

...and turning round, I see a good-looking, broad-shouldered Englishman, in the uniform of a brigadier, who is watching the prisoner with an air of pity and curiosity approaching the ludicrous. "Excellence," says he, in somewhat broken German, "will you not send him to me? I will undertake that he spreads no false reports about the camp. I will answer for his safety in my hands, he must not be permitted to communicate with any one, even by signs; but it is a pity to shoot him is it not?"

"I would do much to oblige you, Brigadier," replied Omar, with frank courtesy; "but you know the custom of war. I cannot in this instance depart from it—no, not even to oblige a friend," he smiled as he spoke, and added in Turkish to an officer who stood beside him, "March him out and see it done immediately. And now, gentlemen," he proceeded, "we will arrange the plan of attack. Mr. Egerton, your despatches are ready; let them reach Iskender Bey without delay. There will be work for us all to-morrow."

At these words a buzz of satisfaction filled the tent; not an officer there but was determined to win his way to distinction *coute qui coute*. I felt I had received my dismissal, and bowed myself out. As I left the tent, I encountered the unfortunate Russian prisoner marching doggedly under escort to the place of his doom. When he caught sight of me he made a mechanical motion with his fettered hand, as though to raise his cap, and addressed me in French, of which language he had hitherto affected the most profound ignorance.

"Comrade," said he, "order these men to give me five minutes. We are both soldiers; you shall do me a favor."

I spoke to the *mulazim* who commanded the guard. He pointed out an open space on which we were entering, and observed, "The Moscow has reached his resting-place at last. Five minutes are soon gone. What am I that I should disobey the Tergyman? Be it on my head, Effendi."

The Russian became perfectly composed. At my desire his arms were liberated, and the first use he made of his freedom was to shake me cordially by the hand.

"Comrade," said he, in excellent French, and with the refined tone of an educated man, "we are enemies, but we are soldiers. We are civilized men among barbarians; above all, we are Christians among infidels. Swear to me by the faith we both worship that you will fulfil my last request."

His coolness at this trying moment brought the tears into my eyes. I promised to comply with his demand so far as my honor as a soldier would permit me.

He had stood unmoved surrounded by enemies, he had heard his death-warrant without shrinking for an instant; but my sympathy unmanned him, and it was with a broken voice and moistened eyes that he proceeded.

"I am not what I seem. I hold a commission in the Russian army. Disguised as a private soldier I crossed the river of my own free will. I have sacrificed myself willingly for my country and my Czar. He will know it, and my brother will be promoted. The favor I ask you is no trifling one." He took a small amulet from his neck as he spoke; it was the image of his patron saint, curiously wrought in gold. "Forward this to my mother, she is the one I love best on earth. Mother," he repeated, in a low, heart-breaking voice, "could you but see me now!"

I had fortunately a memorandum book in my pocket. I tore out a leaf and handed him a pencil. He thanked me with such a look of gratitude as I never saw before on mortal face, wrote a few lines, wrapped the amulet in the paper, and inscribed on it the direction with a hand far steadier than my own. As he gave it me, the *mulazim* coolly observed, "Effendi! the time has expired, and ordered his men to 'fall in.' The Rus-

Lieutenant.

is falling and effectually assists our manoeuvres. We have crossed the Danube in a few flat boats before daybreak, fortunately with no further casualty than the drowning of one horse, whose burial-service has been celebrated in the strongest oaths of the Turkish language. We have landed without opposition; and should we not be surprised by any outpost of the enemy, we are in a highly favorable position for taking our share in the combined attack.

