

The Princess Dehra

BY JOHN REED SCOTT.

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Mlle. d'Essolde looked at him in contemptuous scorn—though, in truth, she was more inclined to laugh; she never could be angry with her Irishman, for long.

"You savage," she said, "you brutal savage; don't ever speak to me again."

He stepped forward and offered his arm, with all the suavity he knew so well.

"Never again after dinner, mademoiselle," he said sadly; "meanwhile, the pleasure is mine."

And to his surprise she took his arm; and when the others' backs were turned, she looked up and smiled, the impudently provoking smile he had suffered under so long, and had at last punished.

"My compliments, Monsieur Ralph, on your adroit proficiency, —and the tone and manner were as provoking as the smile—it is quite unnecessary to refer to what it proves."

"As much so, as to refer to what enables one to recognize proficiency," he agreed.

"And if all the men I know are like you, sir—"

He bent down.

"Now that is an inference I'm curious to hear."

"Do you want them to be like you?" she asked, eyes half closed and glances sidelong—"because, if you do, it would be rather easy to oblige you—and may be not unpleasant—and I can begin with his highness of Lotzen—truly it's a pity, now, I ruined my frock so needlessly this morning, in the japonica walk;—"

and giving him no time for reply, she dropped his arm and glided quickly into the chair the be-wigged and powdered footman was holding for her.

No mention of the Twisted Pines was made until the coffee was being served; then the princess motioned for the liquor also to be put on the table, and dismissed the servants.

Drawing out her case, and lighting a Nestor, she smiled at the archduke, and at his nod passed the cigaret across;—and when Colonel Moore looked inquiringly at Mlle. d'Essolde, she shrugged her pretty shoulders and gave him hers.

"You know what it implies, Elise," Dehra remarked.—"No!—then ask Colonel Moore to tell you sometime—now, we're to hear the explanation that explains—the Tale of the Veiled Lady of the Inn," and she looked at Armand.

When he had finished, the princess offered no comment, but frowned and played with her cigaret; and the archduke, ever glad for any excuse to look at her, and very ready to be silent the better to look, watched her in undisguised devotion.

"What's the plot behind it?" she demanded, suddenly; "I can't make it out—it's absurd to fancy that woman honest, though I'm perfectly sure Lotzen has the book. But why—why should he want to show it to us? Not out of love nor friendship, surely; nor bravado, either; our dear cousin isn't given to any such weakness. So it must be simply a rather clumsy attempt to lure you to the Ferida for slaughter—and that, again, seems unlikely; for Ferdinand isn't clumsy, nor would he want you murdered in his palace; and as to the provision that you need not go—or that you may take a dozen with you if you wish—and if you don't go, that she preferred Colonel Moore, or some one with brains and a sword—all that, I say, is too amazingly inconsistent with anything except entire honesty for my poor brain to solve."

"Don't try, my dear," the archduke laughed. "We will give you the solution tomorrow."

She laid aside her cigaret, and, folding her arms on the table, surveyed him in displeased surprise.

"Surely, Armand, you don't mean that you are going?" she asked.

He nodded, smilingly.

"Why not?" he asked—"the Colonel and I, with a few good blades, and the veiled lady's promise to protect us."

will have failed and your substitutes will be given some excuse by Spencer and let go in peace—oh, it's worse than absurd for you to go, Armand,"—she saw from his expression that her argument was futile—"and you know it, too; and you're going only because you like the excitement, and to show Lotzen, like a big boy, you're not to be dared."

The archduke laughed at her indignantly.

"May be I am, little girl," he said; "but I've made up my mind to fight this business out myself, and that sends me to the Ferida tonight. I'll take every precaution—"

"Except the proper one of staying away," she interrupted. "You're struggling for a crown, man, and mad rashness has no place in the game. Play it like Lotzen, in the modern way, not like the middle ages—he uses his methods, true enough, but lets others execute his plans and face the perils."—She put out her hand to him.—"Come, dear, be reasonable," she begged; "be kind; even the wildest idea of leadership does not obligate you to go."

He took her hand and held it, with the firm, soft pressure of abiding affection, looking the while into her fair face, flushed now with the impetuous earnestness of her fear for him.

"I think it does, Dehra," he said gravely. "It is our duty to the country to find the laws and settle the succession at the quickest possible moment—"

"Yes, it is, but—"

"And there are but three in the kingdom who have ever seen the book, you and Lotzen and myself; and there must be no question as to its absolute identification, before you as regent resort to force to recover it—force that may necessitate the taking of the Ferida by assault. Therefore, dear, I must go, for I must see the book. Assume, just for illustration, that Colonel Moore brings a description that seems to correspond to the laws; you, as regent, formally accuse the Duke of Lotzen of having the book and demand its instant surrender; and upon his indignant denial that he has it, and his offered readiness to have his palace searched, you order me, as governor of Dornitz, to have my rival's residence invaded and subjected to the ignominy of a mandat de perquisition; or, again, he may deny the book without demanding a search, and submit to it only under protest; or he may refuse to permit the search and oppose it by force. And whichever the case may be, the book will not be found—he will take very careful precaution, as to that, you may be sure. And what will my position be then, with the house of nobles?—when our only explanation, for such fruitless insult, is that some one saw a book, which he described to us, and which we thought was the laws. Indeed, though it hadn't occurred to me before, it may be just such a condition that he is playing for—"

"But, my dear Armand," the Princess interrupted, "would it be any advantage even if we could say that you saw it?"

