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Princess Virginia

By C. N. and A. M. WILLIAMSON, Authors of "& Lightning Conductor," "Rose-mary in Search of a Father," Etc. Je Je

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[CONTINUED.]

NOT for Rhaetia. Every instant counts. Thanks to you, we shall win, for, actress as this girl is, she'll find it a task beyond her powers to justify to a jealous man this evening's tete-atete with you."

"If she tests those powers in our presence, we can be audience and admire her histrionic talents," said the prince pleasantly, though with some faint, growing sign of constraint or perhaps impatience. "There's no doubt in my mind, whatever may be the lady's conception of her part, about the final tableau. And, after all, it's with that alone you concern yourself, eh, chancellor?"

"It's that alone," echoed the old man, "Then you would like to go and await the message. There's nothing more for us to arrange. Au revolr, chancellor, till 9."

"TIII 9."

"When the curtain for the last act will ring up.

The prince held out his hand. Count von Breitstein grasped it and then hurried to his electric carriage, which had been waiting outside the hotel. A few minutes later he was talking over the wire to the emperor in the rallway station at Felgarde.

CHAPTED SEVENTEEN



EOPOLD thought it rather more than possible that by the time of his return to Kronburg the chancellor would be as anxious to wriggle out of

his proposal to visit the prince's hunting lodge as he had been to have it accepted a few hours before.

"He shan't escape his humiliation, though," the emperor told himself. "He shall go, and he shall beg forgiveness for his suspicions in sackcloth and ashes. Nothing else can satisfy me now."

Thinking thus, Leopold looked sharply from the window as his special slowed into the central station at Kronburg along the track which had been kept clear for its arrival. No other train was due at the moment; therefore few persons were on the platform, and a figure in a long gray coat, with its face shadowed by slouch hat, was conspicuous.

The emperor had expected to see that figure, but vaguely he wished there were not so much briskness and self confidence in the set of the massive head and shoulders. The young man believed absolutely in his love, but he would have been gratified to detect a something of depression in the enemy's air which he might translate as a foreknowledge of failure.

"I hope your majesty will forgive the liberty I have taken in coming to the station without a distinct invitation to do so," were the chancellor's first words as he met the emperor. "Knowing that you would almost certainly arrive by special train, I came down from my house some time ago that I might be on hand without fail when you arrived to place my electric NEBRASKA carriage at your service. I thought it probable that you would not have sent to the palace and therefore it might save you some slight inconvenience if I were on the spot. If you will honor my poor conveyance"-

"Don't let us delay our business for explanations or compliments, if you please, chancellor." The emperor cut him short brusquely. "I counted on your being here with your carriage. Now for the hunting lodge in the

As he spoke his eyes were on the old man's face, which he hoped to see fall or change, but there was no visible sign of discomfiture, and Von Breitstein made no attempt to excuse himself from making the proposed visit. Evidently nothing had happened during the hours since the message by telephone to change the chancellor's mind.

"Yes, your majesty," came the prompt response. "Now for the hunting lodge in the woods. I am ready to go with you there, as I always have been and always shall be ready to serve you when I am needed."

It was on Leopold's tongue to say that it would be well if his chancellor's readiness could be confined to those occasions when it was needed, but he shut his lips upon the words and walked by the old man's side in frozen si-

The carriage was waiting just outside the station, and the moment the two men were seated the chauffeur started noiselessly and swiftly.

Both windows were closed to keep out the chill of the night air, but soon Leopold impatiently lowered one, forgetting the chancellor's old fashioned hatred of drafts, and stared into the night. Already they were approaching the outskirts of the great town. and, flying past the dark warehouses and factories of the neighborhood, they

sped toward the open country. The weather, still warm the evening before-that evening of moonlight not to be forgotten-had turned cold with morning, and tonight there was a pungent scent of dying leaves in the

the wind of motion, and it seemed to him the essential perfume of sadness. calling this hour.

He was half mad with impatience to reach the end of the journey and confound the chancellor once for all, yet as the swift electric carriage spun smoothly along the white road and laudmark after landmark vanished behind tree branches laced with stars something within him would at last have stayed the flying moments had that been possible. He burned to ask questions of Von Breitstein, yet would have died rather than utter them.

It was a relief to the emperor when after a long silence his companion spoke, though a relief which carried with it a prick of resentment. Even the chancellor had no right to speak first without permission from his sov-

"Forgive me, your majesty," the old man said. "Your anger is hard to bear, yet I bear it uncomplainingly because of my confidence that the reward is the future than tonight." "I, too, believe that you won't miss

your reward," returned the emperor "I shall have it, I am sure, not only

in your majesty's forgiveness, but in your thanks."

