothing on earth I couldn't have been more surprised.

The man stared at me without recognition. He was waiting for his cue.

I spoke rapidly in Sesutu, for I was afraid the captain might know Dutch.

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'Where have you come from?' I asked.

'They shut me up in \_trunk,' said Peter, 'and I ran away. I am

tired, Cornelis, and want to continue the journey by boat.'

'Remember you have worked for me in Africa,' I said. 'You are just

home from Damaraland. You are a German who has lived thirty years  
away

from home. You can tend a furnace and have worked in mines.'

Then I spoke to the captain.

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'Here is a fellow who used to be in my employ, Captain Schenk.

It's almighty luck we've struck him. He's old, and not very strong

in the head, but I'll go bail he's a good worker. He says he'll come

with us and I can use him in the engine-room.'

'Stand up,' said the Captain.

Peter stood up, light and slim and wiry as a leopard. A sailor

does not judge men by girth and weight.

'He'll do,' said Schenk, and the next minute he was readjusting

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his crews and giving the strayed revellers the rough side of his tongue. As it chanced, I couldn't keep Peter with me, but had to send him to one of the barges, and I had time for no more than five words with him, when I told him to hold his tongue and live up to his reputation as a half-wit. That accursed \_Sylvesterabend had played havoc with the whole outfit, and the captain and I were weary men before we got things straight.

In one way it turned out well. That afternoon we passed the frontier and I never knew it till I saw a man in a strange uniform come aboard, who copied some figures on a schedule, and brought

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us a mail. With my dirty face and general air of absorption in duty,

I must have been an unsuspecting figure. He took down the names

of the men in the barges, and Peter's name was given as it appeared

on the ship's roll - Anton Blum.

'You must feel it strange, Herr Brandt,' said the captain, 'to be

scrutinized by a policeman, you who give orders, I doubt not, to

many policemen.'

I shrugged my shoulders. 'It is my profession. It is my business

to go unrecognized often by my own servants.' I could see that I

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was becoming rather a figure in the captain's eyes. He liked the way

I kept the men up to their work, for I hadn't been a nigger-driver

for nothing.

Late on that Sunday night we passed through a great city which

the captain told me was Vienna. It seemed to last for miles and

miles, and to be as brightly lit as a circus. After that, we were in big

plains and the air grew perishing cold. Peter had come aboard once

for his rations, but usually he left it to his partner, for he was lying

very low. But one morning - I think it was the 5th of January,

when we had passed Buda and were moving through great sodden

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flats just sprinkled with snow - the captain took it into his head to

get me to overhaul the barge loads. Armed with a mighty type-

written list, I made a tour of the barges, beginning with the hindmost.

There was a fine old stock of deadly weapons - mostly

machine-guns and some field-pieces, and enough shells to blow up

the Gallipoli peninsula. All kinds of shell were there, from the big

14-inch crumps to rifle grenades and trench-mortars. It made me

fairly sick to see all these good things preparing for our own

fellows, and I wondered whether I would not be doing my best

service if I engineered a big explosion. Happily I had the common

sense to remember my job and my duty and to stick to it.

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Peter was in the middle of the convoy, and I found him pretty

unhappy, principally through not being allowed to smoke. His

companion was an ox-eyed lad, whom I ordered to the look-out while

Peter and I went over the lists.

'Cornelis, my old friend,' he said, 'there are some pretty toys

here. With a spanner and a couple of clear hours I could make these

maxims about as deadly as bicycles. What do you say to a try?'

'I've considered that,' I said, 'but it won't do. We're on a bigger



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business than wrecking munition convoys. I want to know how  
you got here.'

He smiled with that extraordinary Sunday-school docility of his.

'It was very simple, Cornelis. I was foolish in the cafe - but they  
have told you of that. You see I was angry and did not reflect.

They had separated us, and I could see would treat me as dirt.

Therefore, my bad temper came out, for, as I have told you, I do  
not like Germans.'

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Peter gazed lovingly at the little bleak farms which dotted the  
Hungarian plain.

'All night I lay in \_trunk with no food. In the morning they fed  
me, and took me hundreds of miles in a train to a place which I  
think is called Neuburg. It was a great prison, full of English  
officers ... I asked myself many times on the journey what was the  
reason of this treatment, for I could see no sense in it. If they  
wanted to punish me for insulting them they had the chance to  
send me off to the trenches. No one could have objected. If they  
thought me useless they could have turned me back to Holland. I

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could not have stopped them. But they treated me as if I were a dangerous man, whereas all their conduct hitherto had shown that they thought me a fool. I could not understand it.

'But I had not been one night in that Neuburg place before I thought of the reason. They wanted to keep me under observation as a check upon you, Cornelis. I figured it out this way. They had given you some very important work which required them to let you into some big secret. So far, good. They evidently thought much of you, even yon Stumm man, though he was as rude as a buffalo. But they did not know you fully, and they wanted to check on you. That

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check they found in Peter Pienaar. Peter was a fool, and if there was anything to blab, sooner or later Peter would blab it. Then they would stretch out a long arm and nip you short, wherever you were. Therefore they must keep old Peter under their eye.'

'That sounds likely enough,' I said.

'It was God's truth,' said Peter. 'And when it was all clear to me I settled that I must escape. Partly because I am a free man and do not like to be in prison, but mostly because I was not sure of myself. Some day my temper would go again, and I might say

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foolish things for which Cornelis would suffer. So it was very certain that I must escape.

'Now, Cornelis, I noticed pretty soon that there were two kinds among the prisoners. There were the real prisoners, mostly English and French, and there were humbugs. The humbugs were treated, apparently, like the others, but not really, as I soon perceived.

There was one man who passed as an English officer, another as a French Canadian, and the others called themselves Russians. None of the honest men suspected them, but they were there as spies to hatch plots for escape and get the poor devils caught in the act, and

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to worm out confidences which might be of value. That is the German notion of good business. I am not a British soldier to think all men are gentlemen. I know that amongst men there are desperate \_skellums, so I soon picked up this game. It made me very angry, but it was a good thing for my plan. I made my resolution to escape the day I arrived at Neuburg, and on Christmas Day I had a plan made.'

'Peter, you're an old marvel. Do you mean to say you were quite certain of getting away whenever you wanted?'

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'Quite certain, Cornelis. You see, I have been wicked in my time and know something about the inside of prisons. You may build them like great castles, or they may be like a backveld \_tronk, only mud and corrugated iron, but there is always a key and a man who keeps it, and that man can be bested. I knew I could get away, but I did not think it would be so easy. That was due to the bogus prisoners, my friends, the spies.

'I made great pals with them. On Christmas night we were very jolly together. I think I spotted every one of them the first day. I bragged about my past and all I had done, and I told them I was

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going to escape. They backed me up and promised to help. Next

morning I had a plan. In the afternoon, just after dinner, I had to

go to the commandant's room. They treated me a little differently

from the others, for I was not a prisoner of war, and I went there

to be asked questions and to be cursed as a stupid Dutchman.

There was no strict guard kept there, for the place was on the

second floor, and distant by many yards from any staircase. In the

corridor outside the commandant's room there was a window which

had no bars, and four feet from the window the limb of a great

tree. A man might reach that limb, and if he were active as a

monkey might descend to the ground. Beyond that I knew nothing,



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but I am a good climber, Cornelis.

I told the others of my plan. They said it was good, but no one

offered to come with me. They were very noble; they declared that

the scheme was mine and I should have the fruit of it, for if more

than one tried, detection was certain. I agreed and thanked them -

thanked them with tears in my eyes. Then one of them very secretly

produced a map. We planned out my road, for I was going straight

to Holland. It was a long road, and I had no money, for they had

taken all my sovereigns when I was arrested, but they promised to

get a subscription up among themselves to start me. Again I wept

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tears of gratitude. This was on Sunday, the day after Christmas,

and I settled to make the attempt on the Wednesday afternoon.

'Now, Cornelis, when the lieutenant took us to see the British

prisoners, you remember, he told us many things about the ways of

prisons. He told us how they loved to catch a man in the act of

escape, so that they could use him harshly with a clear conscience. I

thought of that, and calculated that now my friends would have

told everything to the commandant, and that they would be waiting

to bottle me on the Wednesday. Till then I reckoned I would be

slackly guarded, for they would look on me as safe in the net ...

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'So I went out of the window next day. It was the Monday

afternoon ...'

'That was a bold stroke,' I said admiringly.

'The plan was bold, but it was not skilful,' said Peter modestly. 'I

had no money beyond seven marks, and I had but one stick of

chocolate. I had no overcoat, and it was snowing hard. Further, I

could not get down the tree, which had a trunk as smooth and

branchless as a blue gum. For a little I thought I should be

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compelled to give in, and I was not happy.

'But I had leisure, for I did not think I would be missed before

nightfall, and given time a man can do most things. By and by I

found a branch which led beyond the outer wall of the yard and

hung above the river. This I followed, and then dropped from it

into the stream. It was a drop of some yards, and the water was

very swift, so that I nearly drowned. I would rather swim the

Limpopo, Cornelis, among all the crocodiles than that icy river.

Yet I managed to reach the shore and get my breath lying in the

bushes ...

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'After that it was plain going, though I was very cold. I knew that I would be sought on the northern roads, as I had told my friends, for no one could dream of an ignorant Dutchman going south away from his kinsfolk. But I had learned enough from the map to know that our road lay south-east, and I had marked this big river.'

'Did you hope to pick me up?' I asked.

'No, Cornelis. I thought you would be travelling in first-class carriages while I should be plodding on foot. But I was set on

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getting to the place you spoke of (how do you call it? Constant

Nople?), where our big business lay. I thought I might be in time

for that.'

'You're an old Trojan, Peter,' I said; 'but go on. How did you

get to that landing-stage where I found you?'

'It was a hard journey,' he said meditatively. 'It was not easy to

get beyond the barbed-wire entanglements which surrounded Neuburg -

yes, even across the river. But in time I reached the woods

and was safe, for I did not think any German could equal me in

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wild country. The best of them, even their foresters, are but babes

in veldcraft compared with such as me ... My troubles came only

from hunger and cold. Then I met a Peruvian smouse, and sold

him my clothes and bought from him these. [Peter meant a

Polish-Jew pedlar.] I did not want to part with my own, which were

better, but he gave me ten marks on the deal. After that I went into a

village and ate heavily.'

'Were you pursued?' I asked.

'I do not think so. They had gone north, as I expected, and were

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looking for me at the railway stations which my friends had marked  
for me. I walked happily and put a bold face on it. If I saw a man  
or woman look at me suspiciously I went up to them at once and  
talked. I told a sad tale, and all believed it. I was a poor Dutchman  
travelling home on foot to see a dying mother, and I had been told  
that by the Danube I should find the main railway to take me to  
Holland. There were kind people who gave me food, and one  
woman gave me half a mark, and wished me God speed ... Then  
on the last day of the year I came to the river and found many  
drunkards.'



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'Was that when you resolved to get on one of the river-boats?'

'\_Ja, Cornelis. As soon as I heard of the boats I saw where my

chance lay. But you might have knocked me over with a straw

when I saw you come on shore. That was good fortune, my friend

... I have been thinking much about the Germans, and I will tell

you the truth. It is only boldness that can baffle them. They are a

most diligent people. They will think of all likely difficulties, but

not of all possible ones. They have not much imagination. They are

like steam engines which must keep to prepared tracks. There they

will hunt any man down, but let him trek for open country and

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they will be at a loss. Therefore boldness, my friend; for ever

boldness. Remember as a nation they wear spectacles, which means

that they are always peering.'

Peter broke off to gloat over the wedges of geese and the strings

of wild swans that were always winging across those plains. His

tale had bucked me up wonderfully. Our luck had held beyond all

belief, and I had a kind of hope in the business now which had

been wanting before. That afternoon, too, I got another fillip.

I came on deck for a breath of air and found it pretty cold after

the heat of the engine-room. So I called to one of the deck hands to

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fetch me up my cloak from the cabin - the same I had bought that  
first morning in the Greif village.

'Der \_grune \_mantel?' the man shouted up, and I cried, 'Yes'. But the  
words seemed to echo in my ears, and long after he had given me  
the garment I stood staring abstractedly over the bulwarks.

His tone had awakened a chord of memory, or, to be accurate,  
they had given emphasis to what before had been only blurred and  
vague. For he had spoken the words which Stumm had uttered  
behind his hand to Gaudian. I had heard something like 'Uhnmantl,'

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and could make nothing of it. Now I was as certain of those words as of my own existence. They had been '\_Grune \_mantel'. \_Grune \_mantel, whatever it might be, was the name which Stumm had not meant me to hear, which was some talisman for the task I had proposed, and which was connected in some way with the mysterious von Einem.

This discovery put me in high fettle. I told myself that, considering the difficulties, I had managed to find out a wonderful amount in a very few days. It only shows what a man can do with the slenderest evidence if he keeps chewing and chewing on it ...

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Two mornings later we lay alongside the quays at Belgrade, and

I took the opportunity of stretching my legs. Peter had come

ashore for a smoke, and we wandered among the battered riverside

streets, and looked at the broken arches of the great railway bridge

which the Germans were working at like beavers. There was a big

temporary pontoon affair to take the railway across, but I calculated

that the main bridge would be ready inside a month. It was a

clear, cold, blue day, and as one looked south one saw ridge after

ridge of snowy hills. The upper streets of the city were still fairly

whole, and there were shops open where food could be got. I

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remember hearing English spoken, and seeing some Red Cross

nurses in the custody of Austrian soldiers coming from the

railway station.

