

# The Princess Dehra

BY JOHN REED SCOTT.  
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"And how many hearts has she?" she asked.

He shook his head sadly. "None—none—not the faintest trace of one."

She bent further over, and tightened the bow of blue ribbon on the staff.

"May be you're not the one to find it," she smiled—"another man"—and the merry eyes glistened gaily through the long lashes.

"Oh, I'm the man—and she knows it."

A little laugh rippled forth—"And does she know, also, your stupendous self sufficiency?"

"Yes, she knows that, too—and likes me just the same."

"Which would seem to be very little—as it should be. . . . My parol of you please, I'm going."

He kept his hold.

"You little witch," he said; "I don't know why I let you walk upon me so."

The saucy mouth drooped at the corners. "Nor I why I walk—the way is surely very stony. . . . My parol, I said."

He glanced up and down the corridor.

"Do you know," he said seriously, "I believe that his is so big I could kiss you, and no one see us."

She dropped the sun shade and sprang back.

"Yes, I believe you could—and I believe you actually would—but you shan't."

He opened the parol, and drew the circle close behind his head.

"It's not quite so large as your hat," he went on, "but I think, if you don't struggle too much, I can manage to hold it properly."

He went slowly toward her—she retreated.

"Come," she commanded; . . . "cease this foolishness. . . . my parol; . . . I'm going. . . ."

He did not answer.

"Ralph," she exclaimed, "are you crazy?"

He shook his head and came on.

She was on the stairway now—a glance—no one was below her. She lifted her skirts with both hands, and backed down the steps, smiling up at him the while, tantalizingly.

"Come on," she said, as he halted at the top; "I need the parol; come on."

"You little devil," he laughed; "you'll tempt me once too often. . . . Here, take your sunshade—I may have need of it another time."

"Merci—amant, merci," she inflected softly, then flung him a kiss from her finger tips—"and you take that—I won't need it another time—and, if I do, I've others."

"Many others?" he asked.

She faced about, and raising the parol swung it between them.

"A million—for your hearts," she answered, and ran quickly down the steps.

Meanwhile the Duke of Lotzen, passing along the lower corridor, had caught, in a mirror, the reflection of the scene on the stairs, and had paused to watch it.

"A pretty picture, mademoiselle; truly, a pretty picture," he said, as they met; "and most charming from the rear—and below—oh! most charming."

Her cheeks and brow went red as flame, as she caught his meaning.

"You vile peeper," she exclaimed; "doubtless, you're an experienced judge," and dropping the parol in his face, nor caring that the silk struck him, she hurried by.

The duke looked after her contemptively. Really, this girl was worth while—he must take a hand in the Irishman's game—that hair, those eyes, that walk, that figure—oh, decidedly, she was quite worth while.

With an evil little laugh, he put her out of his mind, for the moment, and turned toward the terrace and to business. He had learned of the alfresco luncheon near the pergola, and he appreciated that there was the place to make the first move in his new plot.

Yet when, from the sun-dial, as he feigned to study it, he saw the princess, through the rhododendrons—with the American across the table from her, where he himself ought to have been; and watched her lavish upon Armand the adorable smile that

should have been his; and knew, afresh, that, come what may, the glorious woman yonder was lost to him forever—his anger welled so high he dared not risk a meeting, lest in his rage he wreck his cause completely. So he braced his shoulders against the fierce desire that tugged him toward them, and went on, giving no glance aside.

Then the princess called him; and when the only voice able, hitherto, to touch a soft chord in his heart, struck now a jarring dissonance, the fury passed; and again he was the man of cold, calm hate and ruthless purpose. So he turned aside, and to his enemies—her and the foreigner—deliberating how to make his play quickly, yet naturally and with seeming inadvertence. The faintest blunder would be fatal with Courtney watching; Armand he despised.

And at Dehra's sudden question, he had almost laughed aloud—was it always to be so easy! But he bound his face to his part, and made his answer, and went his way; whistling softly, and all unknowingly, a little song, that a slender, sinuous woman, with raven hair and dead-white cheek, had sung to him in the north.

And when, presently, it came to him whose the song was, and where he had heard it, he laughed gaily.

"An omen!" he said aloud, "an omen! On to Lotzenia—and a dead archduke."

CHAPTER X.  
A Question of Veneer.

The Archduke Armand tossed the end of his fourth cigar into the grate and looked at the big clock in the corner. It was only a bit after 11, and that was, he knew by experience, the blush of the evening at the American embassy, where there were no women folk to repress the youngsters nor to necessitate the closing of the house at conventional hours. Courtney had only bachelors in his official family; and he housed them all with him in the big residence on Alta avenue, and gave them free rein to a merry life, fully assured they would not abuse the liberty; he had known every one of them as boys, and their fathers before them.

