

THE UNKNOWN MR. KENT

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The secretary created a diversion by discreetly bowing himself backward to the office door and then through it, with the said fervor of an automaton. The princess looked at her brother a polite request to order Provark from the room; but the king, through obstinacy, refused to heed it.

"You were about to say, Eloise?" he asked politely, as if the baron had not been present, and therefore had not impudently added his voice to the conversation.

She had no time to answer; for at that moment there came from the distance a loud roar of many voices, and immediately after the sound of drums in ragged volley. The effect on the king was as if some one had propelled him with a swift kick out to the balcony, where he gazed anxiously in the direction of the city. The princess, distressed, also moved toward the balcony, while Provark grinned pleasantly and seemed to understand the meaning of the sound. He was confident that he alone knew all that was conveyed by that uproar. He rather hoped that enough Markentines had been killed and wounded to make his revolt a good one. He cocked his head intently to listen for further shots, heard the distant clangor of the bells in the city tower, and decided it must be an alarm, and then another noise became audible, the sound of some one hastily coming through the tiled corridors, and this latter noise perplexed him. It grew louder and more distinct, and both king and princess, hearing it, hastily re-entered the room. Stentorian puffs and wheezes were now accompanied by the ringing of boot heels and spurs, and through the door galloped the minister of war. He was in full uniform of his own proud design, and the red of his broad sash was no redder than the red of his face. His eyes protruded and were wide, and his hand was on his sword hilt. So fast had been his progress, and so intense his excitement, that for a moment he appeared unable to speak. Then he burst out, "Has any one seen Mr. Kent? Has any one seen Mr. Kent, your majesty? Oh, this is horrible. Horrible!"

"I regret to say, sir, that he is not in at present. Any word your excellency might wish to leave will be duly repeated," Provark said in admirable imitation of Kent's secretary, and then added, "My goodness! it's all fussed up, isn't it?"

"Everything is lost!" exclaimed the minister of war, speaking to the king. "What has happened?" asked the latter, quietly, confronting an issue that brought out his better and fighting qualities.

"Mr. Kent! He told me that he proposed to put the decree through regardless of anything and that if I had to fight, fight it would be; told me to have my army stationed at places named, but said he would be there and that I wasn't to give the command to fire until he told me to. Great crowd! People all excited and restless! Accidentally dropped my glasses and stepped on them! And I've lost the oculist's prescription."

"You're rattled!" said the king, growing still cooler now that he faced an emergency.

"So I am! So I am!" admitted Von Glutz, hastily. "But I couldn't see Mr. Kent anywhere and the crowd grew threatening. I asked if any one of my officers had seen him. No one had. I hurried here to inform him, and on the way I heard shots. It can mean but one thing; that pressed to the limit, my soldiers have fired, and that Marken is in a state of civil war!"

He paused for want of breath, and the king clenched his hands and made as if to go to the front himself; then whirled and asked sharply, "If he told you to stay there in command of the troops, who is in charge now?"

"General Happers!"

The king hesitated, but the princess asked sternly, "Did Mr. Kent say you were to kill the people if a disturbance resulted?"

Von Glutz in his turn hesitated, trying to recall his exact orders.

"On signal from him," he replied.

"Karl! Karl!" she called. "Something must be done at once! This will never do. You must act, regardless of your promises to this American. Now! This comes, you see, from your putting yourself into the hands of such a man."

Embodied by her criticism of the dictator, Baron Provark thought he saw his opportunity and assumed an air of extreme honesty and disinterestedness.

"The princess is right!" he declared to the king. "It is time to cast off such an incubus before the

kingdom itself has gone to the dogs." The princess recognized his presence for the first time.

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded, regarding him sternly.

It nettled him to an unfortunate retort.

"I mean that the only way in which affairs can be straightened out is to at once counteract everything this fellow Kent has done, and if I had my way he would be taken out and shot before the day is over."

At his callous indifference to either justice or life, she gasped, and eyed him with a wide stare.