It would have done me a lot of good to have had a word

with them. I thought of the gallant people whose capital this had

been, how three times they had flung the Austrians back over

the Danube, and then had only been beaten by the black treachery

of their so-called allies. Somehow that morning in Belgrade gave

both Peter and me a new purpose in our task. It was our business

to put a spoke in the wheel of this monstrous bloody juggernaut

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that was crushing the life out of the little heroic nations.

We were just getting ready to cast off when a distinguished party

arrived at the quay. There were all kinds of uniforms - German,

Austrian, and Bulgarian, and amid them one stout gentleman in a

fur coat and a black felt hat. They watched the barges up-anchor,

and before we began to jerk into line I could hear their conversation.

The fur coat was talking English.

'I reckon that's pretty good noos, General,' it said; 'if the English

have run away from Gally-poly we can use these noo consignments

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for the bigger game. I guess it won't be long before we see the

British lion moving out of Egypt with sore paws.'

They all laughed. 'The privilege of that spectacle may soon be

ours,' was the reply.

I did not pay much attention to the talk; indeed I did not realize

till weeks later that that was the first tidings of the great evacuation

of Cape Helles. What rejoiced me was the sight of Blenkiron, as

bland as a barber among those swells. Here were two of the

missionaries within reasonable distance of their goal.



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## CHAPTER TEN

### The Garden-House of Suliman the Red

We reached Rustchuk on January 10th, but by no means landed on that day. Something had gone wrong with the unloading arrangements, or more likely with the railway behind them, and we were kept swinging all day well out in the turbid river. On the top of this Captain Schenk got an ague, and by that evening was a blue and shivering wreck. He had done me well, and I reckoned I would stand by him.

So

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I got his ship's papers, and the manifests of cargo, and undertook to see to the trans-shipment. It wasn't the first time I had tackled that kind of business, and I hadn't much to learn about steam cranes. I told him I was going on to Constantinople and would take Peter with me, and he was agreeable. He would have to wait at Rustchuk to get his return cargo, and could easily inspan a fresh engineer.

I worked about the hardest twenty-four hours of my life getting the stuff ashore. The landing officer was a Bulgarian, quite a competent man if he could have made the railways give him the trucks he needed. There was a collection of hungry German transport officers

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always putting in their oars, and being infernally insolent to

everybody. I took the high and mighty line with them; and, as I had the

Bulgarian commandant on my side, after about two hours' blasphemy

got them quieted.

But the big trouble came the next morning when I had got

nearly all the stuff aboard the trucks.

A young officer in what I took to be a Turkish uniform rode up

with an aide-de-camp. I noticed the German guards saluting him,

so I judged he was rather a swell. He came up to me and asked me

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very civilly in German for the way-bills. I gave him them and he

looked carefully through them, marking certain items with a blue

pencil. Then he coolly handed them to his aide-de-camp and spoke

to him in Turkish.

'Look here, I want these back,' I said. 'I can't do without them,

and we've no time to waste.'

'Presently,' he said, smiling, and went off.

I said nothing, reflecting that the stuff was for the Turks and

they naturally had to have some say in its handling. The loading

was practically finished when my gentleman returned. He handed

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me a neatly typed new set of way-bills. One glance at them showed that some of the big items had been left out.

'Here, this won't do,' I cried. 'Give me back the right set. This thing's no good to me.'

For answer he winked gently, smiled like a dusky seraph, and held out his hand. In it I saw a roll of money.

'For yourself,' he said. 'It is the usual custom.'

It was the first time anyone had ever tried to bribe me, and it

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made me boil up like a geyser. I saw his game clearly enough.

Turkey would pay for the lot to Germany: probably had already

paid the bill: but she would pay double for the things not on the

way-bills, and pay to this fellow and his friends. This struck me as

rather steep even for Oriental methods of doing business.

'Now look here, Sir,' I said, 'I don't stir from this place till I get

the correct way-bills. If you won't give me them, I will have every

item out of the trucks and make a new list. But a correct list I have,

or the stuff stays here till Doomsday.'

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He was a slim, foppish fellow, and he looked more puzzled  
than angry.

'I offer you enough,' he said, again stretching out his hand.

At that I fairly roared. 'If you try to bribe me, you infernal little  
haberdasher, I'll have you off that horse and chuck you in the river.'

He no longer misunderstood me. He began to curse and threaten,  
but I cut him short.

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'Come along to the commandant, my boy,' I said, and I marched

away, tearing up his typewritten sheets as I went and strewing them

behind me like a paper chase.

We had a fine old racket in the commandant's office. I said it was

my business, as representing the German Government, to see the

stuff delivered to the consignee at Constantinople ship-shape and

Bristol-fashion. I told him it wasn't my habit to proceed with cooked

documents. He couldn't but agree with me, but there was that

wrathful Oriental with his face as fixed as a Buddha.



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'I am sorry, Rasta Bey,' he said; 'but this man is in the right.'

'I have authority from the Committee to receive the stores,' he

said sullenly.

'Those are not my instructions,' was the answer. 'They are

consigned to the Artillery commandant at Chataldja,

General von Oesterzee.'

The man shrugged his shoulders. 'Very well. I will have a word

to say to General von Oesterzee, and many to this fellow who

flouts the Committee.' And he strode away like an impudent boy.

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The harassed commandant grinned. 'You've offended his Lordship, and he is a bad enemy. All those damned Comitadjis are. You would be well advised not to go on to Constantinople.'

'And have that blighter in the red hat loot the trucks on the road? No, thank you. I am going to see them safe at Chataldja, or whatever they call the artillery depot.'

I said a good deal more, but that is an abbreviated translation of my remarks. My word for 'blighter' was \_trottel, but I used some other expressions which would have ravished my Young Turk

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friend to hear. Looking back, it seems pretty ridiculous to have

made all this fuss about guns which were going to be used against

my own people. But I didn't see that at the time. My professional

pride was up in arms, and I couldn't bear to have a hand in a

crooked deal.

'Well', I advise you to go armed,' said the commandant. 'You

will have a guard for the trucks, of course, and I will pick you

good men. They may hold you up all the same. I can't help you

once you are past the frontier, but I'll send a wire to Oesterzee and

he'll make trouble if anything goes wrong. I still think you would

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have been wiser to humour Rasta Bey.'

As I was leaving he gave me a telegram. 'Here's a wire for your

Captain Schenk.' I slipped the envelope in my pocket and went Out.

Schenk was pretty sick, so I left a note for him. At one o'clock I

got the train started, with a couple of German Landwehr in each

truck and Peter and I in a horse-box. Presently I remembered

Schenk's telegram, which still reposed in my pocket. I took it out

and opened it, meaning to wire it from the first station we stopped

at. But I changed my mind when I read it. It was from some official

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at Regensburg, asking him to put under arrest and send back by the

first boat a man called Brandt, who was believed to have come

aboard at Absthafen on the 30th of December.

I whistled and showed it to Peter. The sooner we were at

Constantinople the better, and I prayed we would get there before the

fellow who sent this wire repeated it and got the commandant to

send on the message and have us held up at Chataldja. For my back

had fairly got stiffened about these munitions, and I was going to

take any risk to see them safely delivered to their proper owner.

Peter couldn't understand me at all.

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destruction of the lot somewhere down the railway. But then, this

wasn't the line of Peter's profession, and his pride was not at stake.

We had a mortally slow journey. It was bad enough in Bulgaria,

but when we crossed the frontier at a place called Mustafa Pasha we

struck the real supineness of the East. Happily I found a German

officer there who had some notion of hustling, and, after all, it was

his interest to get the stuff moved. It was the morning of the 16th,

after Peter and I had been living like pigs on black bread and

condemned tin stuff, that we came in sight of a blue sea on our

right hand and knew we couldn't be very far from the end.

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It was jolly near the end in another sense. We stopped at a station and were stretching our legs on the platform when I saw a familiar figure approaching. It was Rasta, with half a dozen Turkish gendarmes.

I called Peter, and we clambered into the truck next our horse-box. I had been half expecting some move like this and had made a plan.

The Turk swaggered up and addressed us. 'You can get back to Rustchuk,' he said. 'I take over from you here. Hand me the papers.'

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'Is this Chataldja?' I asked innocently.

'It is the end of your affair,' he said haughtily. 'Quick, or it will

be the worse for you.'

'Now, look here, my son,' I said; 'you're a kid and know nothing.

I hand over to General von Oesterzee and to no one else.'

'You are in Turkey,' he cried, 'and will obey the

Turkish Government.'



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'I'll obey the Government right enough,' I said; 'but if you're the Government I could make a better one with a bib and a rattle.'

He said something to his men, who unslung their rifles.

'Please don't begin shooting,' I said. 'There are twelve armed guards in this train who will take their orders from me. Besides, I and my friend can shoot a bit.'

'Fool!' he cried, getting very angry. 'I can order up a regiment in

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five minutes.'

'Maybe you can,' I said; 'but observe the situation. I am sitting on enough troluol to blow up this countryside. If you dare to come aboard I will shoot you. If you call in your regiment I will tell you what I'll do. I'll fire this stuff, and I reckon they'll be picking up the bits of you and your regiment off the Gallipoli Peninsula.'

He had put up a bluff - a poor one - and I had called it. He saw

I meant what I said, and became silken.

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'Good-bye, Sir,' he said. 'You have had a fair chance and rejected

it. We shall meet again soon, and you will be sorry for your

insolence.'

He strutted away and it was all I could do to keep from running

after him. I wanted to lay him over my knee and spank him.

We got safely to Chataldja, and were received by von Oesterzee

like long-lost brothers. He was the regular gunner-officer, not thinking

about anything except his guns and shells. I had to wait about

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three hours while he was checking the stuff with the invoices, and

then he gave me a receipt which I still possess. I told him about

Rasta, and he agreed that I had done right. It didn't make him as

mad as I expected, because, you see, he got his stuff safe in any

case. It was only that the wretched Turks had to pay twice for the

lot of it.

He gave Peter and me luncheon, and was altogether very civil

and inclined to talk about the war. I would have liked to hear what

he had to say, for it would have been something to get the inside

view of Germany's Eastern campaign, but I did not dare to wait.

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Any moment there might arrive an incriminating wire from Rustchuk.

Finally he lent us a car to take us the few miles to the city.

So it came about that at five past three on the 16th day of January,

with only the clothes we stood up in, Peter and I entered Constantinople.

I was in considerable spirits, for I had got the final lap successfully

over, and I was looking forward madly to meeting my friends; but,

all the same, the first sight was a mighty disappointment. I don't

quite know what I had expected - a sort of fairyland Eastern city,

all white marble and blue water, and stately Turks in surplices, and

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veiled hours, and roses and nightingales, and some sort of string  
band discoursing sweet music. I had forgotten that winter is pretty  
much the same everywhere. It was a drizzling day, with a south-  
east wind blowing, and the streets were long troughs of mud. The  
first part I struck looked like a dingy colonial suburb - wooden  
houses and corrugated iron roofs, and endless dirty, sallow children.  
There was a cemetery, I remember, with Turks' caps stuck at the  
head of each grave. Then we got into narrow steep streets which  
descended to a kind of big canal. I saw what I took to be mosques  
and minarets, and they were about as impressive as factory chimneys.  
By and by we crossed a bridge, and paid a penny for the

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privilege. If I had known it was the famous Golden Horn I would have looked at it with more interest, but I saw nothing save a lot of moth-eaten barges and some queer little boats like gondolas. Then we came into busier streets, where ramshackle cabs drawn by lean horses spluttered through the mud. I saw one old fellow who looked like my notion of a Turk, but most of the population had the appearance of London old-clothes men. All but the soldiers, Turk and German, who seemed well-set-up fellows.

Peter had paddled along at my side like a faithful dog, not saying a word, but clearly not approving of this wet and dirty metropolis.

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'Do you know that we are being followed, Cornelis?' he said

suddenly, 'ever since we came into this evil-smelling dorp.'

Peter was infallible in a thing like that. The news scared me

badly, for I feared that the telegram had come to Chataldja. Then I

thought it couldn't be that, for if von Oesterzee had wanted me he

wouldn't have taken the trouble to stalk me. It was more likely my

friend Rasta.

I found the ferry of Ratchik by asking a soldier and a German

sailor there told me where the Kurdish Bazaar was. He pointed up



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a steep street which ran past a high block of warehouses with every window broken. Sandy had said the left-hand side coming down, so it must be the right-hand side going up. We plunged into it, and it was the filthiest place of all. The wind whistled up it and stirred the garbage. It seemed densely inhabited, for at all the doors there were groups of people squatting, with their heads covered, though scarcely a window showed in the blank walls.

The street corkscrewed endlessly. Sometimes it seemed to stop; then it found a hole in the opposing masonry and edged its way in.

Often it was almost pitch dark; then would come a greyish twilight

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where it opened out to the width of a decent lane. To find a house in that murk was no easy job, and by the time we had gone a quarter of a mile I began to fear we had missed it. It was no good asking any of the crowd we met. They didn't look as if they understood any civilized tongue.

At last we stumbled on it - a tumble-down coffee house, with

A. Kuprasso above the door in queer amateur lettering. There was a lamp burning inside, and two or three men smoking at small wooden tables.

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We ordered coffee, thick black stuff like treacle, which Peter

anathematized. A negro brought it, and I told him in German I

wanted to speak to Mr Kuprasso. He paid no attention, so I

shouted louder at him, and the noise brought a man out of the back

parts.

He was a fat, oldish fellow with a long nose, very like the Greek

traders you see on the Zanzibar coast. I beckoned to him and he

waddled forward, smiling oilily. Then I asked him what he would

take, and he replied, in very halting German, that he would have a sirop.

