

THE UNKNOWN MR. KENT

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"I'm going to be perfectly frank with you," he said, at last. "It doesn't matter much to me who is the ruler of Marken; but I like you for the ideals you have had, and admire your sister for wishing to stay to the ultimate end. And most of all, I've got considerable at stake in this myself, because John Rhodes hasn't much use for a man who causes him to lose a million pounds, and what's more, he's a good fighter. Besides, this strikes me as a pretty interesting proposition, and at present I haven't much to do. Provarsk is promising, I admire him, too. It requires courage to do what he has done."

He suddenly threw the book back into the drawer and shoved the latter shut with an emphatic bang. He arose from his chair, frowned thoughtfully at the lampshade, then looked across it at the king, who was watching him, as if fascinated by his heavy, square-cut American face. He seemed to have arrived at an audacious resolution.

"I'll make a bargain with you," he said, chopping his sentences. "You assist me and I'll assist you—under—let us say—very peculiar conditions. If you will agree to do exactly as I say, I'll either make a real king of you, or give you a chance to die like a man instead of a runaway. And if we fail, we'll fail together. But I shall at least make an effort to save John Rhodes' money, and your throne! Be certain of that!"

The king looked at him hopefully, and the chancellor with grudging respect.

"I can't see what else I can do but listen," said the king. "I am—as you see. What do you propose?"

"This," said Kent, deliberately, "that you are to go back to your country and fight it out; but that you are to fight it out just as direct; that from now onward, until I have recovered the money John Rhodes lent you, which would naturally mean the clearing of Marken's finances and a restoration of peace and industry, I am to be the absolute untrammelled dictator of your kingdom. Not only that, but that you and this chancellor, or any other that I name, are to do exactly as I order. I'm to be temporarily the tyrant, the ruler. Also that not a soul on earth besides ourselves is to know that I am such. I can be anything we wish, a visitor at court, or anything that doesn't matter, so long as you and the baron here obey me implicitly, no matter how difficult my command."

The king gasped and stared at him as if fascinated, while the chancellor went red and white by turns. Both were speechless at the boldness of his proposition.

"Come," he said, in a friendly tone, "you've everything to gain and nothing to lose. You've lost all you had, both of you. And I believe, if you agree to give me a free hand, that we can succeed. Administration is, after all, largely a matter of finance. Furthermore, if you do not agree to this, I am compelled to take steps immediately to ally myself with Provarsk, the insurgent, for the protection of that loan which I caused to be made, and which I represent. Hence, after to-night, I shall be either your friend or your enemy! No half-way measures with me. I must be one or the other, squarely, uncompromisingly. You must decide."

The king settled back into his chair, and appeared to hesitate and consider, while the chancellor fixed his stare on the floor, greatly perturbed, and quite helpless. The old clock in the corner ticked heavily, and the rain lashed the windows audibly, as if waiting outside the room were enemies, defiant and challenging onslaught. The American slowly opened his strong box a second time, selected some papers with due care, and held them toward the king.

"That there may be doubt in your mind that I am the original man who made the loan to your government, and that I am empowered by John Rhodes to act as I deem best, you will please read these. They will serve as credentials."

He handed the papers to the king, who read them and handed them back; but with an increased look of respect in his eyes. His gaze shifted back to the chancellor, then, almost absent, so evident was his concentration, to the fire dogs. Plainly he was hesitating, yet devoid of funds or other plans, an exile, tempted to please.

"If you were out of money, why didn't you sell those manganese mines you own, or a concession on

them for a number of years?" Kent asked the king as if by afterthought.

"Because I could conceive of no one being fool enough to offer me such a sum for a concession," replied the king. "It would require more capital or labor than I can produce to make them pay."

Kent stared speculatively at him, and took a turn through the room.

"I'm not certain that I wouldn't be foolish enough to try it," he said thoughtfully. "I've been well informed that they are valuable. Why not grant me a twenty-four year concession, out of which I give you ten per cent of the profit; but with this clear agreement: that I am to have full power to handle you and your kingdom to make them pay? It's the only way I can find to save Rhodes' money for him."

The king looked tempted, yet cautiously considerate; but did not answer in haste.

Kent paced the room thoughtfully, and at last, with a kindly air, walked across and laid his hand on the king's shoulder.

