

# THE BROKEN COIN

## A Story of Mystery and Adventure

### By EMERSON HOUGH

#### From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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 Novellized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

NINETEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LXVIII.

Count Sachio's Search.

"Your majesty, I can now assure you of our success."

Count Sachio of Gretzhoffen spoke calmly. On his face was written full conviction of the truth of his words. He stood once more with his monarch in the great hall of the palace of Gretzhoffen, whither he had hastened at once on his return from the rival capital.

"Why, Sachio?" demanded Cortislaw. "What reason now to believe our success nearer than it has been any time these months past?"

"Your majesty asks proof? Look!"

Sachio held out in his hand the two halves, or what purported to be the two halves, of the broken coin of Gretzhoffen. He, indeed, supposed them to be both halves of that mysterious coin, although in truth one was only the counterfeit long since devised by Count Frederick to appease his own king. That Michael of Gretzhoffen had missed his former possession—that Kitty Gray still held one half of the actual coin—neither Sachio nor his king now knew.

Both conspirators bent above the bits of metal and both smiled in exultation. Their arduous search seemed now really to approach its end.

"By my faith, Sachio," exclaimed Cortislaw, "it seems indeed we have but to run the trail hard and fast a trifle further."

"Yes, your majesty, it remains only for your servant—your very faithful servant, may I say it—to find the hiding place of the scripts and treasures themselves."

"That is a necessary detail," said Cortislaw, with a cold grin. "I have fed long enough on maps and keys and scripts—now I would dip my hands in actual mintage of gold coins—I would see the light of real gems shining, and not this ignis fatuus which we have followed so long over the morasses of doubt and uncertainty. Success! Success, Sachio—in real coins, in real gems, in real treasures—that success alone can mean anything to you or me."

"Be it so, your majesty!" said Sachio, with no abatement of his confidence. "I take my chances. I stake my life on the hazard of full success. If I find not the hidden treasures of Gretzhoffen, then hang my head on our walls as a warning to all boasters."

"Go, then," said the king coldly; "you have found your way within their gates before—do so again. Seek deeply—under the wall of the torture chamber, perhaps, the coin says—the treasure's hiding place lies deep under the walls—but precisely where is that?"

Always the king's cautious mind carried him into the doubts and difficulties of any case.

"It must be somewhere below and beyond the galleries which they flooded from the moats when they came near drowning all our troops," replied Sachio. "I know those galleries as I do my own bedchamber. Trust me to run out this puzzle to which we now have the key here in my hand. When I do, I shall dip my hands deep in actual mintage of gold coin."

"You will do nothing of the kind, Sachio," said his monarch. "You will reserve that first right for your king."

Sachio flushed red, but bowed, conscious of the swift rivalry of pirates who parcel unholy gains.

"Truly, your majesty," said he, "I spoke but in metaphor. The senior right in any such endeavor as this is always, of course, that of the king. The right and the pleasure of the monarch who has led us to such success as this is a thing paramount to all others. But swift enough shall be my course to your majesty, once I have found the actual hiding place."

"Agreed," said Cortislaw, and turned to gnaw his beard in the impatience of a man long balked of his most intimate desire.

And Sachio hastened, he that said for him. His swiftest car carried him across the devious way that lay between the two kingdoms, and duly he arrived at the door of the palace of Gretzhoffen. Here his acquaintance with the place and his ready reference of all inquirers to the king himself gained him easy access once more.

Michael, the weak, still dwelt in the palace, giving small care to the ruin and disorder which lay about him on all sides. Let others care for the government, let others make good the breaches in the capital's defense, let

others reorganize the scattered forces of the army. Himself, he was content to continue his revelry in the palace with those who cared to join him, male or female, creatures dissolute as himself, who had clung to him fatuously in hope of possible reward at some later time.

Before this ruler Count Sachio of Gretzhoffen presently bowed humbly, professing his friendship, giving no token of his treacherous errand.

"What, again, friend Sachio of Gretzhoffen?" jested Michael when he saw him. "You have become one of our most faithful subjects, is it not so? I still miss Count Frederick, who has left many duties unperformed—I still miss the young American, who should be here to lighten the cares of the heavy hours. Yet you come—late our enemy, now our friend. What can we do for you, Sachio, to show our gratitude for your faithfulness?"