Victor de Rohan has been attached for the occasion to our commander's staff. He is accompanied by a swarthy, powerful man, mounted on a game-looking bay mare, the only charger of that sex present on the field. This worthy goes by the name of Ali Mesrour, and is by birth a Beloochee; fighting has been his trade for all over the East, till he found himself a sort of henchman to Omar Pasha on the banks of the Danube. He has accompanied De Rohan here from head-quarters, and sits on his mare by the Hungarian's side, grim and unmoved as becomes a veteran warrior. There is charlatanism in all trades. It is the affectation of the young soldier to be excited, keen, volatile, and jocular, while the older hand thinks it right to assume an air of knowing calmness, just dashed with a touch of sardonic humor. We are situated in a hollow, where we are completely hidden from the surrounding district: the river guards our rear and one of our flanks; a strong picket is under arms in our front; and beyond it a few videttes, themselves unseen, are peeping over the eminence before them. Our main body are dismounted, but the men are prepared to 'stand to their horses' at a moment's notice, and all noise is strictly forbidden in the ranks. If we are surprised by a sufficiently strong force we shall be cut to pieces, for we have no retreat; if we can remain undiscovered for another hour or so, the game will be in our own hands.

Iskender Bey is in Paradise. This is what he lives for; and to-day, he thinks, will see him a pasha or a corpse.

"Tergyman," he whispers to me, whilst his sides shake, and his eyes kindle with mirth, "how little they think who is their neighbor. And the landing, Tergyman; the landing; the only place for miles where we could have accomplished it, and they had not even a sentry there. Oh, it is the best joke!" And Iskender dismounts from his horse to enjoy his laugh in comfort, while his swollen veins and bloodshot eyes betoken the severity of the internal convulsion, all the more powerful that he must not have it out in louder tones.

"Another hour of this, at least," observes Victor, as he lights a large cigar, and hands another to the commandant, and a third to myself, "one more hour, Egerton, and then comes our chance. You have got a picked body of men to-day, Effendi!" he observes to the Bey; "and not the worst of the horses."

"They are my own children to-day, Count," answers Iskender, with sparkling eyes. "There are not too many of the brood left; but the chickens are game to the backbone. What say you, Ali? These fellows are better stuff than your Arabs that you make such a talk about."

The Beloochee smiles grimly, and pats his mare on the neck.

"When the sun is low," he answers, "I shall say what I think; meanwhile work, and not talk, is before us. The Arab is no bad warrior, Effendi, on the fourth day, when the barley is exhausted, and there is no water in the skins."

Iskender laughs, and points to the Danube. "There is water enough there," he says, "for the whole cavalry of the Padiasha, Egyptian guards, and all. Pah! don't talk of water, I hate the very name of it. Brandy is the liquor for a soldier—brandy and blood. Count de Rohan, your Hungarians don't fight upon water, I'll answer for it."

You know our proverb, Effendi," replies

freight. The Russian batteries, well and promptly served, were playing furiously on the river; but their range was too high, and the iron shower whizzed harmlessly over the heads of the attacking Moslem. A Turkish steamer, coolly and skilfully handled, was plying to and fro in support of her comrades, and throwing her shells beautifully into the Russian redoubts, where those unwelcome visitors created much annoyance and confusion. Victor's eyes lightened as he puffed at his cigar with an assumed *sang froid* which it was easy to see he did not feel.

"The old Lion won't stay here long," he whispered to me; "look back at him now, Vere. I told you so: there they go—'boots and saddles.'" We, too, shall be at it ten minutes, *Vive la guerre!*"

As he spoke, the trumpet rang out the order to 'mount.' Concealment was no longer necessary, and we rushed back to our horses, and placed ourselves on either side of our commander, ready to execute whatever orders he might choose to give.

Iskender Bey was now cool as if on parade; nay, considerably cooler: for the rehearsal was more apt to excite his feelings than the play itself. He moved us forward at a trot. Once more he halted amongst the brushwood, from which the scared busters were by this time flying in all directions; and whilst every charger's frame quivered with excitement, and even the proud Turkish hearts throbbed quicker under the Sultan's uniform, he alone appeared wholly unmoved by the stake he had to play in the great game. It was but the calm before the hurricane.