"You are not a king to me," he said, quietly. "You are just a fine, brave young fellow, with high ideals, who deserves a chance. I hate to see as decent a young chap as you are fail, irretrievably for the want of some one to back him, and to show him the way through. We don't have kings in my country; but we have the young fellows. And I have helped a lot of them, when about all they needed was some one to pat them on the back and say, 'It's all right, boy. You're not licked yet! Get up and try again!' And most always, they take heart and go in and win! Your duty is to be a king! And I now tell you, go and be one! If you'll do as I say, Provarsk is much abler than I think he is, if we don't best him, hand and foot. In any event, he shall have a struggle that will make him about the busiest usurper that ever tried for a throne!"

Thinking, trained to repress display of emotions since childhood, and passed through the course which makes of princes wooden-faced images, forgot all that education as the American progressed, and became merely a desperate hurt human being, craving friendship and support. His lips twitched and strained under this unexpected tender of sympathy. They might have remained unmoved had he walked upon the scaffold of a guillotine, but here was a new emotion, that rendered him defenceless. With something akin to boyish amazement, he stared at the grim, satirical, strong face above him as if to make certain of the character that offered open support in return for secret domination, and what he saw there gave him confidence. For a long time he weighed the situation with all its alternatives, asking now and then cautious questions and receiving reassuring answers. At last, quite like one taking a final and desperate chance, he made his decision. He stood to his feet, as befitted the gravity of the situation, and said, very simply, "I accept. The concession is yours, and I put myself completely in your hands because I trust you and because I have no other recourse. Our agreement is one of honour, to last until you have secured your superior's money, or by your own word release me from further obligation."

"That is fair; very fair," Kent replied, with equal gravity. "And you may trust me to make my stay as brief as possible, because I've no wish for the job." He paused a minute and added with one of his rare, half-humorous smiles, "You see, the fact is, I never have run a kingdom before. Once when I was young, I ran a sawmill, and after all, running kingdoms and sawmills are not much different. Both consist in seeing that the work is well done."

The king extended his hand to the financial agent, who took it, and for an instant held it, and studied the king's face as if to make a last appraisal of this material with which he must work.

"And I take it that the chancellor—"

"For more than 20 years, as a boy and man," Von Glutz rumbled, "I have served the house of His majesty. And behind me are four generations of my name who have also given all they had to give. I ask nothing but to serve. The king's wish is to me an order."

"Pshaw! That's going some! Takes me back to a gallery seat at a melodrama," Kent said in English, much to the chancellor's bewilderment. But with the chancellor, too, the American shook hands as if this were to seal a binding contract, and then, almost abruptly, he swung round to his desk, seated himself,

and was the man in command. His head appeared to set more doggedly his voice to become more crisp and authoritative.

"I'll take your word for the concession until we can draw it up. Now who is this friend of whom you spoke?" he asked the king.

"Baron Von Hertz, distantly related, who dwells most of the time in a mediaeval castle he has rehabilitated. It is less than ten miles from Marken."

"And you can depend on him?"

"Implicitly. On him and all his followers and tenants."

"And how far is his castle from here?"

"About 30 miles, I should think."

"All right. We shall have to use the car the princess arrived in. We three will start at once."

"And leave my sister here alone—undefended?"

Kent stepped to the door, and turned back to answer over his shoulder.

"No, I shall leave my man Ivan to guard her. She will be as safe as if we three were here."

He was gone from the room but a few minutes and when he returned was clad in a heavy raincoat, and carried in his hand a light sporting rifle. He was very brusque and determined in the directness with which he crossed the room, possessed himself of a magazine pistol, examined the clip to make certain that it was filled, and gave an order that was entirely devoid of preference.

"You will now call in Captain Paulo and instruct him," he said. "Also there must be no forgetfulness of our relative positions. You are now and hereafter to be my mouthpiece. You are still the king. You will give such orders as I give you as your own, obey my instructions, and see that they are carried out as if they were your own. You understand thoroughly?"

Both the king and chancellor bowed, the latter with a quick military salute of acquiescence.