Provark wondered if, in overlooking the complexities of a woman's mind, he had not made a mistake; but he was still daring to hope to turn the situation to his own advantage. "If I am to be an actual chancellor," he began suavely, but was cut short by the princess.

"Which, no matter what happens, you are not to be, and so of course is all useless to talk about! You would have Mr. Kent shot! You! Why, the worst blunders he ever made are sure to be better than the best things you have ever done. You have told what you would do if you had your way. Well, I'll tell you what I would have done if I had mine! I'd have you booted to the street and through the market place. Kent? Whatever else Mr. Kent is, he is a man. No matter if he has made mistakes, and is a money lender, and all that, he is still a real man and unafraid. Who are you to talk about having him shot?"

She faced her brother as if her last contemptuous gibe at Provark had been her final one for him, and saw that her brother's eyes were fixed on the door and that Von Glutz also stared in that direction with a look of relief. She also turned and saw that the American had entered the room and was now coming gravely toward her.

"I overheard your royal highness," he said, "and I thank you for your defense. I had not hoped for so much and I am grateful—very, very grateful—for a friendship that I esteem as of great worth."

She was visibly embarrassed, and took refuge in a diversion.

"What has happened in the market place?" both she and the king asked in chorus.

"It's a terrible situation," wheezed Von Glutz.

Kent's eyes flickered as if he now understood the cause of the assemblage in his reception room.

"In some ways," he said; "but I don't see how I could have acted differently."

"Why didn't you—" began the princess impatiently, and then hesitated and looked at the king.

"Will the princess please finish?" the American asked. "I wish you would extend your friendship to the point of advice. What would you have done?"

"First of all, I should quell the riot. It comes from misunderstanding. There are no kinder nor more amenable people, Mr. Kent, than ours. They should not have been fired upon at all."

He stood quietly to one side, listening attentively, as if all his own plans had been defeated.

"I don't see why we waste time talking now," the king declared, impatiently.

"Please, sir, allow the princess Eloise to proceed," Kent said. "Her suggestions might be valuable." He turned his face toward her and encouraged her by asking, "And what then? After the riot is quelled?"

"Then they must be dealt with kindly, but with resolute firmness. It will not do to seem to give in to them. They must be made to obey; but there can be a compromise of some sort, can there not? This new plan was too unexpected, too drastic. It would have been better to have prepared them gradually. That would have been my way, Mr. Kent."

She stopped in expectation of his defense, and gazed at him with sympathy and regret, as if wishing to assist him in any way she could now that his plans, all energetic, all hopeful, had gone awry. She had never by word, until this day, credited him with any virtues.

"Thank you," he said quietly, lifting his fine eyes to hers. "I applaud your firmness. It's like encouragement from a friend to hear you talk. But I think, after all, that my way was the best. Something abrupt and sensational had to be done to arouse them. I did it. It worked all right."

All in the room fixed him with looks of interrogation and surprise. The chancellor smiled a super-

"You certainly did!" "And now we've got a revolution!" grumpily muttered Von Glutz.

Kent was still watching the princess, and had opened his lips as if to explain the situation to her when Ivan came striding into the room, stopped and would have retreated when he saw those present, had not Kent halted him with a gesture.

"Well, Ivan," Kent asked, "have you got them all right now?"

"Yes, sir, Captain Paulo said to tell you that the last of them had been rounded up and that all of them are now in jail. Also that he had followed your instructions and ordered an hour of free refreshments in the name of the king. The market place is filled now with people singing the national air and shouting their heads off for his majesty. They've raised a big banner round the clock tower that reads, 'At last we have a king in Marken. God preserve his majesty, Karl the Second.'"

Kent calmly grinned at Provark, whose face had grown black as an August thunder cloud. The king looked bewildered and vastly relieved. Von Glutz exclaimed, "God help us! What does it all mean?" and the Princess Eloise broke into a surprised and gratified smile.

Kent again faced Ivan and asked, "And by the way, did you learn what they have to say about our most noble chancellor, Provark?"