The archduke reached over and pressed a button.

"Bring me a cap and a light cape," he said to the servant;—"and a stick."

The man went out, and Armand crossed to a window and drew aside the curtain.

"Put them on a chair," he said without looking around, as the door opened again. "You may go."

The door closed. For a little while he watched the gay street, stretching southward for half a mile to the center of the city, where the lights blazed variegatedly and brightest. The theaters had tossed out their crowds, and below him the van of the carriage column was hurrying homeward, to the fashionable district out the avenue, or to the hanging garden above the lake. Occasionally a face, usually a woman's, would lean close to the door and look at the Epsau curiously—it housed the man who was likely to be king. And the man smiled with half bitter cynicism, and wondered what words followed the look, and who spoke them, and to whom. Once, he recognized Count Epping's lean visage, and in that carriage, at least, he felt that the words were friendly; a moment later, the snake eyes of Baron Retz went glittering by—but never a glance did he turn aside.

"You little reptile," the archduke muttered aloud, "you ought to crawl, not ride."

He dropped the curtain and turned away—then stopped, and his lips softened; and presently he laughed. Just inside the door, and standing stiffly at attention, was Colonel Bernheim, holding the cape and cap and stick the servant had been sent for.

"Now what's the trouble?" Armand demanded.

"Your highness desired these?" said Bernheim.

"Yes—but I didn't send for you." The tone was very kindly.

"But you are going out, sir?"

"Yes."

"And I'm on duty tonight."

"You're excused—go to bed."

The old soldier shook his head. "I'm going with you."

"Nonsense," said Armand, "nonsense! I'm far only a short walk up the avenue."

"I must go with you, sir," the aide insisted.

The archduke looked at him in some surprise.

"Positively, Bernheim," he said, "if you keep this up you will have nervous prostration. Quit it, man, quit it." He flung on the cape, and taking cap and cane went toward the door.

"Good night."

The colonel stood aside, hand at the salute. "Your pardon, sir—but I must go with you—it is the regent's personal order."

"What!"

"She telephoned me this evening always to see that you had an escort, after dark."

The archduke sat on the end of the writing table and laughed until the tears came—and even old Bernheim condescended to emit, at intervals, a grim sort of chuckle.

"What hour are you to put me to bed, nurse?" Armand asked.

"The orders did not run to that point, sir,"—with a lounder chuckle—"but I should say not later than midnight."

"Then I've a few minutes' grace, and I'll spend them playing on the sidewalk, while you warm the sheets and get the milk," and with another laugh he went out. "Don't forget the milk," he added over his shoulder.

Bernheim held open the door.

"I'll not, sir," he said, and followed him.

At the street, Armand stopped.

"Where are you going, colonel?" he asked.

The heels clicked together and the hand went up.

"For the milk, sir."

He recognized the futility of further opposition; with the regent's command to sustain him, Bernheim would not be denied.

"Come, along, then," he ordered—"and if they have a cow at the American embassy I'll set you to milking it, or I'm a sailor."

The old fellow answered with the faintest suggestion of a grin.

All Dornitz was familiar with the features of the Great Henry, and so it was quite impossible for the Archduke Armand to escape recognition—and tonight, as he and Bernheim went out the avenue, the people made way for him with a respect and deference that even he could not but feel was honest and sincere, and of the quietly enthusiastic sort that is most dependable.

"Does it look as though I had need for an escort?" he asked.

"Not at this moment," the aide agreed.

"Nor at any moment on Alta avenue," he put his hand on the other's arm—"you know, Bernheim, it's not you I object to, it's the idea. I always like you with me."

The colonel's face flushed, and for an instant he did not reply; when he did, his voice was low and faintly husky.

"Sire!" he said, "Sire!"

The archduke glanced at him in quick surprise, and understood; sometimes Bernheim's intense devotion overflowed.

"Brace up, colonel," he exclaimed, with sudden gayety, "brace up! you won't have to milk that cow."

Then both men laughed, and the normal situation was resumed.

The bells began to chime midnight, as they reached the embassy.

"Don't wait for me," Armand said; "I may be late. Go back and send an orderly."

The other smiled. "I'll wait, myself, sir, if you will permit; they have a game here I rather like."

"Take care, colonel; those boys will skin you out of your very uniform—better look on."

"I do, sir, when I've a poor draw," he answered seriously, and wondered at the archduke's chuckling laugh.

Courtney greeted his friend with a nod and a wave of his hand.

"I'm glad you came in," he said. "I've been thinking about you—sit down. . . . Scotch?"