From our new position we could see the boats of our comrades rapidly nearing the shore. Iskender, his bridle hanging over his mutilated arm, and his glass pressed to his eye, watched them with eager gaze. It was indeed a glorious sight. With a thrilling cheer, the Turkish infantry sprang ashore, and fixing bayonets as they rushed on, stormed the Russian redoubts at a run, undismayed and totally unchecked by the well-sustained fire of musketry, and the grape and canister liberally showered on them by the enemy. An English officer in the uniform of a brigadier, whom through my glass I recognized as the good-humored instructor for the prisoner in Omar Pasha's tent, led them on, waving his sword, several paces in front of his men, and encouraging them with a gallantry and daring that I was proud to feel were truly British.

But the Russian redoubts were well manned, and a strong body of infantry were drawn up in support a few hundred paces in their rear; the guns, too, had been depressed, and the cannonade was terrible. Down went the red fez and the shaven head; Turkish sabre and French musket lay masterless on the sand, and many a haughty child of Osman gasped out his welling life-blood to slake the dry Wallachian soil. Wave your green scarfs, dark-eyed maids of Paradise! for your lovers are thronging to your gates. But the crimson bag is waving in the van, and the Russian eagle even now spreads her wings to fly away. A strong effort is made by the massive grey column which constitutes the enemy's reserve, but the English brigadier has placed himself at the head of a freshly-landed regiment—Albanians are they, wild and lawless robbers of the hills—and he sweeps everything before him. The redoubts are carried with a cheer, the gunners bayoneted, the heavy field-pieces turned on their former masters, and the Russian column shakes, wavers, and gives way. The glass trembles in Iskender's hands; his eye glares, and the veins of his forehead begin to swell; for him too the moment has come.

"Count de Rohan," says he, while he shuts up his glass like a man who now sees his way clearly before him, "bring up the rear-guard. Tergyman! I have got them here in my hand!" and he claps the mutilated fingers as he speaks. "Now I can crush

the last. My comrade, the Beloochee, has his eye on him. They meet in the *mole*. The Colonel deals a furious blow at his enemy with his long sabre, but the supple Asiatic crouches on his mare's neck, and wheels the well-trained animal at the same instant with his heel. His curved blade glitter for a moment in the sun. It seems to pass without resistance through the air; then the fair moustache is dabbled all in blood, and the Colonel's horse gallops masterless from the field.

Victor de Rohan fights like a very Paladin, and even I feel the accursed spirit rising in my heart. The Russian cavalry are scattered like chaff before the wind. Their disorganized masses ride in upon their own infantry, who are vainly endeavoring to form with some regularity. The retreat becomes a general rout, and our Turkish troopers fly like hell-hounds to the pursuit.

How might a reserve have turned the tables then! What a bitter lesson might have been taught us by a few squadrons of veteran cavalry, kept in hand by a cool and resolute officer. In vain Iskender rides and curses and gesticulates. He is himself more than half inclined to follow the example of his men. In vain the Beloochee entreates and argues, and even strikes the refractory with the flat of his sabre; our men have tasted blood, and are no longer under control. One regiment of Russian infantry, supported by a few Hussars and a field-piece, are still endeavoring to cover the retreat.

"De Rohan," exclaims Iskender, while the foam gathers on his lip and his features work with excitement, "I must have that gun! Forward, and follow me."

We placed ourselves at the head of two squadrons of the flower of our cavalry; veterans are they, well seasoned in all the artifices of war, and 'own children'—so he delights to call them—to their chief. The Beloochee has also succeeded in rallying a few stragglers; and once more we rush to the attack.

The Russian regiment, however, is well commanded, and does its duty admirably. The light field-piece opens on us as we advance, and a well-directed volley, delivered when we are within a few paces, checks us at the instant we are upon them. I can hear the Russian officer encouraging his men.

"Well done, my children," says he, with the utmost *sang froid*—once more like that will be enough."

Several of our saddles are emptied, and Iskender begins to curse.

"Dog!" he shouts, grinding his teeth, and spurring furiously forward—"dogs! I will be amongst you yet. Follow me, soldiers, follow me!"