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'You are Mr Kuprasso,' I said. 'I wanted to show this place to

my friend. He has heard of your garden-house and the fun there.'

'The Signor is mistaken. I have no garden-house.'

'Rot,' I said; 'I've been here before, my boy. I recall your shanty

at the back and many merry nights there. What was it you called it?

Oh, I remember - the Garden-House of Suliman the Red.'

He put his finger to his lip and looked incredibly sly. 'The

Signor remembers that. But that was in the old happy days before

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war came. The place is long since shut. The people here are too

poor to dance and sing.'

'All the same I would like to have another look at it,' I said, and

I slipped an English sovereign into his hand.

He glanced at it in surprise and his manner changed. 'The Signor

is a Prince, and I will do his will.' He clapped his hands and the

negro appeared, and at his nod took his place behind a

little side-counter.

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'Follow me,' he said, and led us through a long, noisome passage,

which was pitch dark and very unevenly paved. Then he unlocked

a door and with a swirl the wind caught it and blew it back on us.

We were looking into a mean little yard, with on one side a high

curving wall, evidently of great age, with bushes growing in the

cracks of it. Some scraggy myrtles stood in broken pots, and nettles

flourished in a corner. At one end was a wooden building like a

dissenting chapel, but painted a dingy scarlet. Its windows and

skylights were black with dirt, and its door, tied up with rope,

flapped in the wind.

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'Behold the Pavilion,' Kuprasso said proudly.

'That is the old place,' I observed with feeling. 'What times I've  
seen there! Tell me, Mr Kuprasso, do you ever open it now?'

He put his thick lips to my ear.

'If the Signor will be silent I will tell him. It is sometimes open -

not often. Men must amuse themselves even in war. Some of the

German officers come here for their pleasure, and but last week we

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had the ballet of Mademoiselle Cici. The police approve - but not

often, for this is no time for too much gaiety. I will tell you a

secret. Tomorrow afternoon there will be dancing - wonderful

dancing! Only a few of my patrons know. Who, think you, will be

here?'

He bent his head closer and said in a whisper -

'The Compagnie des Heures Roses.'

'Oh, indeed,' I said with a proper tone of respect, though I



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hadn't a notion what he meant.

'Will the Signor wish to come?'

'Sure,' I said. 'Both of us. We're all for the rosy hours.'

'Then the fourth hour after midday. Walk straight through the

cafe and one will be there to unlock the door. You are new-comers here?

Take the advice of Angelo Kuprasso and avoid the streets after nightfall.

Stamboul is no safe place nowadays for quiet men.'

I asked him to name a hotel, and he rattled off a list from which

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I chose one that sounded modest and in keeping with our get-up. It was not far off, only a hundred yards to the right at the top of the hill.

When we left his door the night had begun to drop. We hadn't gone twenty yards before Peter drew very near to me and kept turning his head like a hunted stag.

'We are being followed close, Cornelis,' he said calmly.

Another ten yards and we were at a cross-roads, where a little

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\_place faced a biggish mosque. I could see in the waning light a crowd of people who seemed to be moving towards us. I heard a high-pitched voice cry out a jabber of excited words, and it seemed to me that I had heard the voice before.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The Companions of the Rosy Hours

We battled to a corner, where a jut of building stood out into the

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street. It was our only chance to protect our backs, to stand up with the rib of stone between us. It was only the work of seconds. One instant we were groping our solitary way in the darkness, the next we were pinned against a wall with a throaty mob surging round us.

It took me a moment or two to realize that we were attacked.

Every man has one special funk in the back of his head, and mine was to be the quarry of an angry crowd. I hated the thought of it - the mess, the blind struggle, the sense of unleashed passions different from those of any single blackguard. It was a dark world to me, and I don't like darkness. But in my nightmares I had never

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imagined anything just like this. The narrow, fetid street, with the icy winds fanning the filth, the unknown tongue, the hoarse savage murmur, and my utter ignorance as to what it might all be about, made me cold in the pit of my stomach.

'We've got it in the neck this time, old man,' I said to Peter, who had out the pistol the commandant at Rustchuk had given him.

These pistols were our only weapons. The crowd saw them and hung back, but if they chose to rush us it wasn't much of a barrier two pistols would make.

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Rasta's voice had stopped. He had done his work, and had retired to the background. There were shouts from the crowd - '\_Alleman' and a word '\_Khafiyeh' constantly repeated. I didn't know what it meant at the time, but now I know that they were after us because we were Boches and spies. There was no love lost between the Constantinople scum and their new masters. It seemed an ironical end for Peter and me to be done in because we were Boches. And done in we should be. I had heard of the East as a good place for people to disappear in; there were no inquisitive newspapers or incorruptible police.

I wished to Heaven I had a word of Turkish. But I made my

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voice heard for a second in a pause of the din, and shouted that we were German sailors who had brought down big guns for Turkey, and were going home next day. I asked them what the devil they thought we had done? I don't know if any fellow there understood German; anyhow, it only brought a pandemonium of cries in which that ominous word \_Khafiyeh was predominant.

Then Peter fired over their heads. He had to, for a chap was pawing at his throat. The answer was a clatter of bullets on the wall above us. It looked as if they meant to take us alive, and that I was very clear should not happen. Better a bloody end in a street scrap

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than the tender mercies of that bandbox bravo.

I don't quite know what happened next. A press drove down at me and I fired. Someone squealed, and I looked the next moment to be strangled. And then, suddenly, the scrimmage ceased, and there was a wavering splash of light in that pit of darkness.

I never went through many worse minutes than these. When I had been hunted in the past weeks there had been mystery enough, but no immediate peril to face. When I had been up against a real, urgent, physical risk, like Loos, the danger at any rate had been



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clear. One knew what one was in for. But here was a threat I  
couldn't put a name to, and it wasn't in the future, but pressing  
hard at our throats.

And yet I couldn't feel it was quite real. The patter of the pistol  
bullets against the wall, like so many crackers, the faces felt rather  
than seen in the dark, the clamour which to me was pure gibberish,  
had all the madness of a nightmare. Only Peter, cursing steadily in  
Dutch by my side, was real. And then the light came, and made the  
scene more eerie!

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It came from one or two torches carried by wild fellows with

long staves who drove their way into the heart of the mob. The

flickering glare ran up the steep walls and made monstrous shadows.

The wind swung the flame into long streamers, dying away in a fan

of sparks.

And now a new word was heard in the crowd. It was \_Chinganeh,

shouted not in anger but in fear.

At first I could not see the newcomers. They were hidden in the

deep darkness under their canopy of light, for they were holding

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their torches high at the full stretch of their arms. They were shouting, too, wild shrill cries ending sometimes in a gush of rapid speech. Their words did not seem to be directed against us, but against the crowd. A sudden hope came to me that for some unknown reason they were on our side.

The press was no longer heavy against us. It was thinning rapidly and I could hear the scuffle as men made off down the side streets.

My first notion was that these were the Turkish police. But I changed my mind when the leader came out into a patch of light.

He carried no torch, but a long stave with which he belaboured the

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heads of those who were too tightly packed to flee.

It was the most eldritch apparition you can conceive. A tall man dressed in skins, with bare legs and sandal-shod feet. A wisp of scarlet cloth clung to his shoulders, and, drawn over his head down close to his eyes, was a skull-cap of some kind of pelt with the tail waving behind it. He capered like a wild animal, keeping up a strange high monotone that fairly gave me the creeps.

I was suddenly aware that the crowd had gone. Before us was only this figure and his half-dozen companions, some carrying

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torches and all wearing clothes of skin. But only the one who  
seemed to be their leader wore the skull-cap; the rest had bare  
heads and long tangled hair.

The fellow was shouting gibberish at me. His eyes were glassy,  
like a man who smokes hemp, and his legs were never still for a  
second. You would think such a figure no better than a mountebank,  
and yet there was nothing comic in it. Fearful and sinister  
and uncanny it was; and I wanted to do anything but laugh.

As he shouted he kept pointing with his stave up the street

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which climbed the hillside.

'He means us to move,' said Peter. 'For God's sake let us get  
away from this witch-doctor.'

I couldn't make sense of it, but one thing was clear. These  
maniacs had delivered us for the moment from Rasta and his friends.

Then I did a dashed silly thing. I pulled out a sovereign and  
offered it to the leader. I had some kind of notion of showing  
gratitude, and as I had no words I had to show it by deed.

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He brought his stick down on my wrist and sent the coin spinning  
in the gutter. His eyes blazed, and he made his weapon sing round  
my head. He cursed me - oh, I could tell cursing well enough,  
though I didn't follow a word; and he cried to his followers and  
they cursed me too. I had offered him a mortal insult and stirred up  
a worse hornet's nest than Rasta's push.

Peter and I, with a common impulse, took to our heels. We were  
not looking for any trouble with demoniacs. Up the steep, narrow  
lane we ran with that bedlamite crowd at our heels. The torches

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seemed to have gone out, for the place was black as pitch, and we

tumbled over heaps of offal and splashed through running drains.

The men were close behind us, and more than once I felt a stick on

my shoulder. But fear lent us wings, and suddenly before us was a

blaze of light and we saw the debouchment of our street in a main

thoroughfare. The others saw it, too, for they slackened off. just

before we reached the light we stopped and looked round. There

was no sound or sight behind us in the dark lane which dipped to

the harbour.

'This is a queer country, Cornelis,' said Peter, feeling his limbs



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for bruises. 'Too many things happen in too short a time. I am  
breathless.'

The big street we had struck seemed to run along the crest of the  
hill. There were lamps in it, and crawling cabs, and quite civilized-  
looking shops. We soon found the hotel to which Kuprasso had  
directed us, a big place in a courtyard with a very tumble-down-  
looking portico, and green sun-shutters which rattled drearily in  
the winter's wind. It proved, as I had feared, to be packed to the  
door, mostly with German officers. With some trouble I got an  
interview with the proprietor, the usual Greek, and told him that

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we had been sent there by Mr Kuprasso. That didn't affect him in the least, and we would have been shot into the street if I hadn't remembered about Stumm's pass.

So I explained that we had come from Germany with munitions and only wanted rooms for one night. I showed him the pass and blustered a good deal, till he became civil and said he would do the best he could for us.

That best was pretty poor. Peter and I were doubled up in a small room which contained two camp-beds and little else, and had

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broken windows through which the wind whistled. We had a  
Wretched dinner of stringy mutton, boiled with vegetables, and a  
white cheese strong enough to raise the dead. But I got a bottle of  
whisky, for which I paid a sovereign, and we managed to light the  
stove in our room, fasten the shutters, and warm our hearts with  
a brew of toddy. After that we went to bed and slept like logs  
for twelve hours. On the road from Rustchuk we had had uneasy  
slumbers.

I woke next morning and, looking out from the broken window,  
saw that it was snowing. With a lot of trouble I got hold of a

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servant and made him bring us some of the treacly Turkish coffee.

We were both in pretty low spirits. 'Europe is a poor cold place,'

said Peter, 'not worth fighting for. There is only one white man's

land, and that is South Africa.' At the time I heartily agreed with him.

I remember that, sitting on the edge of my bed, I took stock of

our position. It was not very cheering. We seemed to have been

amassing enemies at a furious pace. First of all, there was Rasta,

whom I had insulted and who wouldn't forget it in a hurry. He had

his crowd of Turkish riff-raff and was bound to get us sooner or

later. Then there was the maniac in the skin hat. He didn't like

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Rasta, and I made a guess that he and his weird friends were of some party hostile to the Young Turks. But, on the other hand, he didn't like us, and there would be bad trouble the next time we met him. Finally, there was Stumm and the German Government. It could only be a matter of hours at the best before he got the Rustchuk authorities on our trail. It would be easy to trace us from Chataldja, and once they had us we were absolutely done. There was a big black \_dossier against us, which by no conceivable piece of luck could be upset.

it was very clear to me that, unless we could find sanctuary and

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shed all our various pursuers during this day, we should be done in

for good and all. But where on earth were we to find sanctuary?

We had neither of us a word of the language, and there was no way

I could see of taking on new characters. For that we wanted friends

and help, and I could think of none anywhere. Somewhere, to be

sure, there was Blenkiron, but how could we get in touch with

him? As for Sandy, I had pretty well given him up. I always

thought his enterprise the craziest of the lot and bound to fail. He

was probably somewhere in Asia Minor, and a month or two later

would get to Constantinople and hear in some pot-house the yarn

of the two wretched Dutchmen who had disappeared so soon from

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men's sight.

That rendezvous at Kuprasso's was no good. It would have been

all right if we had got here unsuspected, and could have gone on

quietly frequenting the place till Blenkiron picked us up. But to do

that we wanted leisure and secrecy, and here we were with a pack

of hounds at our heels. The place was horribly dangerous already.

If we showed ourselves there we should be gathered in by Rasta, or

by the German military police, or by the madman in the skin cap. It

was a stark impossibility to hang about on the off-chance of

meeting Blenkiron.

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I reflected with some bitterness that this was the 17th day of  
January, the day of our assignation. I had had high hopes all the  
way down the Danube of meeting with Blenkiron - for I knew he  
would be in time - of giving him the information I had had the  
good fortune to collect, of piecing it together with what he had  
found out, and of getting the whole story which Sir Walter  
hungered for. After that, I thought it wouldn't be hard to get away  
by Rumania, and to get home through Russia. I had hoped to be  
back with my battalion in February, having done as good a bit of  
work as anybody in the war. As it was, it looked as if my information



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would die with me, unless I could find Blenkiron before the evening.