"Nothing, your majesty, save to allow me division of a task, now and then, with the greatest monarch of the modern days. Nothing save to allow me to join your majesty for a lighter moment betimes, after the duties of the day are done. Meantime—since I would not weary your majesty—I pray no more than safekeeping within your majesty's walls, as I wander here and there. The art treasures of this palace surpass any with which I am acquainted. As a youth, I tried to paint, and I still love the work of those who have done as masters what my student hand could never do. May I look at the pictures in the galleries—the statues, your majesty?"

"With all the heart in the world, my dear Sachio!" exclaimed Michael. "Your discerning judgment is valued most highly. Make free with what you like, and come to us when you please."

This carte blanche was all that Sachio could ask. He accepted it literally. What he purposed actually was to make free with anything he saw; and he did indeed intend to return to King Michael when he pleased. Thus set free to wander as he liked in the palace of Gretzhoffen, he made no doubt whatever of his own quick arrival at the hidden door of the lost treasure of Gretzhoffen. As he bowed himself out he scarce could conceal the satisfaction on his face.

Sachio was an alert and active soul. His was no haphazard intellect, apt to accept the dictum of a mind less exact than his own. He was a soldier first, and next a diplomat, but all the time a model secret agent, a typical spy and detective. He now set about the business in hand, deliberately, with precision, methodically, so that he need not do any task a second time.

He himself had sketched a rough map of the lower galleries as he fancied them to lie. He calculated now that with the aid of this chart and his own earlier acquaintance with these subterranean chambers, it would be easy to find the last door that lay between him and the buried treasure of Gretzhoffen.

What scenes of horror these places must have held Sachio did not pause to ask. That souls had passed out there through these cold walls of stone, that human flesh had quivered here in torment and human voices broken in their anguish, meant naught to him. A king had seen fit to surround his treasures with such terrors in order to fence away all intruders. He had buried these treasures under the very floor of his torture chamber so that all might fear to intrude there in their search. Some might be deterred by such fears—but not Sachio of Gretzhoffen. He walked on calmly, unmoved, sure that his own persistence, his own cunning, had defeated the purpose of the dead king, whose methods so long had defied the avarice and greed of these two kingdoms.

Sachio lost little time in the earlier portions of the subterranean galleries, and satisfied himself only that he was not being pursued. Soon he arrived upon the lower levels, where he did not expect to meet disturbance. Now came the crux of his search.

He made his way slowly along the darkened channels carved at some unknown day from the granite rock on which stood the Gretzhoffen castle, tried door after door, and entered chamber after chamber, slowly, methodically, with no enthusiasm, but only the air of a man covering all possible mischances in his search.

He looked most carefully in that portion of the vaults where he had found the half of the torn parchment, but got no further trace of the missing portion. This gave him a certain pause, for he had figured that the broken coin and the broken parchment would correlate, would focus, somewhere nearly at the same point. But the stained and mildewed walls, still damp from their recent floodings, gave him but cold encouragement whichever way he turned. Any soul but his would have felt the chill of such environment.

"So," said he to himself, standing ir-

resolute at last, and finding himself unable to decide what next to do. "My map has the misfortune of having been made from the imagination and not from facts in hand. But now—see, here the way forks."

Before him now lay a series of galleries still damp from the recent flooding from the moat. It was Sachio's theory, based upon he knew not what, that the treasure chamber must lie somewhere under the moat, that the flood gates must have been devised for some purpose of protecting it. He acted upon that theory now, and with no better guide than the greater dampness of the rock floors which he followed, he wandered on hour after hour.

At length he paused, helpless, puzzled, dumfounded. He had taken a wrong turn somewhere in this labyrinth of underground channels! He had not even found the water gates which had flooded these levels so recently. He had found no new recesses in the rocky walls. He had found nothing which in the least compared itself with the map he now held in his hand! The cold sweat broke out upon his forehead even in these dry depths.

"My God!" said Sachio of Gretzhoffen to himself, "I have failed."

Yes, Sachio had failed. He knew what that meant. Death was to be his portion for his failure. Would it come in one swift stroke at the hand of his monarch, moved by the frenzy of his disappointment? Or, would it come in the slow torture of deliberate revenge, wrought on him for that failure in the fenshish ingenuity of the icy soul of Cortislaw?