Ivan grinned broadly, and with marked enjoyment said, "Yes. Most of the things they said I can't repeat; but I should think it would not be very wise or safe for his excellency, the chancellor, to be seen without a good strong guard for a few days, or until this celebration blows over. On that point they dispute among themselves; some being in favor of tar and feathers, while the others insist on hanging."

"You remember of whom you are speaking!" roared Provark, betrayed into an unusual display of anger.

"If necessary," said Kent, eyeing him, "I'll see that you are handed over to the mob in the market place within the next 10 minutes, and with the word that the king agrees with those who want to lynch you."

"You asked my advice a few minutes ago, Mr. Kent," the princess broke in with a malicious little laugh. "Let me offer it. Send him down there now, regardless of whether he has anything more to say."

Provark controlled himself and was again the polished, self-contained, fearless man of the moment. He brought his heels together and bowed very low toward the princess.

"To be hanged by your royal highness' wish would be a happiness to me," he said.

"Come! Come! We've had enough of this, it seems to me," said the king. "If Mr. Kent will but relieve our suspense by explaining what took place—"

"Very easily done," the American replied, with the utmost calmness. "I learned that a combination had been effected between a certain number of men to provoke a riot at what they believed a suitable moment. It was to be such a riot that it might become a full grown revolt. I therefore took measures to see that each one of these hired lads was to be shadowed by a guardsman I could depend upon. The princess Eloise will be delighted to know that these guardsmen consisted of former adherents of a petty baron named Provark, who have taken service under me personally. Money paid into an itching palm at regular intervals and in sufficient sums, does make some men loyal. These followers swear by me."

He did not look at the discomfited Provark, who affected an air of the utmost indifference and stared absently out toward the garden.

"So," Kent went on, "when the hired disturbers started their outbreak each one was instantly clapped on the shoulder and carried away to a nice, secure little place protected by iron bars. I gave the people a treat. Talked to them myself and was—ahem! received with marked enthusiasm. The firing you heard was prearranged by me. It was a salvo of joy fired with blank cartridges. The ringing of the bells was also arranged by me, to give due dramatic effect. The feeling of love for the chancellor was also stimulated by me. I pointed out that it was he who signed the harsh decree enforcing labor, and suggested that only the unswerving efforts of his majesty, the king, had ameliorated what might have been a most heart rending condition of toll. We turned the proposed revolt into a celebration of joy and enthusiasm for his majesty, who is probably at this moment the best loved man in Marken."

The king threw off royal dignity, and impulsively tried to express his thanks, but seemed to have trouble with his throat.

As if to relieve himself from an embarrassing position, Kent suddenly swung around toward Provark, and fixed him with mocking eyes.

"By the way, chancellor," he asked

in a casual tone, "isn't the sanke Wimblerust a friend of yours?"

"It seems to me that I am acquainted with the gentleman," Provark replied, not in the least perturbed.

"Too bad! Too bad!" said Kent, "He was the leader of the disturbers. He was the first one I had arrested and put in jail, tomorrow he shall be deported and all his property escheat to the crown."

"Dreadful person!" said Provark, with a slight grin.

Kent's eyes lost all mockery and stared harshly at Provark with an unmistakable menace.

"Take care, your excellency, lest you over work and the cares of state become too great for your zeal. It would indeed be pitiable if you were suddenly compelled to join that estimable gentleman, your friend the banker, in an equally penniless state."

Provark did not waver. He sniffed disdainfully, and with the utmost politeness asked, "Am I to understand that this is a command for my departure?"

"Not at all! Why should it be?" Kent retorted with cynical courtesy.

"Oh, no, indeed! You are too good a thing to lose sight of, my gentle chancellor. Why, do you know, you are the most interesting person I have met since the panic of 1903? It is almost unthinkable what might happen to Marken without your presence to guide the ship of state through the reefs of unrest. Also, I'm making you popular; as popular as castor oil for a summer beverage."

He waved his hand deprecatingly.

"I am sure," he said, deferentially, "that your excellency will pardon, for speaking so feebly, one who is, after all, but the king's remembrancer."