"I have already found her and am

taking you to her now." "Then you actually believe in your own story? You believe that this sweet and beautiful young girl is a fast actress, a schemer, a friend of your netoriously gallant friend and willing to spent some joyous days here as a boy, risk her reputation by paying a late visit unchaperoned to him at his hunting lodge in the woods? You are, after

you dream that we shall see her there." "I shall see her, your majesty, and you will see her unless the madness motor out alone with him and dine."

say Miss Mowbray."

bray. And the message that came his emperor before. down I heard. It was that Miss Mowbray would be delighted to see his and, ascending the two stone steps, the royal highness. This left no doubt in chancellor lifted the mailed glove my mind that after giving out that she would leave today the lady had remained in Kronburg for the express purpose of meeting her dear friend the prince, the handsomest and best dressed young man in Europe-after your majesty, of course. And it was quite natural for her to hope that, as she was mons, and Leopold smiled in the darksupposed to be gone and you were fol- ness. He thought it likely that even would never be discovered."

"Please spare me your deductions. chancellor," said the emperor curtiy, "and pray understand now, if you have not understood before, that I am with you in this expedition not to prove you right, but wrong, and nothing you can say will convince me that the prince's actress and Miss Mowbray are one. If we find a woman at the hunting lodge it will not be the lady we seek unless she has been kidnaped. and as you will presently be obliged to eat every word you've spoken the fewer such bitter pills you provide for yourself to swallow the better."

Thus snubbed by the young man whom he had held in his arms, an imperious as well as an imperial infant, the old statesman sought sanctuary in silence. But he had said that which had been in his mind to say, and he was satisfied. Meekness was not his metier, yet he could play the part of the faithful servant, humbly loyal through injustice and misunderstanding, and he played it now, because he knew it to be the one effective role. He sat beside the emperor with bowed head and stooping shoulders which suggested the weakness of old age, his hands clasped before him, and from

time to time he sighed patiently. As they glided under the dark arch of the Buchenwald Leopold spoke

"You have led me to suppose that our call at the hunting lodge will be a surprise visit to the prince. That is

the case, isn't it?" Count von Breitstein would have preferred that the question had not been asked. He had intended to convey the impression which the emperor had recelved, but he had not clothed it in actual statement. Luckily the prince was as clever as he was good looking. and he could be trusted as an actor; otherwise the old man would have been still more reluctant to commit

"Were our visit expected we should not be likely to find the lady," said he. "The prince and I are on such friendly

mind confessing he was to have a prety actress as his guest. He also answered a few questions I asked concerning her freely and frankly, for to do so he had to tell me only what the world knows. How could he dream that the flirtations or the visits of a Miss Jenny Brett could be of the slightest importance to the emperor of Rhaetia? Had he guessed, however, that the entertainment be meant to offer her might be interrupted naturally he would have taken some means to

protect her from annoyance." "This night's work will give him cause to pick a private quarrel with me if he likes," said the emperor, convinced of the chancellor's good faith.

"I don't think he will choose, your majesty. You are in a mood to be glad if he did, I fenr. But, no; I need not Never again would be inhale that fra- fear. You will always remember Rhaegrance of the falling year without re- tia and put her interests before your own wishes."

"You weren't as confident of that few hours ago."

"Even then I knew that when the real test should be applied your majesty's cool head would triumph over the hot impulse of youth. But, see: we're passing through the village of window dark. In six or seven minutes at this speed we shall be at the lodge."

The emperor laughed shortly. "Add another seven minutes to your first seven and we shall be out of the lodge again, with Chancellor von Breitstein

Meekness was once more the part his hands, palm upward, in a gesture his way." of generous indulgence for his young sovereign, he denied himself the plensure of retort.

The hunting lodge in the wood, now not far off. I look for it no further in the property of the chancellor's accommodating young friend, had until recently belonged to a Rhaetlan semiroyal prince who had been compelled by lack of sympathy among his creditors to sell something and had promptly sold the thing he cared for least. The present owner was a keen sports-"I'll forgive you when you've asked man and, though he came seldom to my pardon for your suspicions and the place, had spent a good deal of when you've found Miss Mowbray for money in repairing the quaint rustic house.

Years had passed since the emperor had done more than pass the lodge gates, and now the outlines of the low rambling structure looked strange to him silhouetted against a spangled sky. He was glad of this, for he had and he wished to separate the old impressions and the new.

Two tall chimneys stood up like the all, a very poor judge of character if pricked ears of some alert crouching animal. The path to the lodge gleamed white and straight in the darkness as a parting in the rough black hair of a you call love has blinded the eyes of giant. The trees whispered gossip to your body as well as the eyes of your each other in the wind, and it seemed mind. That she is now at the lodge I to Leopold that they were evil things know, for the prince assured me with telling lies and slandering his love. his own lips that she had promised to He hated them and their rustling, which once he had loved; he hated "You mean he told you that his the yellow eyes of the animal with the friend the actress had promised. I'll pricked ears, glittering eyes which stake my life even he didn't dare to were lighted windows; he hated the young prince who owned the place. "He said Miss Brett, the actress, it's and he would have hated the chantrue, but when he called upon her at cellor more than all had not the old her hotel, where he and I met to dis. man limped as he walked up the path, cuss a matter which is no secret to showing how heavy was the burden of your majesty, he asked for Miss Mow. his years as he had never shown it to

The path led to a hooded entrance, which did duty as a knocker. Twice he brought it down on the oak panel underneath, and the sound of metal smiting against wood went echoing through the house with an effect of emptiness and desolation.