"I have failed," said Sachio to himself, "and through my own fault! I had success in my grasp and threw it away. That girl could have told me everything, and I sent her away—beyond all reach—out of our country!"

riddle or the missing Gretzhoffen coin. If either of these two kingdoms should march against the other, it its armies should lay level with the earth the battlements and towers of its enemy—why, that would but bury the deeper the secret which alone animated either in the quest of conquest.

As for any offense against Gretzhoffen, however, what could Michael the weak have done now, with his right hand man, his ablest general, his best man of affairs, gone? He hesitated as to means of the offensive, just as his chief rival pondered the results possible, even of a successful offensive.

Meantime, the truth remained that the key to all this coil was absent, nor was she apt to return. Kitty Gray certainly must cherish a keen memory of injuries she had known on these shores. The armies of America might come back, the ships of America might anchor in these ports, their guns might exact apology or tribute—but Kitty Gray herself would not return, that was sure. Therefore affairs halted. The battle was arrested as though the sun had halted midway of the heavens in a modern Ajalon.

Yet, not so far away, as actual distance is measured, the two principals of this play still lived. Kitty and Count Frederick were separated from the rival kingdoms by not so many leagues of the sea, yet they knew not where they were more than did any of these others. The sea which stretched between the two lands was narrow enough in fact, yet potentially it lay immeasurably wide.

As to the secrets of the rival kingdoms which they had left behind, neither of these two much concerned himself. There were other things which concerned each vastly more.

When Count Frederick hastened away from the side of the sacrificial fire in the search of the woman who had come so near being its victim, he

even as he pushed her back of him and faced the strange being from whom she had escaped.

Once more Kitty reit surge across her the feeling that after all, she was weak, and always must be weak; whereas, he, her late enemy, was strong and always would be strong. She was content to cower down behind him and leave the event to him.

The noise of the oncoming melee behind them grew in volume now as Count Frederick turned to face the shaggy figure of the man who but now had been the captor of Kitty Gray. The muzzle of the pistol pressing to his face spoke louder than any words—seemed, indeed, to restore to him a part of the reason he had lost through dwelling here among the savages, on a shore upon which he had been cast unknown years earlier. He threw up his hands now. "Avast, there, captain!" he cried. "I surrender!"

"Who are you?" demanded Count Frederick. "Or what are you?"

The half-demented creature passed a hand across his face. "Blessed if I could tell you the truth about that, sir," he said, "and that's the truth. But seems to me I remember I was once Old Jimmy Wainwright of the ship Adventure, out of Clyde. It's maybe we were cast away somewhere, years since, and I'm thinking Adam was then a boy. Belay all! Friend captain, your honor, don't shoot old Jimmy Wainwright, if so be I am him."

"But what are you doing down here, under the earth, man?"

"Captain, your honor, sir, I came here to live safe. I kill some of them black folks once in a while. They think I'm crazy, and maybe they're right. How can I tell, captain, your honor, sir?"

"You know this place?" exclaimed Frederick. "Thus far we are safe, but listen to them coming."

"Ay, ay, sir; fighting like cats and dogs. They always do. We must cut and run, or they'll kill us all, and put us in the big fire yonder. Don't I know? I've seen sights a plenty, up there. I couldn't a-bear to see the white lady burned."

"Lead on!" said Frederick, quickly. "We must hide, or it will be too late."

"This way, captain, your honor, sir! And bear a hand lively!"

Count Frederick and Kitty Gray followed him as he led deeper into the cavernous interior of the lava hill. They turned corner after corner, until at length the sounds of the pursuit became fainter and died away far at the rear.

"Ere's my 'ome, str.," began the old sailor at last, as they paused before a rude cabin, which showed some animal-like proof of human occupancy. "We'll be safe 'ere, I'm thinking."

But they were not safe for long. The keen instinct of the savage trailers, hot in the blood lust which now possessed them, brought them on ultimately along the trail, and to its end. They heard the savage shouts of their pursuers gaining in volume, heard the thud of their bare feet on the rocky floors. A moment, and the yelling band stood before the entrance to their cavern.

The natives were spearmen, and their shafts were cast with strength and accuracy. Those beleaguered ones had no shields with which to parry such weapons, and yet for one instant a barrier was offered to the assault.