I talked the thing over with Peter, and he agreed that we were

fairly up against it. We decided to go to Kuprasso's that afternoon,

and to trust to luck for the rest. It wouldn't do to wander about the

streets, so we sat tight in our room all morning, and swapped old

hunting yarns to keep our minds from the beastly present. We

got some food at midday - cold mutton and the same cheese,

and finished our whisky. Then I paid the bill, for I didn't dare to

stay there another night. About half-past three we went into the

street, without the foggiest notion where we would find our

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next quarters.

It was snowing heavily, which was a piece of luck for us. Poor

old Peter had no greatcoat, so we went into a Jew's shop and

bought a ready-made abomination, which looked as if it might have

been meant for a dissenting parson. It was no good saving my

money when the future was so black. The snow made the streets

deserted, and we turned down the long lane which led to Ratchik

ferry, and found it perfectly quiet. I do not think we met a soul till

we got to Kuprasso's shop.

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We walked straight through the cafe, which was empty, and  
down the dark passage, till we were stopped by the garden door. I  
knocked and it swung open. There was the bleak yard, now puddled  
with snow, and a blaze of light from the pavilion at the other end.  
There was a scraping of fiddles, too, and the sound of human talk.  
We paid the negro at the door, and passed from the bitter afternoon  
into a garish saloon.  
There were forty or fifty people there, drinking coffee and sirops  
and filling the air with the fumes of latakia. Most of them were  
Turks in European clothes and the fez, but there were some German  
officers and what looked like German civilians - Army Service

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Corps clerks, probably, and mechanics from the Arsenal. A woman

in cheap finery was tinkling at the piano, and there were several

shrill females with the officers. Peter and I sat down modestly in

the nearest corner, where old Kuprasso saw us and sent us coffee.

A girl who looked like a Jewess came over to us and talked French,

but I shook my head and she went off again.

Presently a girl came on the stage and danced, a silly affair, all a

clashing of tambourines and wriggling. I have seen native women

do the same thing better in a Mozambique kraal. Another sang a

German song, a simple, sentimental thing about golden hair and

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rainbows, and the Germans present applauded. The place was so tinselly and common that, coming to it from weeks of rough travelling, it made me impatient. I forgot that, while for the others it might be a vulgar little dancing-hall, for us it was as perilous as a brigands' den.

Peter did not share my mood. He was quite interested in it, as he was interested in everything new. He had a genius for living in the moment.

I remember there was a drop-scene on which was daubed a blue

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lake with very green hills in the distance. As the tobacco smoke  
grew thicker and the fiddles went on squealing, this tawdry picture  
began to mesmerize me. I seemed to be looking out of a window at  
a lovely summer landscape where there were no wars or danger. I  
seemed to feel the warm sun and to smell the fragrance of blossom  
from the islands. And then I became aware that a queer scent had  
stolen into the atmosphere.

There were braziers burning at both ends to warm the room, and  
the thin smoke from these smelt like incense. Somebody had been  
putting a powder in the flames, for suddenly the place became very

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quiet. The fiddles still sounded, but far away like an echo. The

lights went down, all but a circle on the stage, and into that circle

stepped my enemy of the skin cap.

He had three others with him. I heard a whisper behind me, and

the words were those which Kuprasso had used the day before.

These bedlamites were called the Companions of the Rosy Hours,

and Kuprasso had promised great dancing.

I hoped to goodness they would not see us, for they had fairly

given me the horrors. Peter felt the same, and we both made

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ourselves very small in that dark corner. But the newcomers had no eyes for us.

In a twinkling the pavilion changed from a common saloon, which might have been in Chicago or Paris, to a place of mystery - yes, and of beauty. It became the Garden-House of Suliman the Red, whoever that sportsman may have been. Sandy had said that the ends of the earth converged there, and he had been right. I lost all consciousness of my neighbours - stout German, frock-coated Turk, frowsy Jewess - and saw only strange figures leaping in a circle of light, figures that came out of the deepest darkness to



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make a big magic.

The leader flung some stuff into the brazier, and a great fan of

blue light flared up. He was weaving circles, and he was singing

something shrill and high, whilst his companions made a chorus

with their deep monotone. I can't tell you what the dance was. I

had seen the Russian ballet just before the war, and one of the men

in it reminded me of this man. But the dancing was the least part of

it. It was neither sound nor movement nor scent that wrought the

spell, but something far more potent. In an instant I found myself

reft away from the present with its dull dangers, and looking at a

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world all young and fresh and beautiful. The gaudy drop-scene had vanished. It was a window I was looking from, and I was gazing at the finest landscape on earth, lit by the pure clean light of morning.

It seemed to be part of the veld, but like no veld I had ever seen.

It was wider and wilder and more gracious. Indeed, I was looking

at my first youth. I was feeling the kind of immortal light-

heartedness which only a boy knows in the dawning of his days. I

had no longer any fear of these magic-makers. They were kindly

wizards, who had brought me into fairyland.

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Then slowly from the silence there distilled drops of music. They came like water falling a long way into a cup, each the essential quality of pure sound. We, with our elaborate harmonies, have forgotten the charm of single notes. The African natives know it, and I remember a learned man once telling me that the Greeks had the same art. Those silver bells broke out of infinite space, so exquisite and perfect that no mortal words could have been fitted to them. That was the music, I expect, that the morning stars made when they sang together.

Slowly, very slowly, it changed.

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purple, and then to an angry red. Bit by bit the notes spun together  
till they had made a harmony - a fierce, restless harmony. And I  
was conscious again of the skin-clad dancers beckoning out of  
their circle.

There was no mistake about the meaning now. All the daintiness  
and youth had fled, and passion was beating the air - terrible,  
savage passion, which belonged neither to day nor night, life nor  
death, but to the half-world between them. I suddenly felt the  
dancers as monstrous, inhuman, devilish. The thick scents that  
floated from the brazier seemed to have a tang of new-shed blood.

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Cries broke from the hearers - cries of anger and lust and terror. I

heard a woman sob, and Peter, who is as tough as any mortal, took

tight hold of my arm.

I now realized that these Companions of the Rosy Hours were

the only thing in the world to fear. Rasta and Stumm seemed feeble

simpletons by contrast. The window I had been looking out of was

changed to a prison wall - I could see the mortar between the

massive blocks. In a second these devils would be smelling out

their enemies like some foul witch-doctors. I felt the burning eyes

of their leader looking for me in the gloom. Peter was praying

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audibly beside me, and I could have choked him. His infernal  
chatter would reveal us, for it seemed to me that there was no one  
in the place except us and the magic-workers.

Then suddenly the spell was broken. The door was flung open  
and a great gust of icy wind swirled through the hall, driving  
clouds of ashes from the braziers. I heard loud voices without, and  
a hubbub began inside. For a moment it was quite dark, and then  
someone lit one of the flare lamps by the stage. It revealed nothing  
but the common squalor of a low saloon - white faces, sleepy eyes,

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and frowsy heads. The drop-piece was there in all its tawdriness.

The Companions of the Rosy Hours had gone. But at the door

stood men in uniform, I heard a German a long way off murmur,

'Enver's bodyguards,' and I heard him distinctly; for, though I

could not see clearly, my hearing was desperately acute. That is

often the way when you suddenly come out of a swoon.

The place emptied like magic. Turk and German tumbled over

each other, while Kuprasso wailed and wept. No one seemed to

stop them, and then I saw the reason. Those Guards had come for

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us. This must be Stumm at last. The authorities had tracked us down, and it was all up with Peter and me.

A sudden revulsion leaves a man with a low vitality. I didn't seem to care greatly. We were done, and there was an end of it. It was Kismet, the act of God, and there was nothing for it but to submit. I hadn't a flicker of a thought of escape or resistance. The game was utterly and absolutely over.

A man who seemed to be a sergeant pointed to us and said something to Kuprasso, who nodded. We got heavily to our feet



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and stumbled towards them. With one on each side of us we  
crossed the yard, walked through the dark passage and the empty  
shop, and out into the snowy street. There was a closed carriage  
waiting which they motioned us to get into. It looked exactly like  
the Black Maria.

Both of us sat still, like truant schoolboys, with our hands on our  
knees. I didn't know where I was going and I didn't care. We  
seemed to be rumbling up the hill, and then I caught the glare of  
lighted streets.

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'This is the end of it, Peter,' I said.

'\_Ja, Cornelis,' he replied, and that was all our talk.

By and by - hours later it seemed - we stopped. Someone

opened the door and we got out, to find ourselves in a courtyard

with a huge dark building around. The prison, I guessed, and I

wondered if they would give us blankets, for it was perishing cold.

We entered a door, and found ourselves in a big stone hall. It

was quite warm, which made me more hopeful about our cells. A

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man in some kind of uniform pointed to the staircase, up which we plodded wearily. My mind was too blank to take clear impressions, or in any way to forecast the future. Another warder met us and took us down a passage till we halted at a door. He stood aside and motioned us to enter.

I guessed that this was the governor's room, and we should be put through our first examination. My head was too stupid to think, and I made up my mind to keep perfectly mum. Yes, even if they tried thumbscrews. I had no kind of story, but I resolved not to give anything away. As I turned the handle I wondered idly

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what kind of sallow Turk or bulging-necked German we should  
find inside.

It was a pleasant room, with a polished wood floor and a big fire  
burning on the hearth. Beside the fire a man lay on a couch, with a  
little table drawn up beside him. On that table was a small glass of  
milk and a number of Patience cards spread in rows.

I stared blankly at the spectacle, till I saw a second figure. It was  
the man in the skin-cap, the leader of the dancing maniacs. Both  
Peter and I backed sharply at the sight and then stood stock still.

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For the dancer crossed the room in two strides and gripped both

of my hands.

'Dick, old man,' he cried, 'I'm most awfully glad to see you again!'

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Four Missionaries See Light in their Mission

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A spasm of incredulity, a vast relief, and that sharp joy which

comes of reaction chased each other across my mind. I had come

suddenly out of very black waters into an unbelievable calm. I

dropped into the nearest chair and tried to grapple with something

far beyond words.

'Sandy,' I said, as soon as I got my breath, 'you're an incarnate

devil. You've given Peter and me the fright of our lives.'

It was the only way, Dick. If I hadn't come mewling like a tom-cat

at your heels yesterday, Rasta would have had you long before you

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got to your hotel. You two have given me a pretty anxious time,

and it took some doing to get you safe here. However, that is all

over now. Make yourselves at home, my children.'

'Over!' I cried incredulously, for my wits were still wool-

gathering. 'What place is this?'

'You may call it my humble home' - it was Blenkiron's sleek

voice that spoke. 'We've been preparing for you, Major, but it was

only yesterday I heard of your friend.'

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I introduced Peter.

'Mr Pienaar,' said Blenkiron, 'pleased to meet you. Well, as I was

observing, you're safe enough here, but you've cut it mighty fine.

Officially, a Dutchman called Brandt was to be arrested this afternoon

and handed over to the German authorities. When Germany

begins to trouble about that Dutchman she will find difficulty in

getting the body; but such are the languid ways of an Oriental

despotism. Meantime the Dutchman will be no more. He will have

ceased upon the midnight without pain, as your poet sings.'



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'But I don't understand,' I stammered. 'Who arrested us?'

'My men,' said Sandy. 'We have a bit of a graft here, and it

wasn't difficult to manage it. Old Moellendorff will be nosing after

the business tomorrow, but he will find the mystery too deep for

him. That is the advantage of a Government run by a pack of

adventurers. But, by Jove, Dick, we hadn't any time to spare. If

Rasta had got you, or the Germans had had the job of lifting you,

your goose would have been jolly well cooked. I had some unquiet

hours this morning.'

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The thing was too deep for me. I looked at Blenkiron, shuffling his Patience cards with his old sleepy smile, and Sandy, dressed like some bandit in melodrama, his lean face as brown as a nut, his bare arms all tattooed with crimson rings, and the fox pelt drawn tight over brow and ears. It was still a nightmare world, but the dream was getting pleasanter. Peter said not a word, but I could see his eyes heavy with his own thoughts.

Blenkiron hove himself from the sofa and waddled to a cupboard.

'You boys must be hungry,' he said. 'My duo-denum has been

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giving me hell as usual, and I don't eat no more than a squirrel. But

I laid in some stores, for I guessed you would want to stoke up

some after your travels.'

He brought out a couple of Strassburg pies, a cheese, a cold

chicken, a loaf, and three bottles of champagne.

'Fizz,' said Sandy rapturously. 'And a dry Heidsieck too! We're

in luck, Dick, old man.'

I never ate a more welcome meal, for we had starved in that

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dirty hotel. But I had still the old feeling of the hunted, and before

I began I asked about the door.

'That's all right,' said Sandy. 'My fellows are on the stair and at

the gate. If the \_Metreb are in possession, you may bet that other

people will keep off. Your past is blotted out, clean vanished away,

and you begin tomorrow morning with a new sheet. Blenkiron's

the man you've got to thank for that. He was pretty certain you'd

get here, but he was also certain that you'd arrive in a hurry with a

good many inquirers behind you. So he arranged that you should

leak away and start fresh.'

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'Your name is Richard Hanau,' Blenkiron said, 'born in Cleveland, Ohio, of German parentage on both sides. One of our brightest mining-engineers, and the apple of Guggenheim's eye. You arrived this afternoon from Constanza, and I met you at the packet.

The clothes for the part are in your bedroom next door. But I guess all that can wait, for I'm anxious to get to business. We're not here on a joy-ride, Major, so I reckon we'll leave out the dime-novel adventures. I'm just dying to hear them, but they'll keep. I want to know how our mutual inquiries have prospered.'