"Summon Captain Paulo," said the king, accepting his new role; and when, in answer to the stentorian hail of the chancellor through the lattice, the officer appeared, the king commanded, evenly, as if nothing unusual could be found in the situation, "Captain Paulo, bring the car around to the door, headed in the opposite direction. We return to our kingdom."

The officer's youthful face flashed to exultation. Almost he voiced it! but recovered and saluted, while his eyes danced with satisfaction. He would have turned to obey, but the king restrained him.

"Just a moment, Paulo," he said. "Mr. Kent accompanies us, and will remain with us for some time. It is my wish that you obey anything he says as you do me. Do you now the road from here to the Castle Hertz?"

"Quite well, Sir."

"Then it is there that you are to take us."

Kent gave his first direct order to the officer a few minutes later as the three men climbed into the car.

"Drive," he said. "Drive lie the devil!"

And the car, with big headlights ablaze, roared its way down the village street, sidded as it made a sharp turn, and then leaped out on a long straight road lie a raver reaching for a goal.

For what seemed to Kent a long and perilous time, the car jolted and slipped, and ran at a fearsome speed over long level stretches, up hills, over mountains roads, and at last rushed noisily up a harsh incline and across what he surmised had once been a moat bridge, to come to a halt in a courtyard, where it stood and streamed the aspent racer finishing a course.

"Well! What's wanted?" A night watchman, flashing an electric torch, challenged them, and they climbed out of observe that the storm was abating, that off on one horizon stars were shining through a cloud opening, and that they stood in front of a huge and gloomy old pile that Kent new must be the Castle Hertz.

"The baron is within?" asked the chancellor.

"Without a doubt. And asleep as such an honorable man should be," was the watchman's surly response.

"He must be aroused," grunted the chancellor.

"Not by me!" exclaimed the watchman. "I'm an old man with a family dependent upon me. Can't you gentlemen wait until morning?"

"You go and tell your master that—" Von Glutz began in a hoarse bluster, but was quietly elbowed aside by the American, who continued the sentence as if it were his own.

"That three gentleman have called here in the most urgent haste and can not be delayed. Also that we are on the king's business. Here! This may help you!"

He slipped a gold coin into the watchman's hand, which the latter took, inspected under the light of the torch, bit to make certain that he was not dreaming, and acknowledged by doffing his cap and bow-

ing very deeply.

"It must be on the king's business," he declared. "No one else could possibly have that much money in these times, Sir. I'll take a chance."

"Wonderful what one can accomplish by diplomacy," Kent remarked, dryly, as the watchman ambled around to a side entrance and disappeared. A long wait ensued which indicated either that the Baron Von Hertz might have been hard to awaken, or had calmly murdered his watchman and returned to his repose. And then when Kent was beginning to be annoyed, a huge door in front of them opened, a light glowed within, and they were invited to enter.

"I trust," observed the watchman, meaningly, as he conducted them to ward a waiting room, "that you gentlemen are really on the king's business. Otherwise I fear that my Lord the baron will prove—ahem! a trifle unpleasant. As first he swore that he wouldn't get up for the king himself. It was not until I suggested you might be robbers, and there was a prospect of a good fight, that he consented to arise. He is now loading his shot gun. Pray be seated."

"Must be a pleasant old chap!" said Kent, with a soft chuckle.

But the king, failing to see any humor in the situation, threw himself wearily into a chair without removing his hat or coat, and stretched his legs in front of him and stared at his boots. The watchman took his post outside the doorway, and then, by afterthought, switched on the lights in the corridors, and brought the waiting room to full blaze. Kent, as idly as any tourist, personally conducted, and endowed with a connoisseur's knowledge, stared around at the fine old wainscoting and polished floors. He acted as if calling out a baron of the realm of Marken at three o'clock in the morning were an every night occurrence with him. He was disturbed by a sharp "Ahem!" in the doorway and looked around to discover a tall, gaunt, white-whiskered old gentleman whose bald head was protected by a flaming red night cap, and who carried a heavy fowling piece in a perfectly willing to use it on slight provocation. The three men stood to there feet and for a moment he glared at them, then entering the room, hastily deposited the shotgun in a corner, turned his head and bawled to the watchman, "It's alright! Go on outside and watch the weather. I'm expecting a hail-storm."

After that he came quickly forward and offered both hands to his sovereign.