With a savage, half-animal roar, the old sailor—whose full history never was to be known—cast himself in front of his new friend, opposing his shaggy breast to the leveled spears. He fell pierced by a dozen shafts, still roaring his defiance. Above his body now spoke again and again the weapon of Count Frederick. A half dozen dusky forms fell and filled up the opening. The savages behind gave back and sought to flee.

This instant of their hesitation gave Frederick one more opportunity. Catching Kitty by the arm he passed back to the rear of the little cavern in the hope there might be egress that way—for surely the wall of steel in front could not be passed. He found it—a narrow passageway. Panting and breathless, stumbling, falling and rising, the two hurried on until at length they heard no more in their ears the din of fighting.

The passage way now seemed gradually to rise, its walls closing in. At length, far ahead, they saw a faint tinge of light. It deepened as they advanced, until at length it became visible through a broken aperture beyond which shone the full light of day. Gasping their joy at this, they hurried up and on until at length their feet stood upon the surface of that earth to which they had been accustomed.

It was a strange and new scene which lay before them now. There was no path that they could see—the mouth of the cavern came out at the top of a high cliff. Far below them ran the sea, blue-tinged and rippling out to its horizon. But no sail broke the wide expanse, no path showed down the steep declivity which lay before them. Their case seemed quite as hopeless as ever it had been. If discovered now, they must indeed stand at bay.

The keen eye of Count Frederick searched here and there for some avenue of escape, but at first found none.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "the beach below, no doubt, leads to one of their villages. But we cannot reach the beach. I presume that we have come almost through the hill—that the main village lies yonder, beyond the forest. If we return, whether by the cavern or by the sea beach, it would mean only death. If only we could find some other place of concealment!"

"Look!" said Kitty, and pointed be-

yond, at the base of the cliff. A narrow, slitlike aperture showed in the rock wall. "Perhaps there is another cave," said she.

"Hurry," said Count Frederick. "Run and hide yourself there at once."

As she obeyed he set about certain plans of his own. He flung himself down upon the sand at the edge of the cliff, and left a trail, as though he had been flung over and down. Here and there he pulled loose certain shrubs to strengthen that impression in the mind of any pursuer who might come. Then, retreating toward the mouth of the cave where Kitty had secreted herself, he obscured his own trail in the sand as best he could by brushing away the footprints with a broken bough, trusting to the strong wind to complete his own bungling work at covering his trail.

"Mademoiselle," said he, when at length he joined her. "We now have done all that we can do. We have no food, no water, no weapons—" he showed his empty revolver. "All we can do is to wait and hope."

Cowering in their hiding place, they lay for what might have been an hour before they heard the voices of any pursuers. Then they saw emerge along their old passageway the figures of several of the natives, who stood jabbering, weapons in hand, looking this way and that, seemingly too much excited to have much care. One of these ran to the broken trail mark at the edge of the bluff, and, shouting in excitement, returned. With no more ado, and apparently without suspecting the actual trail of the two fugitives, they all now made off to the right, shouting loudly, and disappeared from view—no doubt along some steep path known only to themselves.

"They have gone," said Count Frederick, "and I fancy will not return. They think us dashed to death on the rocks below."

"We might as well be," said Kitty Gray, apathetically. "What hope is there for us now?"

"Courage, mademoiselle!" was his response. "That we have lived through such perils means that there is a purpose for it—one purpose."

"No, said Kitty Gray. "It has been too much. We are lost. There is no food, no water. Even if there were what chance is there for an escape?"

"Even should there never be an escape, mademoiselle, life here with you would be better than life anywhere else in the world without you."

But, utterly worn out, she only shook her head and turned away. Completely exhausted, at length she fell asleep. He spread about her his own coat and kept watch.

Night came at length, and with it its chilling airs. They must have fire, yet a fire might announce their presence there. Count Frederick gathered some bits of dried wood here and there, and at length ventured to build a fire where it would offer warmth within the cave, and where it would be practically invisible from any direction except from the sea. Indeed, he felt that they must take this chance, since only from the sea could they have any hope of escape. Their beacon light would shine widely, and perhaps some passing mariner might see it.

The night wore away, passed as it was in hunger and in chill, with nothing to soften the hard floor of the rocky cavern. There was no breakfast for them, there was not even a drop of water to assuage their growing thirst.