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He gave Peter and me cigars, and we sat ourselves in armchairs

in front of the blaze. Sandy squatted cross-legged on the hearthrug

and lit a foul old briar pipe, which he extricated from some pouch

among his skins. And so began that conversation which had never

been out of my thoughts for four hectic weeks.

'If I presume to begin,' said Blenkiron, 'it's because I reckon my

story is the shortest. I have to confess to you, gentlemen, that I

have failed.'

He drew down the corners of his mouth till he looked a cross

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between a music-hall comedian and a sick child.

'If you were looking for something in the root of the hedge, you

wouldn't want to scour the road in a high-speed automobile. And

still less would you want to get a bird's-eye view in an aeroplane.

That parable about fits my case. I have been in the clouds and I've

been scorching on the pikes, but what I was wanting was in the

ditch all the time, and I naturally missed it ... I had the wrong

stunt, Major. I was too high up and refined. I've been processing

through Europe like Barnum's Circus, and living with generals and

transparencies. Not that I haven't picked up a lot of noos, and got

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some very interesting sidelights on high politics. But the thing I was after wasn't to be found on my beat, for those that knew it weren't going to tell. In that kind of society they don't get drunk and blab after their tenth cocktail. So I guess I've no contribution to make to quieting Sir Walter Bullivant's mind, except that he's dead right. Yes, Sir, he has hit the spot and rung the bell. There is a mighty miracle-working proposition being floated in these parts, but the promoters are keeping it to themselves. They aren't taking in more than they can help on the ground-floor.'

Blenkiron stopped to light a fresh cigar. He was leaner than



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when he left London and there were pouches below his eyes. I

fancy his journey had not been as fur-lined as he made out.

I've found out one thing, and that is, that the last dream Germany

will part with is the control of the Near East. That is what

your statesmen don't figure enough on. She'll give up Belgium and

Alsace-Lorraine and Poland, but by God! she'll never give up the

road to Mesopotamia till you have her by the throat and make her

drop it. Sir Walter is a pretty bright-eyed citizen, and he sees it

right enough. If the worst happens, Kaiser will fling overboard a

lot of ballast in Europe, and it will look like a big victory for the

Allies, but he won't be beaten if he has the road to the East safe.

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Germany's like a scorpion: her sting's in her tail, and that tail

stretches way down into Asia.

I got that clear, and I also made out that it wasn't going to be

dead easy for her to keep that tail healthy. Turkey's a bit of an

anxiety, as you'll soon discover. But Germany thinks she can

manage it, and I won't say she can't. It depends on the hand she

holds, and she reckons it a good one. I tried to find out, but they

gave me nothing but eyewash. I had to pretend to be satisfied, for

the position of John S. wasn't so strong as to allow him to take

liberties. If I asked one of the highbrows he looked wise and spoke

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of the might of German arms and German organization and German staff-work. I used to nod my head and get enthusiastic about these stunts, but it was all soft soap. She has a trick in hand - that much I know, but I'm darned if I can put a name to it. I pray to God you boys have been cleverer.'

His tone was quite melancholy, and I was mean enough to feel rather glad. He had been the professional with the best chance. It would be a good joke if the amateur succeeded where the expert failed.

I looked at Sandy. He filled his pipe again, and pushed back his

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skin cap from his brows. What with his long dishevelled hair, his high-boned face, and stained eyebrows he had the appearance of some mad mullah.

'I went straight to Smyrna,' he said. 'It wasn't difficult, for you

see I had laid down a good many lines in former travels. I reached

the town as a Greek money-lender from the Fayum, but I had

friends there I could count on, and the same evening I was a

Turkish gipsy, a member of the most famous fraternity in Western

Asia. I had long been a member, and I'm blood-brother of the chief

boss, so I stepped into the part ready made. But I found out that

the Company of the Rosy Hours was not what I had known it in

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1910. Then it had been all for the Young Turks and reform; now it hankered after the old regime and was the last hope of the Orthodox. It had no use for Enver and his friends, and it did not regard with pleasure the *\_beaux \_yeux* of the Teuton. It stood for Islam and the old ways, and might be described as a Conservative-Nationalist caucus. But it was uncommon powerful in the provinces, and Enver and Talaat daren't meddle with it. The dangerous thing about it was that it said nothing and apparently did nothing. It just bided its time and took notes.

'You can imagine that this was the very kind of crowd for my

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purpose. I knew of old its little ways, for with all its orthodoxy it dabbled a good deal in magic, and owed half its power to its atmosphere of the uncanny. The Companions could dance the heart out of the ordinary Turk. You saw a bit of one of our dances this afternoon, Dick - pretty good, wasn't it? They could go anywhere, and no questions asked. They knew what the ordinary man was thinking, for they were the best intelligence department in the Ottoman Empire - far better than Enver's \_Khafiyeh. And they were popular, too, for they had never bowed the knee to the \_Nemseh - the Germans who are squeezing out the life-blood of the Osmanli for their own ends. It would have been as much as the life of the

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Committee or its German masters was worth to lay a hand on us,

for we clung together like leeches and we were not in the habit of

sticking at trifles.

'Well, you may imagine it wasn't difficult for me to move where

I wanted. My dress and the pass-word franked me anywhere. I

travelled from Smyrna by the new railway to Panderma on the

Marmora, and got there just before Christmas. That was after

Anzac and Suvla had been evacuated, but I could hear the guns

going hard at Cape Helles. From Panderma I started to cross to

Thrace in a coasting steamer. And there an uncommon funny thing

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happened - I got torpedoed.

'It must have been about the last effort of a British submarine in those waters. But she got us all right. She gave us ten minutes to take to the boats, and then sent the blighted old packet and a fine cargo of 6-inch shells to the bottom. There weren't many passengers, so it was easy enough to get ashore in the ship's boats. The submarine sat on the surface watching us, as we wailed and howled in the true Oriental way, and I saw the captain quite close in the conning-tower. Who do you think it was? Tommy Elliot, who lives on the other side of the hill from me at home.



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I gave Tommy the surprise of his life. As we bumped past him,

I started the "Flowers of the Forest" - the old version - on the

antique stringed instrument I carried, and I sang the words very

plain. Tommy's eyes bulged out of his head, and he shouted at me

in English to know who the devil I was. I replied in the broadest

Scots, which no man in the submarine or in our boat could have

understood a word of. "Maister Tammy," I cried, "what for wad

ye skail a dacent tinkler lad intil a cauld sea? I'll gie ye your kail

through the reek for this ploy the next time I forgather wi' ye on

the tap o' Caerdon."

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'Tommy spotted me in a second. He laughed till he cried, and as we moved off shouted to me in the same language to "pit a stoot hert tae a stey brae". I hope to Heaven he had the sense not to tell my father, or the old man will have had a fit. He never much approved of my wanderings, and thought I was safely anchored in the battalion.

'Well, to make a long story short, I got to Constantinople, and pretty soon found touch with Blenkiron. The rest you know.

And now for business. I have been fairly lucky - but no more, for I haven't got to the bottom of the thing nor anything like it. But I've

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solved the first of Harry Bullivant's riddles. I know the meaning  
of \_Kasredin.

'Sir Walter was right, as Blenkiron has told us. There's a great  
stirring in Islam, something moving on the face of the waters. They  
make no secret of it. Those religious revivals come in cycles, and  
one was due about now. And they are quite clear about the details.

A seer has arisen of the blood of the Prophet, who will restore the  
Khalifate to its old glories and Islam to its old purity. His sayings  
are everywhere in the Moslem world. All the orthodox believers  
have them by heart. That is why they are enduring grinding poverty

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and preposterous taxation, and that is why their young men are rolling up to the armies and dying without complaint in Gallipoli and Transcaucasia. They believe they are on the eve of a great deliverance.

'Now the first thing I found out was that the Young Turks had nothing to do with this. They are unpopular and unorthodox, and no true Turks. But Germany has. How, I don't know, but I could see quite plainly that in some subtle way Germany was regarded as a collaborator in the movement. It is that belief that is keeping the present regime going. The ordinary Turk loathes the Committee,

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but he has some queer perverted expectation from Germany. It is

not a case of Enver and the rest carrying on their shoulders the

unpopular Teuton; it is a case of the Teuton carrying the unpopular

Committee. And Germany's graft is just this and nothing more -

that she has some hand in the coming of the new deliverer.

'They talk about the thing quite openly. It is called the

\_Kaaba-i-hurriyeh, the Palladium of Liberty. The prophet himself is

known as Zimrud - "the Emerald" - and his four ministers are called also

after jewels - Sapphire, Ruby, Pearl, and Topaz. You will hear

their names as often in the talk of the towns and villages as you will

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hear the names of generals in England. But no one knew where

Zimrud was or when he would reveal himself, though every week

came his messages to the faithful. All that I could learn was that he

and his followers were coming from the West.

'You will say, what about \_Kasredin? That puzzled me dreadfully,

for no one used the phrase. The Home of the Spirit! It is an

obvious cliché, just as in England some new sect might call itself

the Church of Christ. Only no one seemed to use it.

'But by and by I discovered that there was an inner and an outer

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circle in this mystery. Every creed has an esoteric side which is kept from the common herd. I struck this side in Constantinople. Now there is a very famous Turkish \_shaka called \_Kasredin, one of those old half-comic miracle plays with an allegorical meaning which they call \_orta \_oyun, and which take a week to read. That tale tells of the coming of a prophet, and I found that the select of the faith spoke of the new revelation in terms of it. The curious thing is that in that tale the prophet is aided by one of the few women who play much part in the hagiology of Islam. That is the point of the tale, and it is partly a jest, but mainly a religious mystery. The prophet, too, is not called Emerald.'

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'I know,' I said; 'he is called Greenmantle.'

Sandy scrambled to his feet, letting his pipe drop in the fireplace.

'Now how on earth did you find out that?' he cried.

Then I told them of Stumm and Gaudian and the whispered words

I had not been meant to hear. Blenkiron was giving me the benefit of

a steady stare, unusual from one who seemed always to have his eyes

abstracted, and Sandy had taken to ranging up and down the room.



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'Germany's in the heart of the plan. That is what I always thought. If we're to find the \_Kaaba-i-hurriyeh it is no good fossicking among the Committee or in the Turkish provinces. The secret's in Germany. Dick, you should not have crossed the Danube.'

'That's what I half feared,' I said. 'But on the other hand it is obvious that the thing must come east, and sooner rather than later.

I take it they can't afford to delay too long before they deliver the goods. If we can stick it out here we must hit the trail ... I've got another bit of evidence. I have solved Harry Bullivant's third

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puzzle.'

Sandy's eyes were very bright and I had an audience on wires.

'Did you say that in the tale of \_Kasredin a woman is the ally of the  
prophet?'

'Yes,' said Sandy; 'what of that?'

'Only that the same thing is true of Greenmantle. I can give you  
her name.'

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I fetched a piece of paper and a pencil from Blenkiron's desk and handed it to Sandy.

'Write down Harry Bullivant's third word.'

He promptly wrote down 'v. I.'

Then I told them of the other name Stumm and Gaudian had

spoken. I told of my discovery as I lay in the woodman's cottage.

'The "I" is not the letter of the alphabet, but the numeral. The

name is Von Einem - Hilda von Einem.'

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'Good old Harry,' said Sandy softly. 'He was a dashed clever

chap. Hilda von Einem? Who and where is she? for if we find her

we have done the trick.'

Then Blenkiron spoke. 'I reckon I can put you wise on that,

gentlemen,' he said. 'I saw her no later than yesterday. She is a

lovely lady. She happens also to be the owner of this house.'

Both Sandy and I began to laugh. It was too comic to have

stumbled across Europe and lighted on the very headquarters of

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the puzzle we had set out to unriddle.

But Blenkiron did not laugh. At the mention of Hilda von

Einem he had suddenly become very solemn, and the sight of his

face pulled me up short.

'I don't like it, gentlemen,' he said. 'I would rather you had

mentioned any other name on God's earth. I haven't been long in this

city, but I have been long enough to size up the various political

bosses. They haven't much to them. I reckon they wouldn't stand up

against what we could show them in the U-nited States. But I have met

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the Frau von Einem, and that lady's a very different proposition. The

man that will understand her has got to take a biggish size in hats.'

'Who is she?' I asked.

'Why, that is just what I can't tell you. She was a great excavator

of Babylonish and Hittite ruins, and she married a diplomat who

went to glory three years back. It isn't what she has been, but what

she is, and that's a mighty clever woman.'

Blenkiron's respect did not depress me. I felt as if at last we had

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got our job narrowed to a decent compass, for I had hated casting

about in the dark. I asked where she lived.

'That I don't know,' said Blenkiron. 'You won't find people

unduly anxious to gratify your natural curiosity about Frau von Einem.'

'I can find that out,' said Sandy. 'That's the advantage of having

a push like mine. Meantime, I've got to clear, for my day's work

isn't finished. Dick, you and Peter must go to bed at once.'

'Why?' I asked in amazement. Sandy spoke like a medical adviser.

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'Because I want your clothes - the things you've got on now. I'll

take them off with me and you'll never see them again.'

'You've a queer taste in souvenirs,' I said.

'Say rather the Turkish police. The current in the Bosphorus is

pretty strong, and these sad relics of two misguided Dutchmen will

be washed up tomorrow about Seraglio Point. In this game you

must drop the curtain neat and pat at the end of each Scene, if you

don't want trouble later with the missing heir and the family lawyer.'