Meantime, the Russian hussars have been reinforced, and are now capable of showing a front. They threaten our flank, and we are forced to turn our attention to this new foe. The infantry hold their ground manfully, and Iskender, wheeling his men, rushes furiously upon the comparatively fresh regiment of hussars with his tired horses. The Beloochee and myself are still abreast. Despite of a galling fire poured in by the infantry upon our flank, the men advance readily to the attack. We are within six horses' lengths of the hussars. I am setting my teeth and nerving my muscles for the encounter, which must be fought out hand to hand, when—crash!—In four bounds into the air, falls upon his head, recovers himself, goes down once more, rolls over me, and lies prostrate, shot through the heart. I disentangle myself from the saddle, and rise, looking wildly about me. One leg refuses to support my weight, but I do not know that my ankle-bone is broken by a musket-ball, and that I cannot walk three yards to save my life. A loose charger gallops over me and knocks me down once more. I cannot rise again. The short look I have just had, has shown our cavalry retiring, probably to obtain rein-

see wandering over my person, as though I was selecting such accoutrements and articles of clothing as he thought would suit his taste. The officer, who seemed of high rank and was accompanied by an escort, fortunately spoke German, and I appealed quickly to him in that language. He started at the superscription of the deserter's letter, and demanded of me sternly how I obtained it. In a few words I told him the history of the unfortunate spy, and he passed a gloved hand over his face as though to conceal his emotion.

"You are English?" he observed rapidly and looking uneasily over his shoulder the same time. "We do not kill our English prisoners, barbarians as you choose to call us; but to the Turk we give no quarters. him on a horse," he added, to my former captor, who kept unpleasantly near; "do not ill-treat him, but bring him safely along with you. If he tries to escape, blow his brains out. As for that rascal," pointing to the Beloochee, "put a lance through him with."

A happy thought struck me. I determined to make an effort for Ali Excellence, I pleaded, "spare him, he is a servant."

The Russian officer paused. "Is he a Turk?" he asked, sternly.

"No, I swear he is not," I replied. "He is my servant, and an Englishman."

If ever a lie was justifiable, it was on the present. I trust this white one may not be laid to my charge.

"Bring them both on," said the Russian still glancing anxiously to the rear. "Tenant Dolwitz, look to the party. Your men together, and move rapidly. It is the devil's own business, and our party are in full retreat." All this, though spoken in Russian, I was able to understand; did the hurried manner in which the man galloped off shake my impression; he still dreaded a vision of Iskender and his band of heroes thundering on track.

I was placed on a little active Cossack pony. The Beloochee's wrist was tied to mine, and he was forced to walk or run by my side; whenever he lagged a foot from the butt-end of a lance admonished him to mend his pace, and a Russian fell harmlessly on his ear. Still he pressed his dignity through it all; and so we moved onwards into Wallachia, and meditated on the chances of war and the chance that a day may bring forth.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE BULOCHEN.

The pursuit was fast and furious. crossing such a river as the Danube, in the teeth of a far superior force and under heavy fire—after carrying the Russian redoubts with a bayonet, and driving the main body back upon its reserve, the Turkish troops, flushed and wild with victory, were not to be stopped by any soldiers on earth.

Iskender's charge had completely shattered the devoted body that had so gallantly interposed to cover the retreat of their comrades, and a total rout of the Russian force was the result. The plains of Wallachia were literally strewed with dismounted and broken ambulance waggons, tumbrils, ammunition carts, dead and dying, whilst the fierce Moslem urged his hot pursuit. Straggler after straggler, reeking with blood and all agape with fear, reached the abandoned town of Lilecharest, and the report that pleasure-seeking capital were, as well be imagined, of the most bewildering and contradictory description.

Many a frightful scene was witnessed as the terrified Wallachian peasant, as fugitive was overtaken, struck down and butchered by the dread pursuers.

To be continued.