"Quite so! Quite so!" retalled Provark, with unbroken nerve. "It's the first time I knew you had any feelings."

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

It was nearly three months later when the various steel manufacturers of the world were stirred and agitated by the announcement that the reputable John Rhodes had again been heard from and in a most unsatisfactory way. The manganese deposits, of which there were only two or three of any size on earth, had been secretly bought in, or concessions gained therefor, and word came from the blithe John Rhodes, dated from his London offices, that hereafter manganese would double in price. Steel manufacturers swore volubly, but the market went soaring. Some of the manufacturers used cable and wires to find out if that deposit which was said to exist in a dinky little kingdom called Marken, was open for sale, lease, or concession.

The replies provoked renewed profanity, inasmuch as they tersely said, "Nothing doing. Concession already held by John Rhodes. (Signed) Kent."

And the steel industry of the world threw up its hands in horror and was compelled to submit to unheard of prices for a commodity that was indispensable for all manganese steel. Richard Kent, smiling plaintively in his offices in the palace, found much cause to feel well satisfied. He had "made good" with John Rhodes for life, for on his judgment John Rhodes was making "a killing." Kent could now see the way not only to repay Rhodes all the money advanced to Marken, but in addition thereto was enjoying himself to the uttermost in the development of his big machine of state enterprise.

"I've put Marken on the map, you can bet," he confided to Paulo. "A year ago mighty few people had ever heard of it. Today it's known everywhere, and there's a nice crowd of kings here in Europe who have 100 times more power, but who are sick with envy. Marken markets on manganese are quoted daily all over the world. That's going some!"

(Continued next week.)

A Veteran's Sentiments.
Letter to American Legion Weekly. I should deem it a favor if you would publish the following:

"Brothers of yesterday, you who lie gain in your blankets in the little shallow graves over there, we send you greeting. You have solved the Great Problem and we pray that you are truly at rest. You are indeed fortunate not to have lived to see how little your efforts to free the world of jealousy and power seeking have failed. Had you lived you would have seen the ideals for which you fought and died swept aside in a rush for political power and material gain. Better to be forgotten a thousand times, than to be exploited by those who can never understand what you suffered. Better to be where you are than to be the subject of political quibbling as to whether you should be cared for or not. But in the minds of your brothers, who also served, there is no forgetfulness of the horrors of war or the sacrifice you made."

"Brothers of yesterday, we send you greeting."

Dame Nellie Melba, who has been visiting Christiania, was presented by the king of Norway with the royal medal of merit in gold after a concert on Wednesday, says the London Times.

A wage increase of 5 per cent. has been awarded all classes of civil employes in the naval establishment and will go into effect on the nearest day to September 15."

CANADA'S HARVEST IS OVER

Threshing Shows Increase Over Expected Yields.

The Winnipeg Free Press of a few days ago contained a cartoon of which the following is a copy:



This probably as much as anything else will give some idea of the state of mind of the Western Canada farmer, as he watches the tally from the thrashing machine while his wheat is being carried to the elevator.

From all sections of the country, the most optimistic reports are received, with reports from twenty to thirty bushels of wheat to the acre, while in some places oats are showing a record of as high as 120 bushels to the acre.

Referring to Saskatchewan, it is confidently expected that the wheat yield will be nearly 125 million bushels; heavy rains which fell in districts that did not promise so well in July, had greatly improved the prospects there, and there is no question that paying yields will be produced. The yields in the eastern part of the province may not show to the advantage that will those of the western part, but too much cannot be said of this, for it is the results as they come from the machine, and often these prove happily deceptive.

There is now every reason to believe that the wheat crop of the three prairie provinces will approach 250 million bushels.

Alberta will exceed the 70 million bushels that had been looked for. The average yield will be considerably higher than it has been in the province in any of the last four years. The Department of Agriculture in a recent report gave the opinion that it cannot fall below twenty-two bushels to the acre, and that it might easily pass the twenty-five bushel mark. Most of the wheat in the province when the report was written, stood well up to three feet high, and on some fields was still higher. The report goes on that in parts of Southern Alberta forty and fifty bushels to the acre yields will not be uncommon, while there will be a good many yields of from thirty to thirty-five bushels to the acre.