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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### I Move in Good Society

I walked out of that house next morning with Blenkiron's arm in mine, a different being from the friendless creature who had looked vainly the day before for sanctuary. To begin with, I was splendidly dressed. I had a navy-blue suit with square padded shoulders, a neat black bow-tie, shoes with a hump at the toe, and a brown bowler. Over that I wore a greatcoat lined with wolf fur. I had a smart

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malacca cane, and one of Blenkiron's cigars in my mouth. Peter had been made to trim his beard, and, dressed in unassuming pepper-and-salt, looked with his docile eyes and quiet voice a very respectable servant.

Old Blenkiron had done the job in style, for, if you'll

believe it, he had brought the clothes all the way from London. I

realized now why he and Sandy had been fossicking in my wardrobe.

Peter's suit had been of Sandy's procuring, and it was not the

fit of mine. I had no difficulty about the accent. Any man brought

up in the colonies can get his tongue round American, and I

flattered myself I made a very fair shape at the lingo of the

Middle West.

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The wind had gone to the south and the snow was melting fast.

There was a blue sky above Asia, and away to the north masses of white cloud drifting over the Black Sea. What had seemed the day before the dingiest of cities now took on a strange beauty, the beauty of unexpected horizons and tongues of grey water winding below cypress-studded shores. A man's temper has a lot to do with his appreciation of scenery. I felt a free man once more, and could use my eyes.

That street was a jumble of every nationality on earth. There

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were Turkish regulars in their queer conical khaki helmets, and  
wild-looking levies who had no kin with Europe. There were squads  
of Germans in flat forage-caps, staring vacantly at novel sights, and  
quick to salute any officer on the side-walk. Turks in closed carriages  
passed, and Turks on good Arab horses, and Turks who  
looked as if they had come out of the Ark. But it was the rabble  
that caught the eye - very wild, pinched, miserable rabble. I never  
in my life saw such swarms of beggars, and you walked down that  
street to the accompaniment of entreaties for alms in all the tongues  
of the Tower of Babel. Blenkiron and I behaved as if we were  
interested tourists. We would stop and laugh at one fellow and give

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a penny to a second, passing comments in high-pitched Western voices.

We went into a cafe and had a cup of coffee. A beggar came in and asked alms. Hitherto Blenkiron's purse had been closed, but now he took out some small nickels and planked five down on the table. The man cried down blessings and picked up three. Blenkiron very swiftly swept the other two into his pocket.

That seemed to me queer, and I remarked that I had never before seen a beggar who gave change.

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presently we moved on and came to the harbour-side.

There were a number of small tugs moored alongside, and one

or two bigger craft - fruit boats, I judged, which used to ply in the

Aegean. They looked pretty well moth-eaten from disuse. We

stopped at one of them and watched a fellow in a blue nightcap

splicing ropes. He raised his eyes once and looked at us, and then

kept on with his business.

Blenkiron asked him where he came from, but he shook his

head, not understanding the tongue. A Turkish policeman came up

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and stared at us suspiciously, till Blenkiron opened his coat, as if by accident, and displayed a tiny square of ribbon, at which he saluted.

Failing to make conversation with the sailor, Blenkiron flung him three of his black cigars.

'I guess you can smoke, friend, if you can't talk,' he said.

The man turned and caught the three neatly in the air. Then to my amazement he tossed one of them back.

The donor regarded it quizzically as it lay on the pavement.

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'That boy's a connoisseur of tobacco,' he said. As we moved away I

saw the Turkish policeman pick it up and put it inside his cap.

We returned by the long street on the crest of the hill. There was a

man selling oranges on a tray, and Blenkiron stopped to look at them.

I noticed that the man shuffled fifteen into a cluster. Blenkiron felt

the oranges, as if to see that they were sound, and pushed two aside.

The man instantly restored them to the group, never raising his eyes.

'This ain't the time of year to buy fruit,' said Blenkiron as we



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passed on. 'Those oranges are rotten as medlars.'

We were almost on our own doorstep before I guessed the  
meaning of the business.

'Is your morning's work finished?' I said.

'Our morning's walk?' he asked innocently.

I said "work".'

He smiled blandly. 'I reckoned you'd tumble to it. Why, yes,

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except that I've some figuring still to do. Give me half an hour and

I'll be at your service, Major.'

That afternoon, after Peter had cooked a wonderfully good

luncheon, I had a heart-to-heart talk with Blenkiron.

'My business is to get noos,' he said; 'and before I start on a

stunt I make considerable preparations. All the time in London

when I was yelping at the British Government, I was busy with Sir

Walter arranging things ahead. We used to meet in queer places

and at all hours of the night. I fixed up a lot of connections in this

city before I arrived, and especially a noos service with your Foreign

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Office by way of Rumania and Russia. In a day or two I guess our friends will know all about our discoveries.'

At that I opened my eyes very wide.

'Why, yes. You Britishers haven't any notion how wide-awake your Intelligence Service is. I reckon it's easy the best of all the belligerents. You never talked about it in peace time, and you shunned the theatrical ways of the Teuton. But you had the wires laid good and sure. I calculate there isn't much that happens in any corner of the earth that you don't know within twenty-four hours.

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I don't say your highbrows use the noos well. I don't take much stock in your political push. They're a lot of silver-tongues, no doubt, but it ain't oratory that is wanted in this racket. The William Jennings Bryan stunt languishes in war-time. Politics is like a chicken-coop, and those inside get to behave as if their little run were all the world. But if the politicians make mistakes it isn't from lack of good instruction to guide their steps. If I had a big proposition to handle and could have my pick of helpers I'd plump for the Intelligence Department of the British Admiralty. Yes, Sir, I take off my hat to your Government sleuths.'

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'Did they provide you with ready-made spies here?' I asked in

astonishment.

'Why, no,' he said. 'But they gave me the key, and I could make

my own arrangements. In Germany I buried myself deep in the

local atmosphere and never peeped out. That was my game, for I

was looking for something in Germany itself, and didn't want any

foreign cross-bearings. As you know, I failed where you succeeded.

But so soon as I crossed the Danube I set about opening up my

lines of communication, and I hadn't been two days in this metropolis

before I had got my telephone exchange buzzing. Sometime I'll explain

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the thing to you, for it's a pretty little business. I've got the cutest

cypher ... No, it ain't my invention. It's your Government's. Any  
one,

babe, imbecile, or dotard, can carry my messages - you saw some of them

today - but it takes some mind to set the piece, and it takes a lot of

figuring at my end to work out the results. Some day you shall hear it

all, for I guess it would please you.'

'How do you use it?' I asked.

'Well, I get early noos of what is going on in this cabbage-patch.

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Likewise I get authentic noos of the rest of Europe, and I can send  
a message to Mr X. in Petrograd and Mr Y. in London, or, if I  
wish, to Mr Z. in Noo York. What's the matter with that for a  
post-office? I'm the best informed man in Constantinople, for old  
General Liman only hears one side, and mostly lies at that, and  
Enver prefers not to listen at all. Also, I could give them points on  
what is happening at their very door, for our friend Sandy is a big  
boss in the best-run crowd of mountebanks that ever fiddled secrets  
out of men's hearts. Without their help I wouldn't have cut much  
ice in this city.'

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'I want you to tell me one thing, Blenkiron,' I said. 'I've been

playing a part for the past month, and it wears my nerves to tatters.

Is this job very tiring, for if it is, I doubt I may buckle up.'

He looked thoughtful. 'I can't call our business an absolute rest-

cure any time. You've got to keep your eyes skinned, and there's

always the risk of the little packet of dynamite going off unexpected.

But as these things go, I rate this stunt as easy. We've only got to

be natural. We wear our natural clothes, and talk English, and

sport a Teddy Roosevelt smile, and there isn't any call for theatrical

talent. Where I've found the job tight was when I had got to be



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natural, and my naturalness was the same brand as that of everybody

round about, and all the time I had to do unnatural things. It isn't

easy to be going down town to business and taking cocktails with

Mr Carl Rosenheim, and next hour being engaged trying to blow

Mr Rosenheim's friends sky - high. And it isn't easy to keep up a

part which is clean outside your ordinary life. I've never tried that.

My line has always been to keep my normal personality. But you

have, Major, and I guess you found it wearing.'

'Wearing's a mild word,' I said. 'But I want to know another

thing. It seems to me that the line you've picked is as good as could

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be. But it's a cast-iron line. It commits us pretty deep and it won't

be a simple job to drop it.'

'Why, that's just the point I was coming to,' he said. 'I was

going to put you wise about that very thing. When I started out I

figured on some situation like this. I argued that unless I had a very

clear part with a big bluff in it I wouldn't get the confidences

which I needed. We've got to be at the heart of the show, taking a

real hand and not just looking on. So I settled I would be a big

engineer - there was a time when there weren't many bigger in the

United 'States than John S. Blenkiron. I talked large about what

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might be done in Mesopotamia in the way of washing the British  
down the river. Well, that talk caught on. They knew of my  
reputation as an hydraulic expert, and they were tickled to death to  
rope me in. I told them I wanted a helper, and I told them about  
my friend Richard Hanau, as good a German as ever supped sauerkraut,  
who was coming through Russia and Rumania as a benevolent neutral;  
but  
when he got to Constantinople would drop his neutrality and double his  
benevolence. They got reports on you by wire from the States - I  
arranged that before I left London. So you're going to be welcomed and  
taken to their bosoms just like John S. was. We've both got jobs we  
can hold down, and now you're in these pretty clothes you're the dead

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ringer of the brightest kind of American engineer ... But we can't go

back on our tracks. If we wanted to leave for Constanza next week

they'd be very polite, but they'd never let us. We've got to go on

with this adventure and nose our way down into Mesopotamia, hoping  
that

our luck will hold ... God knows how we will get out of it; but

it's no good going out to meet trouble. As I observed before, I

believe in an all-wise and beneficent Providence, but you've got to

give him a chance.'

I am bound to confess the prospect staggered me. We might be

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let in for fighting - and worse than fighting - against our own side.

I wondered if it wouldn't be better to make a bolt for it, and said SO.

He shook his head. 'I reckon not. In the first place we haven't

finished our inquiries. We've got Greenmantle located right enough,

thanks to you, but we still know mighty little about that holy man.

in the second place it won't be as bad as you think. This show

lacks cohesion, Sir. It is not going to last for ever. I calculate that

before you and I strike the site of the garden that Adam and Eve

frequented there will be a queer turn of affairs. Anyhow, it's good

enough to gamble on.'

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Then he got some sheets of paper and drew me a plan of the dispositions of the Turkish forces. I had no notion he was such a close student of war, for his exposition was as good as a staff lecture. He made out that the situation was none too bright anywhere. The troops released from Gallipoli wanted a lot of refitment, and would be slow in reaching the Transcaucasian frontier, where the Russians were threatening. The Army of Syria was pretty nearly a rabble under the lunatic Djemal. There wasn't the foggiest chance of a serious invasion of Egypt being undertaken. Only in Mesopotamia did things look fairly cheerful, owing to the blunders of

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British strategy. 'And you may take it from me,' he said, 'that if the old Turk mobilized a total of a million men, he has lost 40 per cent of them already. And if I'm anything of a prophet he's going pretty soon to lose more.'

He tore up the papers and enlarged on politics. 'I reckon I've got the measure of the Young Turks and their precious Committee.

Those boys aren't any good. Enver's bright enough, and for sure he's got sand. He'll stick out a fight like a Vermont game-chicken, but he lacks the larger vision, Sir. He doesn't understand the intricacies of the job no more than a sucking-child, so the Germans

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play with him, till his temper goes and he bucks like a mule. Talaat is a sulky dog who wants to batter mankind with a club. Both these boys would have made good cow-punchers in the old days, and they might have got a living out West as the gun-men of a Labour Union. They're about the class of Jesse James or Bill the Kid, excepting that they're college-reared and can patter languages. But they haven't the organizing power to manage the Irish vote in a ward election. Their one notion is to get busy with their firearms, and people are getting tired of the Black Hand stunt. Their hold on the country is just the hold that a man with a Browning has over a crowd with walking-sticks. The cooler heads in the Committee are



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growing shy of them, and an old fox like David is lying low till his

time comes. Now it doesn't want arguing that a gang of that kind

has got to hang close together or they may hang separately. They've

got no grip on the ordinary Turk, barring the fact that they are

active and he is sleepy, and that they've got their guns loaded.'

'What about the Germans here?' I asked.

Blenkiron laughed. 'It is no sort of a happy family. But the

Young Turks know that without the German boost they'll be

strung up like Haman, and the Germans can't afford to neglect an

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ally. Consider what would happen if Turkey got sick of the game and made a separate peace. The road would be open for Russia to the Aegean. Ferdy of Bulgaria would take his depreciated goods to the other market, and not waste a day thinking about it. You'd have Rumania coming in on the Allies' side. Things would look pretty black for that control of the Near East on which Germany has banked her winnings. Kaiser says that's got to be prevented at all costs, but how is it going to be done?'

Blenkiron's face had become very solemn again. 'It won't be done unless Germany's got a trump card to play. Her game's

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mighty near bust, but it's still got a chance. And that chance is a woman and an old man. I reckon our landlady has a bigger brain than Enver and Liman. She's the real boss of the show. When I came here, I reported to her, and presently you've got to do the same. I am curious as to how she'll strike you, for I'm free to admit that she impressed me considerable.'

'It looks as if our job were a long way from the end,' I said.

'It's scarcely begun,' said Blenkiron.

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That talk did a lot to cheer my spirits, for I realized that it was the biggest of big game we were hunting this time. I'm an economical soul, and if I'm going to be hanged I want a good stake for my neck.