"No, rye—and seltzer, please." He took the chair across the desk from Courtney and waited until the man had placed the decanters and glasses and retired. "And I've been thinking about you, too," he said. "You got me into this infernal mess, and now it's up to you to help me out."

Courtney slowly lit a cigaret and scrutinized the coal, critically.

"I see," he remarked, "that you have already developed the ungratefulness of kings—I have high hopes for your reign . . .

if you live to reign."

The archduke put down his glass and regarded him in exasperated surprise.

"Damn it, man, you too?" he exclaimed. "If I were given to nerves I would be seeing daggers and bullets all around me—Bernheim croaks death; and so does Moore; and now you join the chorus—pretty soon the boys will be whistling in on the avenue."

Courtney picked up an embassy official envelope that lay before him, and tossed it across to the archduke.

"I've done a little work on my own account, lately," he said, "and here is what I got this evening. I have always found this—agent, reliable."

It was only a few words, scratched hastily in pencil on a sheet torn from a small notebook—

"Danger very imminent—under no circumstance go out at night without an escort."

"Nice sort of country this, you brought me to," said Armand.

"It's not the country, my dear boy," Courtney observed; "it is beyond reproach. The trouble is that one of your own family still is a barbarian; and you insist upon treating him as though he were civilized. For my part, I have no patience with your altruism; you've had quite sufficient warning—he tried twice to kill you at the Vierle masque; and he has told you to your face that you would never be king. Yet you persist in regarding him as fighting square and in the open. Bernheim and Moore are wise—they know your dear cousin—and you—well, you're a fool if you don't know him, too."

It was a very long speech for Courtney, and Armand had listened in surprise—it was most unusual for his imperturbable friend to grow emphatic, either in voice or gesture, and it impressed him as Bernheim and Moore never had. In truth, he had no particular scruples against meeting Lotzen in the good, old fashioned, cloak and dagger way; but what irked him was the necessity of being always on the qui vive to resist assault or to avoid a trap; and the seeming absurdity of it in Dornitz of the 20th century. It made him feel such a simpleton, to be looking for bravos in dark alleys, or to wear steel vests, or to be eternally watchful and suspicious of every one and everything.

"What do you want me to do," he asked; "go down to Lotzen's palace and stick my sword through him?"

"It's a pity you may not—it's what he would do to you, if he could—but that's not our way; we're civilized. . . . to a certain point. But what you may do is to take every precaution against him; and then, if you get the chance in fair justification, kill him as unconcernedly as he would kill you."

The archduke sat silent, his cigar between his teeth, the smoke floating in a thin strand across his face, his eyes upon the desk before him.

"Of course, my boy," Courtney went on, after a pause, "I assume you are in the game to the end, and in to win. If you're not, the whole matter is easy of adjustment—renounce the crown and marry the princess. . . . and live somewhere beyond the borders of Valeria—come back to America, indeed; I'll see that you have again your commission in the engineer's."

Armand's lips closed a bit tighter on his cigar, his fingers began to play upon the chair arm, and his glance shifted for an instant to the other's face, then back to the desk. And Courtney read his mind and pressed on to clinch the purpose.

"But if you're in to win—and it's your duty to your friends to win; it's your duty to your friends to win, I repeat—your first obligation is to keep alive; a dead archduke is of no earthly use in the king business we have in hand. You may go straight to glory, but that won't help out the poor devils you leave here in Lotzen's clutches, and who have been true to you, never doubting that you would be true to them. Your life belongs to them, now; and you have no right to fritter it away in silly, stubborn recklessness. . . . There, I've spoken my mind, and quite too frankly, may be; but I'll promise never to bother you again. After all, it's for you to decide—not for a meddling friend."

(To Be Continued Next Week)

Her Responsibilities.

From the Argonaut.

The mistress was interviewing the new charwoman. "Have you been married, Susan?" she inquired.

"Sweet, mum," Susan told her.

"Have you any children?"

"Yes, mum, I've three. One by the third wife uv me second husband, an' two by the uv me second husband."

## 40 MEMBERS RUSH TO GIVE STATEMENTS

All Seek Immunity—Klan Not Likely to Finance Louisiana Defense—Hundreds Deserting Organization.

Universal Service. Special Cable Dispatch.

London, Dec. 30 (Saturday, 3 a. m.)—All London papers this morning are featuring the threat of the Ku Klux Klan to invade England. The papers are united in declaring that the Klan is not wanted here.

BY SAM BLAIR, Universal Service Correspondent. New Orleans, La., Dec. 29.—Forty confessions, or signed statements of accusation, naming approximately 300 of the 500 members of the Ku Klux Klan in Morehouse parish, are said to be in the hands of department of justice men who are investigating outrages in the parish which climaxed with the torture and murder last August of Watt Danielson and Tom Richards.