In the northwest part of the province, in the country surrounding Battleford and adjacent to the Canadian National railway line to Lloydminster, and south the crops are excellent and the yield will be heavy.

A larger than average wheat crop is being thrashed in Manitoba. It has been estimated that the total yield of the three provinces will not be less than 225,000,000 bushels, and it may be that somewhere between 250,000,000

and 300,000,000 bushels will be the final figure.

Oats is a good crop in all three provinces. This crop has also grown rapidly during the last two or three weeks. Excepting from those fields which were sown late for green feed, the yield will be heavy and the grain excellent. Barley and rye are above the average. There was sufficient feed to harvest the crop.—Advertisement.

LITTLE ADVICE FOR GROCER

Would Be Wag Had Picked Out the Wrong Woman on Whom to Exercise His Wit.

There was an expression of melancholy ringed with resentment on Mrs. Brown's face as she entered the grocer's shop.

"I want," she began impressively, "to talk to you about them eggs I had last week. They weren't anything like as fresh as they might have been."

"That's strange," replied the grocer, who fancied himself something of a wag. "We always have an almanac hanging up in the fowl run to keep the hens up to date."

"Oh!" came the retort with crushing emphasis. "Then all I have to say is that somebody with brains about as added as them eggs has been mistaken in the hens with last year's calendar. Just you hang up a 1920 card, my good fellow, and maybe them chickens'll start working overtime to catch up to it!"

—Just So.

"Can you give me an outside room?" "I can give you a hammock in the alley or a cot in the yard," said the hotel proprietor.

"I see. All outside rooms."

SICK WOMEN HEAR ME

You Can Be Free from Pain as I Am, if You Do as I Did.

Harrington, Me.—"I suffered with backache, pains through my hips and such a bearing down feeling that I could not stand on my feet. I also had other distressing symptoms. At times I had to give up work. I tried a number of remedies but Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound did me more good than anything else. I am regular, do not suffer the pains I used to, keep house and do all my work. I recommend your medicine to all who suffer as I did and you may use my letter as you like."—Mrs. MINNIE MITCHELL, Harrington, Me.

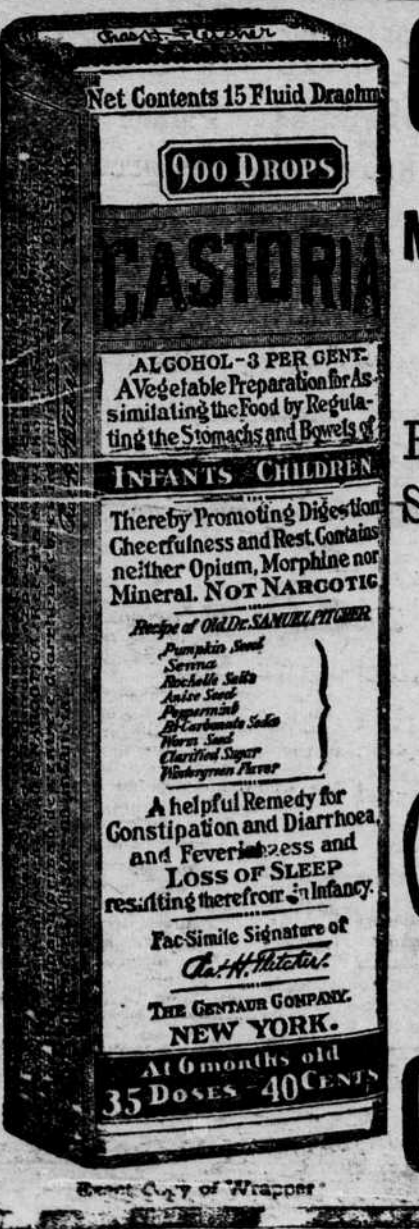
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