Then began some varied experiences. I used to wake up in the morning, wondering where I should be at night, and yet quite pleased at the uncertainty. Greenmantle became a sort of myth with me. Somehow I couldn't fix any idea in my head of what he was like. The nearest I got was a picture of an old man in a turban coming out of a bottle in a cloud of smoke, which I remembered from a child's edition of the Arabian Nights. But if he was dim, the lady was dimmer.

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Sometimes I thought of her as a fat old German crone, sometimes as a harsh-featured woman like a schoolmistress with thin lips and eyeglasses. But I had to fit the East into the picture, so I made her young and gave her a touch of the languid houri in a veil. I was always wanting to pump Blenkiron on the subject, but he shut up like a rat-trap. He was looking for bad trouble in that direction, and was disinclined to speak about it beforehand.

We led a peaceful existence. Our servants were two of Sandy's lot, for Blenkiron had very rightly cleared out the Turkish caretakers, and they worked like beavers under Peter's eye, till I reflected I had

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never been so well looked after in my life. I walked about the city with Blenkiron, keeping my eyes open, and speaking very civil.

The third night we were bidden to dinner at Moellendorff's, so we put on our best clothes and set out in an ancient cab. Blenkiron had fetched a dress suit of mine, from which my own tailor's label had been cut and a New York one substituted.

General Liman and Metternich the Ambassador had gone up the line to Nish to meet the Kaiser, who was touring in those parts, so Moellendorff was the biggest German in the city. He was a thin, foxy-faced fellow, cleverish but monstrously vain, and he was not

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very popular either with the Germans or the Turks. He was polite

to both of us, but I am bound to say that I got a bad fright when I

entered the room, for the first man I saw was Gaudian.

I doubt if he would have recognized me even in the clothes I had

worn in Stumm's company, for his eyesight was wretched. As it

was, I ran no risk in dress-clothes, with my hair brushed back and a

fine American accent. I paid him high compliments as a fellow

engineer, and translated part of a very technical conversation between

him and Blenkiron. Gaudian was in uniform, and I liked the

look of his honest face better than ever.

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But the great event was the sight of Enver. He was a slim fellow of Rasta's build, very foppish and precise in his dress, with a smooth oval face like a girl's, and rather fine straight black eyebrows.

He spoke perfect German, and had the best kind of manners, neither pert nor overbearing. He had a pleasant trick, too, of appealing all round the table for confirmation, and so bringing everybody into the talk. Not that he spoke a great deal, but all he said was good sense, and he had a smiling way of saying it. Once or twice he ran counter to Moellendorff, and I could see there was no love lost between these two. I didn't think I wanted him as a friend - he was too cold-blooded and artificial; and I was pretty certain that



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I didn't want those steady black eyes as an enemy. But it was no good denying his quality. The little fellow was all cold courage, like the fine polished blue steel of a sword.

I fancy I was rather a success at that dinner. For one thing I could speak German, and so had a pull on Blenkiron. For another I was in a good temper, and really enjoyed putting my back into my part. They talked very high-flown stuff about what they had done and were going to do, and Enver was great on Gallipoli. I remember he said that he could have destroyed the whole British Army if it hadn't been for somebody's cold feet - at which Moellendorff

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looked daggers. They were so bitter about Britain and all her works that I gathered they were getting pretty panicky, and that made me as jolly as a sandboy. I'm afraid I was not free from bitterness myself on that subject. I said things about my own country that I sometimes wake in the night and sweat to think of.

Gaudian got on to the use of water power in war, and that gave me a chance.

'In my country,' I said, 'when we want to get rid of a mountain we wash it away. There's nothing on earth that will stand against

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water. Now, speaking with all respect, gentlemen, and as an absolute

novice in the military art, I sometimes ask why this God-given

weapon isn't more used in the present war. I haven't been to any of

the fronts, but I've studied them some from maps and the newspapers.

Take your German position in Flanders, where you've got

the high ground. If I were a British general I reckon I would very

soon make it no sort of position.'

Moellendorff asked, 'How?'

'Why, I'd wash it away. Wash away the fourteen feet of soil down

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to the stone. There's a heap of coalpits behind the British front  
where they could generate power, and I judge there's ample water  
supply from the rivers and canals. I'd guarantee to wash you away  
in twenty-four hours - yes, in spite of all your big guns. It beats me  
why the British haven't got on to this notion. They used to have  
some bright engineers.'

Enver was on the point like a knife, far quicker than Gaudian.

He cross-examined me in a way that showed he knew how to  
approach a technical subject, though he mightn't have much technical  
knowledge. He was just giving me a sketch of the flooding in

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Mesopotamia when an aide-de-camp brought in a chit which fetched  
him to his feet.

'I have gossiped long enough,' he said. 'My kind host, I must  
leave you. Gentlemen all, my apologies and farewells.'

Before he left he asked my name and wrote it down. 'This is an  
unhealthy city for strangers, Mr Hanau,' he said in very good  
English. 'I have some small power of protecting a friend, and what  
I have is at your disposal.' This with the condescension of a king  
promising his favour to a subject.

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The little fellow amused me tremendously, and rather impressed me too. I said so to Gaudian after he had left, but that decent soul didn't agree.

'I do not love him,' he said. 'We are allies - yes; but friends - no.

He is no true son of Islam, which is a noble faith and despises liars and boasters and betrayers of their salt.'

That was the verdict of one honest man on this ruler in Israel.

The next night I got another from Blenkiron on a greater than Enver.

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He had been out alone and had come back pretty late, with his face grey and drawn with pain. The food we ate - not at all bad of its kind - and the cold east wind played havoc with his dyspepsia. I can see him yet, boiling milk on a spirit-lamp, while Peter worked at a Primus stove to get him a hot-water bottle. He was using horrid language about his inside.

'my God, Major, if I were you with a sound stomach I'd fairly conquer the world. As it is, I've got to do my work with half my mind, while the other half is dwelling in my intestines. I'm like the child in the Bible that had a fox gnawing at its vitals.'

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He got his milk boiling and began to sip it.

'I've been to see our pretty landlady,' he said. 'She sent for me

and I hobbled off with a grip full of plans, for she's mighty set on

Mesopotamy.'

'Anything about Greenmantle?' I asked eagerly.

'Why, no, but I have reached one conclusion. I opine that the

hapless prophet has no sort of time with that lady. I opine that he



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will soon wish himself in Paradise. For if Almighty God ever  
created a female devil it's Madame von Einem.'

He sipped a little more milk with a grave face.

'That isn't my duodenal dyspepsia, Major. It's the verdict of a  
ripe experience, for I have a cool and penetrating judgement, even  
if I've a deranged stomach. And I give it as my considered conclusion  
that that woman's mad and bad - but principally bad.'

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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## The Lady of the Mantilla

Since that first night I had never clapped eyes on Sandy. He had gone clean out of the world, and Blenkiron and I waited anxiously for a word of news. Our own business was in good trim, for we were presently going east towards Mesopotamia, but unless we learned more about Greenmantle our journey would be a grotesque failure. And learn about Greenmantle we could not, for nobody by word or deed suggested his existence, and it was impossible of course for us to ask questions. Our only hope was Sandy, for what

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we wanted to know was the prophet's whereabouts and his plans. I

suggested to Blenkiron that we might do more to cultivate Frau

von Einem, but he shut his jaw like a rat-trap.

'There's nothing doing for us in that quarter,' he said.

'That's the most dangerous woman on earth; and if she got any kind

of notion that we were wise about her pet schemes I reckon you and

I would very soon be in the Bosphorus.'

This was all very well; but what was going to happen if the two

of us were bundled off to Baghdad with instructions to wash away

the British? Our time was getting pretty short, and I doubted if we

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could spin out more than three days more in Constantinople. I felt just as I had felt with Stumm that last night when I was about to be packed off to Cairo and saw no way of avoiding it. Even Blenkiron was getting anxious. He played Patience incessantly, and was disinclined to talk. I tried to find out something from the servants, but they either knew nothing or wouldn't speak - the former, I think. I kept my eyes lifting, too, as I walked about the streets, but there was no sign anywhere of the skin coats or the weird stringed instruments. The whole Company of the Rosy Hours seemed to have melted into the air, and I began to wonder if they had ever existed.

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Anxiety made me restless, and restlessness made me want exercise.

It was no good walking about the city. The weather had become

foul again, and I was sick of the smells and the squalor and the flea-

bitten crowds. So Blenkiron and I got horses, Turkish cavalry

mounts with heads like trees, and went out through the suburbs

into the open country.

It was a grey drizzling afternoon, with the beginnings of a sea

fog which hid the Asiatic shores of the straits. It wasn't easy to find

open ground for a gallop, for there were endless small patches of

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cultivation and the gardens of country houses. We kept on the high

land above the sea, and when we reached a bit of downland came

on squads of Turkish soldiers digging trenches. Whenever we let

the horses go we had to pull up sharp for a digging party or a

stretch of barbed wire. Coils of the beastly thing were lying loose

everywhere, and Blenkiron nearly took a nasty toss over one. Then

we were always being stopped by sentries and having to show our

passes. Still the ride did us good and shook up our livers, and by

the time we turned for home I was feeling more like a white man.

We jogged back in the short winter twilight, past the wooded

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grounds of white villas, held up every few minutes by transport-wagons and companies of soldiers. The rain had come on in real earnest, and it was two very bedraggled horsemen that crawled along the muddy lanes. As we passed one villa, shut in by a high white wall, a pleasant smell of wood smoke was wafted towards us, which made me sick for the burning veld. My ear, too, caught the twanging of a zither, which somehow reminded me of the afternoon in Kuprasso's garden-house.

I pulled up and proposed to investigate, but Blenkiron very testily declined.

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'Zithers are as common here as fleas,' he said. 'You don't want to be fossicking around somebody's stables and find a horse-boy entertaining his friends. They don't like visitors in this country; and you'll be asking for trouble if you go inside those walls. I guess it's some old Buzzard's harem.' Buzzard was his own private peculiar name for the Turk, for he said he had had as a boy a natural history book with a picture of a bird called the turkey-buzzard, and couldn't get out of the habit of applying it to the Ottoman people.

I wasn't convinced, so I tried to mark down the place. It seemed to be about three miles out from the city, at the end of a steep lane



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on the inland side of the hill coming from the Bosphorus. I fancied somebody of distinction lived there, for a little farther on we met a big empty motor-car snorting its way up, and I had a notion that the car belonged to the walled villa.

Next day Blenkiron was in grievous trouble with his dyspepsia.

About midday he was compelled to lie down, and having nothing

better to do I had out the horses again and took Peter with me. It

was funny to see Peter in a Turkish army-saddle, riding with the

long Boer stirrup and the slouch of the backveld.

That afternoon was unfortunate from the start. It was not the

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mist and drizzle of the day before, but a stiff northern gale which

blew sheets of rain in our faces and numbed our bridle hands. We

took the same road, but pushed west of the trench-digging parties

and got to a shallow valley with a white village among the cypresses.

Beyond that there was a very respectable road which brought us to

the top of a crest that in clear weather must have given a fine

prospect. Then we turned our horses, and I shaped our course so as

to strike the top of the long lane that abutted on the down. I

wanted to investigate the white villa.

But we hadn't gone far on our road back before we got into

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trouble. It arose out of a sheep-dog, a yellow mongrel brute that came at us like a thunderbolt. It took a special fancy to Peter, and bit savagely at his horse's heels and sent it capering off the road. I should have warned him, but I did not realize what was happening, till too late. For Peter, being accustomed to mongrels in Kaffir kraals, took a summary way with the pest. Since it despised his whip, he out with his pistol and put a bullet through its head.

The echoes of the shot had scarcely died away when the row began. A big fellow appeared running towards us, shouting wildly. I guessed he was the dog's owner, and proposed to pay no attention.

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But his cries summoned two other fellows - soldiers by the look of them - who closed in on us, unslinging their rifles as they ran. My first idea was to show them our heels, but I had no desire to be shot in the back, and they looked like men who wouldn't stop short of shooting. So we slowed down and faced them.

They made as savage-looking a trio as you would want to avoid.

The shepherd looked as if he had been dug up, a dirty ruffian with matted hair and a beard like a bird's nest. The two soldiers stood staring with sullen faces, fingering their guns, while the other chap raved and stormed and kept pointing at Peter, whose mild eyes

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stared unwinkingly at his assailant.

The mischief was that neither of us had a word of Turkish. I

tried German, but it had no effect. We sat looking at them and they

stood storming at us, and it was fast getting dark. Once I turned

my horse round as if to proceed, and the two soldiers jumped in

front of me.

They jabbered among themselves, and then one said very slowly:

'He ... want ... pounds,' and he held up five fingers. They

evidently saw by the cut of our jib that we weren't Germans.

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'I'll be hanged if he gets a penny,' I said angrily, and the

conversation languished.

The situation was getting serious, so I spoke a word to Peter.

The soldiers had their rifles loose in their hands, and before they

could lift them we had the pair covered with our pistols.

'If you move,' I said, 'you are dead.' They understood that all

right and stood stock still, while the shepherd stopped his raving

and took to muttering like a gramophone when the record is finished.

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'Drop your guns,' I said sharply. 'Quick, or we shoot.'

The tone, if not the words, conveyed my meaning. Still staring at

us, they let the rifles slide to the ground. The next second we had

forced our horses on the top of them, and the three were off like

rabbits. I sent a shot over their heads to encourage them. Peter

dismounted and tossed the guns into a bit of scrub where they

would take some finding.

This hold-up had wasted time. By now it was getting very dark,

and we hadn't ridden a mile before it was black night. It was an

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annoying predicament, for I had completely lost my bearings and at the best I had only a foggy notion of the lie of the land. The best plan seemed to be to try and get to the top of a rise in the hope of seeing the lights of the city, but all the countryside was so pocketed that it was hard to strike the right kind of rise.