This information comes from a source as authoritative as any available in the state.

The fact that 40 confessions have been given is just another amazing detail in connection with this case. As every new element appears the story of the Klan's activities in Morehouse parish veers closer to the unbelievable.

Why Make Confessions?

"Why should 40 men expose themselves if not to prosecution at least to everlasting ignominy?"

"Because," answers the official who is responsible for this latest announcement, "an epidemic of fear swept through the members of the Klan in Morehouse when they learned that two of their number had named them all and had obtained immunity by giving evidence on atrocities and, particularly, evidence on the killing of Daniels and Richards. Forty terror stricken men made secret visits to the department of justice men and offered their confessions and information against their associates for immunity."

In a general way those in charge of the investigation are seeking to keep the nature and extent of their evidence from the public until it can be offered at the open hearing set for January 5 at Bastrop, Morehouse parish seat. But the facts are coming out in advance of schedule. Too many persons are familiar with the circumstances to make possible any continued secrecy.

Members Desert Klan.

The Ku Klux Klan, as a national organization, would like to "get out from under" that part of the organization in Morehouse parish.

Resignations from the Klan, as a result of publicity given the Morehouse parish murders, have been dispatched at an average of 300 a week throughout the United States, the department of justice has ascertained.

If national Klan officials originally had intended to finance the defense of those who are and who will be arrested for the slayings, it appears that a change of policy has been determined upon. If for no other reason than to check the exodus of members, the Klan is ready, if need be, to withdraw the charter from the Morehouse parish branch and to make a flourishing gesture in denouncing and repudiating those Klansmen against whom evidence is to be presented.

Klan Officials Confer.

Klan officials of Louisiana gathered from all sections of the state at a conference here Friday. While the symposium was ostensibly secret, the Klan leaders were anxious to "set themselves right" before the public and one newspaper man was invited to "sit in." The correspondent was asked only to withhold identification of those present.

"We cannot believe that the Morehouse Klan, as an institution, perpetrated any of the outrages which have been charged," announced the Louisiana Klan chief, a millionaire resident of a city in the northern part of the state. "But should it develop that Klansmen actually participated in the killing of Daniels and Richards, then they certainly will be repudiated by the Klan and the Morehouse branch will be outlawed."

Investigator Appointed.

The session decided that the Louisiana division of the Klan must obtain first hand information on the Morehouse situation. An investigator, authorized to act with full authority of the state section, was named and instructed to depart at once on his mission.

The organization chieftains discussed the announcement from Baltimore that Dr. B. M. McKoin, under arrest there on a charge of participating in the Morehouse parish killings, was determined to fight extradition.

"McKoin is making a fool of himself," the supreme Klan head of the state declared. "He had better come as quickly as possible and present the evidence he claims will prove his innocence."

The chief of the Klan was unable to say positively whether Dr. McKoin was a Klan member.

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A Heavy Hand.

Prof. Barrett Wendell, Yale's brilliant and famous critic, was talking at a tea about a new novelist.

"He has a heavy, awkward hand," said Professor Wendell. "When he wants to be impressive he reminds me of the divine who went to jail to administer the last comforting rites of the church to a murderer."

"Dugald, mon," he said—for he was a Scot—"Dugald, mon, the gallows is ready, the rope's ready, the hangman is ready—Dugald, are you ready?"—Exchange.

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The Busy Toothpick.

The Woman was seeing a friend off at the Northwestern station. Nearby was a man saying good-bye to his wife, for their domestic conversation was in no sense whispered.

As the husband talked the Woman watched, quite fascinated, his toothpick as it moved up and down in his mouth.

The gate was being opened. The travelers were passing through. The Woman wondered what would happen to the almost animated toothpick while the man said good-bye to his wife.

Surely he would remove it. But no—with a move of his lips he had shifted it to a corner and proceeded to kiss his wife. No wonder wives read "The Sheik" and such. One would have to do something to make up for dividing a kiss with a toothpick.—Chicago Journal.

Fatal Artillery Practice.

While a battery of Swiss artillery was at practice near Sursee, north of Lucerne, a shell ricocheting from the ground struck the house of a peasant. The peasant's wife, who was having dinner with her daughters and a workman, was killed, but the others were not harmed. The shell entered through the kitchen and buried itself in a loft without exploding.

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**GAS PRICE CUT.**

Houston, Tex., Dec. 29 (A. P.)—Initiated by the Gulf company and followed immediately by the other market-ers, gasoline was today reduced in price two cents. Kernsene also declined 2 cents.

General decline in refined + product prices is assigned as + the cause.