"Well, Carl, what is up now? What brings you here at this time of night? Some one been lifting the lid to let the sulphur out?"

"Provarsk," replied the king, sentimentally.

The old man smiled a rye smile, nodded to Von Glutz, and favoured Kent with a harsh stare from under his scowling eyebrows.

"It's alright said the king. "We can talk freely. This is an American gentleman, Mr. Kent, who is the agent for John Rhodes, the financial magnate."

"Oh! Can't he collect interest in daylight?" demanded the irascible old man. "Since when did you begin to make night journeys with money lenders?"

Kent stood unmoved; but the king rushed to his defence.

"Baron," he asserted, steadily, "Mr. Kent has proved to be my friend. As much as certain you will regard him."

"Pardon me," the American interjected, "I do not seek the baron's friendship."

Before the amazed old gentleman could recover, Kent walked directly across the intervening space until he confronted him.

"Whether you like me or not, whether you object to me or not, My Lord Baron, is to me the very slightest importance. There is but one attitude I expect from you, that which is current between gentleman, and consists of courtesy. That I demand!"

There was an intense stillness in the room as they eyed each other, Kent inflexible, the king distressed, and the chancellor open-mouthed at such uncompromising words. The old baron was the most effected and stood as if stupefied with astonishment. For a pregnant time he met Kent's stare and then suddenly chuckled in his throat with a queer, wise acceptance. He turned to the king and exploded, much as an explorer might have done on announcing a discovery. "Wh, Kear! You've got a friend who is a man! By Saint Dominick! This is a man!"

The chancellor twisted and frowned. The caustic inference was not lost upon him; but he had no opportunity for speech, for the baron advanced to the American, put out his hand and exclaimed, "My kinsman needs a few like you. It should straighten affairs out, unless I mistake."

For a time they stood and eyed each other, the one stalfartin developed strength, the other elderly, weak, and wise.

(To be Continued Next Week)

DEVIL-DARER KILLED TRYING TO CONQUER NIAGARA

Charles Stevens, 58, of Bristol England, Is Killed in Attempt to Shoot the Falls in a Barrel.

Chicago Tribune Special to The Sioux City Tribune.

Niagara Falls, N. Y., July 12.—Charles Stevens, 58, of Bristol, England, Committed Suicide Sunday morning by going over the Horseshoe or Canada falls of Niagara in a barrel in an effort to emulate the previously successful feat of Anne Edson Taylor and (Bobbie) Leach. Stevens reached the Canadian side of the river some few days ago and began to study the falls and river locally with a view of determining the possibilities of making a successful trip. He viewed the river above and below the falls and to many expressed the view that the barrel he had brought along with him would carry him safely through the upper rapids and over the big dip of the Horseshoe.

Sunday morning about 8 o'clock he and his party gathered on the Canadian side of the upper river. On the mainland about midway up the shore opposite Navy island he crept into the barrel, which was equipped with apparatus said to have been designed by Professor Hill, of England, so as to give him an air supply of about eight hours. The harness was put over his head and he took the mouthpiece in his mouth before friends bade him farewell. His air was confident and he showed little or no fear. Others had made the trip, why not he? A motor launch towed him and his barrel to midstream.

Down, Down, Down. And then downstream as far as it was safe to go. There the final fastenings were made over the manhole and a rap on the outside of the barrel was the signal that told Stevens he was adrift on the bosom of the Niagara only a few hundred feet up from the awful precipice over which only two had gone and live to tell the tale.

Down, down, down the swift current carried the barrel. The people on shore stood transfixed at the sight of the approach of the strange craft with its human freight toward the jumping off place of the waters in their drop from the higher to the lower level. Twenty-six minutes elapsed, and for this period of time the people stared with their eyes fairly sticking from their heads in their following of the barrel.

It had passed through the rapids and floated through the more quiet water to the horseshoe. A second more and it dropped out of sight and then the scene of the tragedy was transferred from the upper to the lower river. How these anxious friends on shore on both banks watched for the barrel to emerge from the foot of the falls, as had the Taylor and Leach barrels years ago. They looked and watched in vain. The tumultuous currents of the boiling waters at the base of the waterfall delivered the barrel in pieces to the bosom of the lower river and later, boatmen further down the stream, picked up some of these pieces and carried them ashore to the Ashor Sovereign, as Stevens faith in his ability to conquer Niagara.