Once more Count Frederick searched out every corner of their narrow refuge ground. To attempt escape directly down the face of the cliff would have been sheer madness. He followed the trail which the natives had made when they passed to the right along the rock wall. Apparently they had descended by swinging from one tree trunk to another. It would be equal to madness for a woman to attempt a descent here—still more hopeless for a woman weakened with hunger and fatigue. He told Kitty the truth, as he now found it.

"Leave me," said she, weakly. "Save yourself."

"Leave you, mademoiselle?" said he. "Never! Not until death do us part shall we be separated."

He read something of his answer in the look in the eyes turned upon him now.

"It is well," said she at length, simply—"we shall live or die—together."

"Together, mademoiselle? Tell me—"

But her hand, raised in sheer weariness, arrested him, calling upon all his chivalry.

"We will be able to endure our hunger for a day, at least," said he. "Our light shines far. Let us devote at least another day to hope. If none comes, why, then we can die."

"Yes," said she, simply, "that comes at last to all. But let us try to hope!"

They faced a second night, endless in length, and faced another dawn—at first they thought a hateful dawn, and no more kind than the night had been. But even as this feeling of apathetic resentment grew in their souls, Kitty Gray raised her lusterless eyes as she heard an exclamation from her companion.

"Look!" exclaimed Count Frederick. "Look! A sail!"

She stared out over the sea. There lay the dearest object that could meet her eyes—a low white deck, or dot, rising and falling, just inside the rim of the distant horizon. Yes, it was a sail!

"Quick! The fire!" she cried. "We must build the fire!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"Look! A Sail!" Exclaimed Count Frederick.

With her gone, we have no hope remaining—we never shall find it ourselves. She alone now could save my life—she whom I mistreated—and she whom I sent away."

"And Count Frederick," he went on, still musing to himself. "He was my enemy, and is today—but something tells me that he also has the clue. If he were here, I could wheedle or threaten him. Perhaps he is with her; who knows? And I have sent her away! Did ever a man gain sight by bullying a woman? Fair speech with them—or the bowstring—those are the only ways. I am sentenced, doomed, and by my own fault."

Discouraged, baffled, perhaps after all, affected by the gloom of these surroundings, he turned back at last. Somewhere near him he knew, somewhere perhaps not a biscuit toss away, measured by distance in the open air, lay a dark cloistered space, the chamber of tortures, grim in its secrets, its floor perhaps piled with broken bones, its walls perhaps hung full of the old machinery for parting flesh and soul in lingering agony. Was it indeed true that the lost souls in that hidden chamber had wiped out the trace of it and left the surface of all these walls alike?

Count Sachio could feel the needles and pinners of hot steel tearing at his own soul.

"Gone!" said he, to himself, "gone! And 'twas I who sent her away."

CHAPTER LXIX.

The Sacred Fire.

No intimation could come to anyone in the two rival kingdoms as to the whereabouts of those two persons of most importance in the swift drama of those days—Kitty and Count Frederick. They had disappeared utterly and left no trace. With them had passed all hope of the solution of the

was overlooked at the moment alike by the natives who had accompanied him thither and by the inhabitants of the village which they had surprised. These were rival factions, or rival tribes upon the island, and for the time their ancient hatred made them forget the presence of the white man. They fell upon each other fiercely, and in the swift clash of arms all else was overlooked. Perhaps they remembered the potency of the white man's weapons. Their own weapons none the less would serve for a skin whose color they understood. With much cheerfulness they addressed themselves to the task of mutual mutilation.

The conflict awayed here and there, until at length the villagers seemed to have the best of the invaders. The latter now remembering their white leader, broke off toward the forest, hotly pursued by their antagonists. Thus at length they all, a mixed array of fighting men, found themselves at the brink of the cavern where but recently Count Frederick had followed the trail of Kitty Gray and her captor. They also plunged down the slope, still mingled, still fighting, so that presently there might have been heard deep within the subterranean cavern the clash of spear or shield, and the thud of war clubs against human skulls.

By this time Kitty Gray had been rescued from the immediate peril which had threatened. When Count Frederick called out, the half-witted sailor turned toward him, and hesitated half an instant. With swift instinct, Kitty's fingers found a vulnerable place in her assailant's eyes, and as he roared in pain, she pulled herself free from him and sprang down and back into the arms of Count Frederick, who caught her close, murmuring some words with whose meaning she was well content.

"My heart, my life!" he exclaimed.