

Turks in his place. Poor men, one was an old man. Perhaps they were innocent, but some one must suffer. I shot one of them myself, and at a good distance. We are getting practice, you see. Good night. Pray for us." And he stepped out again into the night and was lost.

A few nights later ten young men, armed to the teeth, with their faces masked, started across the hills behind Tashlikeny in the direction of Kara Hissar. The night was dark, but the leader of the party marched on without any hesitation as if he knew the path. All night they marched, stumbling in the dark over roots and stones, slapped in the face by branches as they scrambled through thickets of scrub oak and rhododendron. By day they rested in hiding, avoiding the tents of mountain tribes. One day they camped by the side of a path that led from Kara Hissar to the largest Turkish village in the neighborhood. They were completely concealed from any who should pass. And there they waited, sending two of their party every day to find meat, the rest watching.

About a week later a young Turkish lad, newly freed from the ropes that had bound him, ran towards the village where his home was. And there to anxious friends he told his tale. "I was going to Kara-Hissar with my father. We were driving our donkey before us. Suddenly four men, armed and masked, challenged us. They bound our arms and legs after a fierce struggle. Our donkey they kept and ate the vegetables that we were taking to market. We found four other men from our village, all similarly bound. Then yesterday they brought in Hassan Agha and would have slain him before our eyes, for they seem to bear some special grudge against him, but the leader interfered. To-day they sent me to say that I must go alone with the five Armenian women who are in our homes to the tree beyond that hill, and there they will release my father and Hassan Agha and all the rest. But if I do not come by the time the sun in setting touches yonder peak they will slay their hostages."

An angry tumult arose upon this story. "The robbers, the accursed thieves, how many are there of them? How dare they lay hands upon those noble men! Who are they? Where are they hiding? They must be those giaour dogs. I told you no good would come of them and that we should have slain every one of them when we had the chance. Perhaps even yet we may have another day of reckoning. Allah and our good Padishah grant it! But now we must go to work. We shall indeed take to them all the Armenian girls who have graced our harems. Bring them here, the five of them. We shall give those men a present they dream not of."

As the sun began to descend over the hilltops Torkom could no longer conceal his anxiety. What if the lad should fail in his errand! Would the Turks believe his story? And if they did would they consent to give up their slaves? Perhaps they would attempt some ruse, come out in force to surround him and his company and then force them to give up their prisoners. No, he had guarded too well against that. From his point of vantage he could see all the ground that lay between the village and the trysting spot right beneath the knoll on which he and his faithful friends were concealed. They could not surround him. And what if they did? He could at least die fighting, and first he