Hurled Out of Barrel? Friends on the river banks found it hard to believe and read that Stevens had failed in his effort.

The conclusion of all this is that Stevens' barrel dropped beside the falling sheet water instead of being cast out to the front of it as had the other barrels which had safely made the trip—in falling beside the sheet water the barrel would make an awful plunge onto the rocks of the cliff.

WILSON GIVES MARCH CROSS FOR SERVICE

Washington, July 12.—By direction of President Wilson, a distinguished service cross was awarded today to General March, chief of staff of the army, for gallant services in Philippine. The citation reads: "Gen. Payton C. March, (then lieutenant in the Astor battery) for extraordinary heroism in action before Manila, P. I., August 13, 1898. He gallantly led a charge on the enemy's breastworks, volunteers having been called for by the brigadier general, commanding."

WIDOW OF NAPOLEON III DIES IN SPAIN

London, July 12.—The Empress Eugenie, widow of Napoleon III of France, died Sunday afternoon in Spain, according to a report by the Exchange Telegraph Company. Eugenie had American blood in her veins, her grandfather on her mother's side having been William Kirkpatrick, United States consul in Malaga. Her father, count of Montijo and grandee of Spain, brought her up in the court circles of Madrid. The empress celebrated her 94th birthday last May.

U. S. FLYERS TO AID POLISH SOLDIERS

New York, July 12.—Six members of the American Flying club have responded to the recent call from Poland for members to volunteer for service in the Kosciuszko Escadrille against the bolsheviks. Names of volunteers announced today included H. M. Winkler, Granger, Tex., who served in the Royal Air Force during the war, was brought down and captured by the Germans, later escaping.

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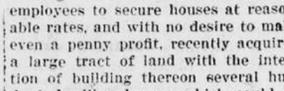
In an Indianapolis barber shop a man got a shave, haircut and tonic and gave the boss barber a dollar bill, which the latter rang up as he said, "Just right."

After about a minute the customer exclaimed: "The only difference between you and Jesse James is that Jesse had a horse."

"There is a bigger difference than that," replied the boss barber; "Jesse was a piker. Why, I've got a seven-passenger car."—Indianapolis News.

ASPIRIN

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"Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" is genuine Aspirin proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians for over twenty years. Accept only an unbroken "Bayer package" which contains proper directions to relieve Headache, Toothache, Earache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Colds and Pain. Handy tin boxes of 12 tablets cost few cents. Druggists also sell larger "Bayer packages." Aspirin is trade mark Bayer Manufacture Monocetateester of Salicylicacid.—Adv.

Will Build Homes for Employees.

One of the largest London dry-goods merchants, with a view of doing his bit toward overcoming the housing shortage and also to enable his own employees to secure houses at reasonable rates, and with no desire to make even a penny profit, recently acquired a large tract of land with the intention of building thereon several hundred dwelling houses which could be let at reasonable rates.

FRECKLES

Now is the Time to Get Rid of These Ugly Spots.

There's no longer the slightest need of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots. Simply get an ounce of Othine—double strength—from your druggist, and apply a little of it night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is a skin cream that more than once is needed to completely clear the skin and gain a beautiful clear complexion.

Be sure to ask for the double strength Othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.

Burglars Helped Him Out.

For a year D. T. McRoberts, a business man at New Castle, Pa., had not been able to open his safe on account of the combination being lost, and so had been unable to get at papers and other property inside the safe. One night recently burglars broke it open, found no money, left the papers and other property, and Mr. McRoberts felt very much obliged.

FARMERS ARE WORKING HARDER

And using their feet more than ever before. For all these workers the frequent use of Allen's Foot-Ease, the antiseptic, healing powder to be shaken into the shoes and sprinkled in the foot-bath, increases their efficiency and insures needed physical comfort. It takes the friction from the shoe, freshens the feet, and prevents tired, aching and blistered feet. Women everywhere are constant users of Allen's Foot-Ease. Don't get foot sore, get Allen's Foot-Ease. Sold by dealers everywhere.—Adv.

Objection.

Knicker—Why is Jones resigning his job?
Boeker—He hasn't got enough not to do.—New York Sun.