Nobody came to answer the sumlowing her, this evening's escapade the prince was not at home. A practical joke had been played on the chancellor.

Again the mailed fist struck the panel. An echo alone replied. Count von Breitstein began to be alarmed for the success of his plan. He thanked the night which hid from the keen eyes of the emperor-cynical now, no doubtthe telltale vein beating hard in his forehead.

"Don't you think, chancellor, that, after all, you'd better try to take me to some more probable as well as more suitable place to look for Miss Mowbray?" he suggested, with a drawl intended to be as aggravating as it actually was. "There doesn't appear to be any one about. Even the caretakers are out courting perhaps."

"But listen, your majesty," said Von Breitstein when he knocked again. Leopold did listen and heard the ring of a heel on a floor of stone or marble.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



was a jager clad in green who opened the door of the hunting lodge and gazed apparently without recognition at the two men standing in the dark embrasure of the

porch. "We wish to see his royal highness, your master," said the chancellor, taking the initiative, as he knew the emperor would wish him to do. "His royal highness is not at home,

sir," replied the jager. Leopold's eyes lightened as he threw a glance of sarcastic meaning at his companion, but Iron Heart was un-

daunted. He knew very well now that this was only a prelude to the drama which would follow, and, though he had suffered a sharp pang of anxiety at first, he saw that his royal friend was playing with commendable realism. Naturally when beautiful young actresses ventured into the forest un-ALLIANCE, NgB. air. It smote Leopold in the face with terms, your majesty, that he didn't chaperoned to dine with fascinating

princes the least that such favored gentlemen could do was to be "not at home" to an intrusive public.

"You are mistaken," insisted the chancellor. "His royal highness is at home and will receive us. It will be better for you to admit us without fur-

ther delay."
Under the domination of those eyes. which could quell a turbulent reichstag. the jager weakened, as his master had doubtless expected him to do after the first resistance.

"It may be I have made a mistake, sir," he stammered, "though I do not think so. If you will have the kindness to walk in and walt for a few minutes until I can inquire whether his royal highness has come home or will come home"-

"That is not necessary," said the chancellor. "His royal highness dines here this evening. We will go with you to the door of the dining room. which you will open for us and announce that two gentlemen wish to see

With this all uncertainty in the mind of the jager was swept away. He knew his duty and determined to stand Inseleden, fast asleep already, every the master had given instructions by it, and the chancellor saw that if meaning them to be overridden at least the servant was sincere. He put himself in the doorway and looked an obstacle difficult to dislodge.

"That is impossible, sir!" he exclaimed. "I have had my orders, which are sadder and a wiser man than he that his royal highness is not at home tonight, and until I know whether or not these orders are to stand nobody, for the old man to play, and, raising not if it were the emperor, should force



"His imperial majesty the emperor." "Fool, those orders are not for us and it is the emperor who will go in." With a step aside the chancellor let the light from the hanging lamp in the hall shine full upon Leopold's face, hitherto masked in shadow.

His boast forgotten, the jager uttered a cry of dismay, and, with a sudden failing of the knees, he moved and left the doorway free.

"Your majesty!" he faltered. "I did not see-I could not know. Most humme blameless with my master"-

"Never mind yourself, and never mind your master," broke in the chancellor. "Open that door at the end of the hall and announce the emperor and Count von Breitstein."

The unfortunate jager, approaching a state of collapse, obeyed. The door of the dining room, which Leopold knew of old, was thrown open, and a quavering voice heralded "His imperial majesty the emperor and the Herr' Chancellor Count von Breitstein."

The scene disclosed was as unreal to Leopold's eyes as a painted picture -the walls of pompellan red, the gold candelabra, the polished floor spread with the glimmering fur of polar bears and in the center a flower decked table lit with pink shaded lights and sparkling with gold and crystal; springing up from a chair which faced the door, a young man in evening dress; sitting motionless, her back half turned, a slender girl in bridal white. At sight of her the emperor stopped

on the threshold. All the blood in his Contractors, body seemed rushing to his head, then surging back upon his heart.

The impossible had happened.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Teaching the Drummer. It was the custom in the days of our old navy for the men to bring to the mast all the wornout articles which were to be inspected, handed in and exchanged for new. The drummer had applied for so many drum heads that the commodore felt sure he was being imposed upon and one day set himself to watch while the band was playing. As one rattling martial air followed another his anger increased perceptibly until he burst forth in uncontrollable

"There, now, confound you! I see why you use so many drum heads. Don't drum in the middle of it all the time. Drum all over that drum, I tell you!"

Plants That Hate One Another. Fancy two plants being so unfriend! ly that the mere neighborhood of one is death to the other. Yet this is the case with two well known English plants. These are the thistle and the rape. If a field is infested with thistles which come up year after year G. W. ZOBEL and ruin the crops, all you have to do is to sow it with rape. The thistle will be absolutely annihilated.

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