We had to trust to Peter's instinct. I asked him where our line lay, and he sat very still for a minute sniffing the air. Then he pointed the direction. It wasn't what I would have taken myself, but on a point like that he was pretty near infallible.



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Presently we came to a long slope which cheered me. But at the top there was no light visible anywhere - only a black void like the inside of a shell. As I stared into the gloom it seemed to me that there were patches of deeper darkness that might be woods.

'There is a house half-left in front of us,' said Peter.

I peered till my eyes ached and saw nothing.

'Well, for heaven's sake, guide me to it,' I said, and with Peter in front we set off down the hill.

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It was a wild journey, for darkness clung as close to us as a vest.

Twice we stepped into patches of bog, and once my horse saved

himself by a hair from going head forward into a gravel pit. We got

tangled up in strands of wire, and often found ourselves rubbing

our noses against tree trunks. Several times I had to get down and

make a gap in barricades of loose stones. But after a ridiculous

amount of slipping and stumbling we finally struck what seemed

the level of a road, and a piece of special darkness in front which

turned out to be a high wall.

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I argued that all mortal walls had doors, so we set to groping along it, and presently found a gap. There was an old iron gate on broken hinges, which we easily pushed open, and found ourselves on a back path to some house. It was clearly disused, for masses of rotting leaves covered it, and by the feel of it underfoot it was grass-grown.

We dismounted now, leading our horses, and after about fifty yards the path ceased and came out on a well-made carriage drive.

So, at least, we guessed, for the place was as black as pitch.

Evidently the house couldn't be far off, but in which direction I

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hadn't a notion.

Now, I didn't want to be paying calls on any Turk at that time

of day. Our job was to find where the road opened into the lane,

for after that our way to Constantinople was clear. One side the

lane lay, and the other the house, and it didn't seem wise to take

the risk of tramping up with horses to the front door. So I told

Peter to wait for me at the end of the back-road, while I would

prospect a bit. I turned to the right, my intention being if I saw the

light of a house to return, and with Peter take the other direction.

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I walked like a blind man in that nether-pit of darkness. The road seemed well kept, and the soft wet gravel muffled the sounds of my feet. Great trees overhung it, and several times I wandered into dripping bushes. And then I stopped short in my tracks, for I heard the sound of whistling.

It was quite close, about ten yards away. And the strange thing was that it was a tune I knew, about the last tune you would expect to hear in this part of the world. It was the Scots air: 'Ca' the yowes to the knowes,' which was a favourite of my father's.

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The whistler must have felt my presence, for the air suddenly

stopped in the middle of a bar. An unbounded curiosity seized me

to know who the fellow could be. So I started in and finished it myself.

There was silence for a second, and then the unknown began

again and stopped. Once more I chipped in and finished it.

Then it seemed to me that he was coming nearer. The air in that

dank tunnel was very still, and I thought I heard a light foot. I

think I took a step backward. Suddenly there was a flash of an

electric torch from a yard off, so quick that I could see nothing of

the man who held it.

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Then a low voice spoke out of the darkness - a voice I knew

well - and, following it, a hand was laid on my arm. 'What the

devil are you doing here, Dick?' it said, and there was something

like consternation in the tone.

I told him in a hectic sentence, for I was beginning to feel badly

rattled myself.

'You've never been in greater danger in your life,' said the voice.

'Great God, man, what brought you wandering here today of all days?'

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You can imagine that I was pretty scared, for Sandy was the last man to put a case too high. And the next second I felt worse, for he clutched my arm and dragged me in a bound to the side of the road. I could see nothing, but I felt that his head was screwed round, and mine followed suit. And there, a dozen yards off, were the acetylene lights of a big motor-car.

It came along very slowly, purring like a great cat, while we pressed into the bushes. The headlights seemed to spread a fan far to either side, showing the full width of the drive and its borders,



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and about half the height of the over-arching trees. There was a

figure in uniform sitting beside the chauffeur, whom I saw dimly in

the reflex glow, but the body of the car was dark.

It crept towards us, passed, and my mind was just getting easy

again when it stopped. A switch was snapped within, and the

limousine was brightly lit up. Inside I saw a woman's figure.

The servant had got out and opened the door and a voice came

from within - a clear soft voice speaking in some tongue I didn't

understand. Sandy had started forward at the sound of it, and I

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followed him. It would never do for me to be caught skulking in  
the bushes.

I was so dazzled by the suddenness of the glare that at first I  
blinked and saw nothing. Then my eyes cleared and I found myself  
looking at the inside of a car upholstered in some soft dove-coloured  
fabric, and beautifully finished off in ivory and silver. The woman  
who sat in it had a mantilla of black lace over her head and  
shoulders, and with one slender jewelled hand she kept its fold over  
the greater part of her face. I saw only a pair of pale grey-blue eyes  
- these and the slim fingers.

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I remember that Sandy was standing very upright with his hands on his hips, by no means like a servant in the presence of his mistress. He was a fine figure of a man at all times, but in those wild clothes, with his head thrown back and his dark brows drawn below his skull-cap, he looked like some savage king out of an older world. He was speaking Turkish, and glancing at me now and then as if angry and perplexed. I took the hint that he was not supposed to know any other tongue, and that he was asking who the devil I might be.

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Then they both looked at me, Sandy with the slow unwinking

stare of the gipsy, the lady with those curious, beautiful pale eyes.

They ran over my clothes, my brand-new riding-breeches, my

splashed boots, my wide-brimmed hat. I took off the last and made

my best bow.

'Madam,' I said, 'I have to ask pardon for trespassing in your

garden. The fact is, I and my servant - he's down the road with the

horses and I guess you noticed him - the two of us went for a ride

this afternoon, and got good and well lost. We came in by your

back gate, and I was prospecting for your front door to find

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someone to direct us, when I bumped into this brigand-chief who

didn't understand my talk. I'm American, and I'm here on a big

Government proposition. I hate to trouble you, but if you'd send a

man to show us how to strike the city I'd be very much in your debt.'

Her eyes never left my face. 'Will you come into the car?' she

said in English. 'At the house I will give you a servant to direct you.'

She drew in the skirts of her fur cloak to make room for me, and

in my muddy boots and sopping clothes I took the seat she pointed

out. She said a word in Turkish to Sandy, switched off the light,

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and the car moved on.

Women had never come much my way, and I knew about as

much of their ways as I knew about the Chinese language. All my

life I had lived with men only, and rather a rough crowd at that.

When I made my pile and came home I looked to see a little

society, but I had first the business of the Black Stone on my hands,

and then the war, so my education languished. I had never been in

a motor-car with a lady before, and I felt like a fish on a dry

sandbank. The soft cushions and the subtle scents filled me with

acute uneasiness. I wasn't thinking now about Sandy's grave words,

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or about Blenkiron's warning, or about my job and the part this

woman must play in it. I was thinking only that I felt mortally shy.

The darkness made it worse. I was sure that my companion was

looking at me all the time and laughing at me for a clown.

The car stopped and a tall servant opened the door. The lady was

over the threshold before I was at the step. I followed her heavily,

the wet squelching from my field-boots. At that moment I noticed

that she was very tall.

She led me through a long corridor to a room where two pillars

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held lamps in the shape of torches. The place was dark but for their glow, and it was as warm as a hothouse from invisible stoves. I felt soft carpets underfoot, and on the walls hung some tapestry or rug of an amazingly intricate geometrical pattern, but with every strand as rich as jewels. There, between the pillars, she turned and faced me. Her furs were thrown back, and the black mantilla had slipped down to her shoulders.

'I have heard of you,' she said. 'You are called Richard Hanau, the American. Why have you come to this land?'



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'To have a share in the campaign,' I said. 'I'm an engineer, and I

thought I could help out with some business like Mesopotamia.'

'You are on Germany's side?' she asked.

'Why, yes,' I replied. 'We Americans are supposed to be nootrals,

and that means we're free to choose any side we fancy. I'm

for the Kaiser.'

Her cool eyes searched me, but not in suspicion. I could see she

wasn't troubling with the question whether I was speaking the

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truth. She was sizing me up as a man. I cannot describe that calm  
appraising look. There was no sex in it, nothing even of that  
implicit sympathy with which one human being explores the existence  
of another. I was a chattel, a thing infinitely removed from  
intimacy. Even so I have myself looked at a horse which I thought  
of buying, scanning his shoulders and hocks and paces. Even so  
must the old lords of Constantinople have looked at the slaves  
which the chances of war brought to their markets, assessing their  
usefulness for some task or other with no thought of a humanity  
common to purchased and purchaser. And yet - not quite. This  
woman's eyes were weighing me, not for any special duty, but for

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my essential qualities. I felt that I was under the scrutiny of one

who was a connoisseur in human nature.

I see I have written that I knew nothing about women. But every

man has in his bones a consciousness of sex. I was shy and perturbed,

but horribly fascinated. This slim woman, poised exquisitely

like some statue between the pillared lights, with her fair cloud of

hair, her long delicate face, and her pale bright eyes, had the

glamour of a wild dream. I hated her instinctively, hated her

intensely, but I longed to arouse her interest. To be valued coldly by

those eyes was an offence to my manhood, and I felt antagonism

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rising within me. I am a strong fellow, well set up, and rather  
above the average height, and my irritation stiffened me from heel  
to crown. I flung my head back and gave her cool glance for cool  
glance, pride against pride.

Once, I remember, a doctor on board ship who dabbled in  
hypnotism told me that I was the most unsympathetic person he  
had ever struck. He said I was about as good a mesmeric subject as  
Table Mountain. Suddenly I began to realize that this woman was  
trying to cast some spell over me. The eyes grew large and luminous,  
and I was conscious for just an instant of some will battling to

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subject mine. I was aware, too, in the same moment of a strange

scent which recalled that wild hour in Kuprasso's garden-house. It

passed quickly, and for a second her eyes drooped. I seemed to read

in them failure, and yet a kind of satisfaction, too, as if they had

found more in me than they expected.

'What life have you led?' the soft voice was saying.

I was able to answer quite naturally, rather to my surprise. 'I

have been a mining engineer up and down the world.'

'You have faced danger many times?'

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'I have faced danger.'

'You have fought with men in battles?'

'I have fought in battles.'

Her bosom rose and fell in a kind of sigh. A smile - a very

beautiful thing - flitted over her face. She gave me her hand.

'The horses are at the door now,' she said, 'and your servant is

with them. One of my people will guide you to the city.'

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She turned away and passed out of the circle of light into the  
darkness beyond ...

Peter and I jogged home in the rain with one of Sandy's skin-  
clad Companions loping at our side. We did not speak a word, for  
my thoughts were running like hounds on the track of the past  
hours. I had seen the mysterious Hilda von Einem, I had spoken to  
her, I had held her hand. She had insulted me with the subtlest of  
insults and yet I was not angry. Suddenly the game I was playing  
became invested with a tremendous solemnity. My old antagonists,

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Stumm and Rasta and the whole German Empire, seemed to shrink into the background, leaving only the slim woman with her inscrutable smile and devouring eyes. 'Mad and bad,' Blenkiron had called her, 'but principally bad.' I did not think they were the proper terms, for they belonged to the narrow world of our common experience. This was something beyond and above it, as a cyclone or an earthquake is outside the decent routine of nature. Mad and bad she might be, but she was also great.

Before we arrived our guide had plucked my knee and spoken some words which he had obviously got by heart. 'The Master



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says,' ran the message, 'expect him at midnight.'

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### An Embarrassed Toilet

I was soaked to the bone, and while Peter set off to look for dinner I went to my room to change. I had a rubdown and then got into pyjamas for some dumb-bell exercises with two chairs, for that long wet ride had stiffened my arm and shoulder muscles. They were a vulgar suit of primitive blue, which Blenkiron had looted from my London wardrobe.

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As Cornelis Brandt I had sported a flannel nightgown.

My bedroom opened off the sitting-room, and while I was busy

with my gymnastics I heard the door open. I thought at first it was

Blenkiron, but the briskness of the tread was unlike his measured

gait. I had left the light burning there, and the visitor, whoever he

was, had made himself at home. I slipped on a green dressing-gown

Blenkiron had lent me, and sallied forth to investigate.

My friend Rasta was standing by the table, on which he had laid

an envelope. He looked round at my entrance and saluted.

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'I come from the Minister of War, sir,' he said, 'and bring you  
your passports for tomorrow. You will travel by ...' And then his  
voice tailed away and his black eyes narrowed to slits. He had seen  
something which switched him off the metals.

At that moment I saw it too. There was a mirror on the wall  
behind him, and as I faced him I could not help seeing my reflection.

It was the exact image of the engineer on the Danube boat - blue  
jeans, loden cloak, and all. The accursed mischance of my costume  
had given him the clue to an identity which was otherwise buried

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deep in the Bosphorus.

I am bound to say for Rasta that he was a man of quick action.

In a trice he had whipped round to the other side of the table

between me and the door, where he stood regarding me wickedly.

By this time I was at the table and stretched out a hand for the

envelope. My one hope was nonchalance.

'Sit down, sir,' I said, 'and have a drink. It's a filthy night to

move about in.'

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'Thank you, no, Herr Brandt,' he said. 'You may burn these  
passports for they will not be used.'

'Whatever's the matter with you?' I cried. 'You've mistaken the  
house, my lad. I'm called Hanau - Richard Hanau - and my partner's

Mr John S. Blenkiron. He'll be here presently. Never knew  
anyone of the name of Brandt, barring a tobacconist in Denver City.'

'You have never been to Rustchuk?' he said with a sneer.