"An incalculable advantage, Dehra; I know the book—there could not be any chance for mistake; and it would then be my word against Lotzen's, an even break, as it were; whereas, otherwise, it will be his word against our guess. Yet, indeed, in this aspect, it's very doubtful if we ought to resort to open measures against him, even if I saw the book. It would be a question for careful consideration and counsel with all our friends—and it is but right that I should be able to assure them that I, myself, saw it, and recognized it beyond a doubt. It's worth all the danger it may involve; though I don't anticipate any—the more I think, the more I believe we have solved the riddle. Lotzen wants some one to see the book—he much prefers it shouldn't be I; he fancies I will gladly send a substitute; and he takes me for a hot-headed fool, who then will promptly play out for him the rest of his game, landing him on the throne and myself beyond the border."

The princess had listened with growing conviction that he was right; now she turned to Moore.

"And what is your best judgment?" she asked.

"That his highness has the argument," was the prompt re-

ply; "and I confess I was hitherto of your mind, and urged him, all I might, to let me go in his stead. Now, I am convinced not only that we should verify Mrs. Spencer's story, but that the archduke must do it."

"And because he has seen the book, and can identify it beyond doubt?"

"Exactly that, your highness; such identification is vital."

Dehra nodded and sipped her cordial mediately; while Armand watched her in sudden disquiet; he had seen that look on her face a few times only, and it always presaged some amazing decision that was immutable—and not always to his approval. When she raised her eyes, it was with the conquering smile that he had never yet stood out against for long.

"Armand," said she, "you and Colonel Moore have persuaded me; it is right for you to go, and I'll go with you—"

"What! You!" the archduke cried—"are you crazy, child?"

"Not in the least, dear; only very sensible to your cogent logic—who can identify the book so well as I, who have known it all my life; you have seen it but once, you know."

"But the danger!"

"There isn't any danger, you said—and if there were, the regent of Valeria will be the best sort of protector for you."

"But you will have to go into Madeline Spencer's apartments—may be remain there half the night," he protested.

"And much more seemly for me then for you, my dear, and much less—tempting."

He joined in her laugh, but shook his head and turned to Moore.

"Colonel, will you oblige me by telephoning Mrs. Spencer we shall not be there tonight; word it any way you wish."

"Colonel Moore," said the princess sharply, "you will do nothing of the sort. The regent of Valeria requires the attendance of the governor of Dornitz and yourself to the Ferida palace this night—and in the interval, you both will hold yourselves here in readiness."

Armand would have protested again, but she cut him short with a peremptory gesture.

"It is settled," she said; then added, almost vehemently: "surely, you can't think I want to see that awful woman!—but it's the only sure way to block Lotzen's game. The nobles will take my word as to the book—and so will the army, and the people, too. No, I must go."

CHAPTER XVII.

Into the Tiger's Cage.

They had gone into the library for a rubber of bridge, until it was time to start for the Ferida. Now there came a chime from the mantel, and Dehra glanced at the old French clock that her Bourbon ancestors had brought with her—among wagon loads of clothes and furniture—when she came to be wife to Henry the Third.

"Well, Armand," she said, "if we are to be at our dear cousin's rear gate at 11, I suppose it's the last moment for me to change my gown, this one isn't especially appropriate—have you anything in particular to suggest?"

"Nothing," he smiled, "nothing; except that you don't make yourself any more attractive than is absolutely unavoidable."

"And that I conceal my identity as much as possible, I suppose?"

"Undoubtedly—and the more effective the concealment, the better."

She laid aside the cards she was shuffling and arose.

"Will you come with me, Elise?" she asked. "You can help me with the disguise."

Moore closed the door behind them, and going over to a side-table poured out a very stiff drink.

"I don't like it!" he said, turning around, the glass half emptied, and tossing off the remainder; "I don't like it, a little bit!"

"Then it's appalling to think what you would take if you did like it," the archduke commented.

The colonel laughed and poured out a trifle more.

"The liquor is all right," he laughed; "it's this notion of her highness I don't like."

Armand had begun to deal solitaire, but he stopped and tossed the cards together.

"I wonder if Mademoiselle d'Essolde could persuade her to give it up?" he said.

"She wouldn't try—she, too, wanted to go. I blocked that, however; I told her that one foolish virgin was as much as we could look after in this mess, and

that she would best stay home and trim the lamps. It wasn't a happy remark, I fear, but it did the business—you will have to give me another message for her tomorrow. Meanwhile, I must go over and do a bit of dress changing myself—shall I need a mask?"

"I don't know; better take one."

The archduke was in the uniform of a general officer, dark green evening coat and trousers, with buff waistcoat; and unadorned save for the narrow gold cord on the shoulder, the insignia on the sleeves, and the braid on the lag seam. Because Dehra liked him best in the Red Huzzar dress, he always wore it when he dined with her; for tonight, however, it was entirely too showy and hampering, and he had chosen the one quietest in tone and best suited for quick action.

Left alone, he tried the solitaire again; but it got on his nerves, and after a minute of listless playing, he sprang up, with an exclamation of disgust, and began to pace the floor. Presently Moore returned, in the fatigues uniform of the general staff, with its easy-fitting packet, and was immediately sent back to telephone the secret police to spread a loose cordon around the Ferida, with a dozen men loitering in close vicinity to every gate. There was no anticipating what they were about to encounter, so it was well to provide for the worst. It was his duty to protect the regent whether she wished it or not; and though he might not take them inside with her, yet if the occasion arose, a pistol shot would bring them very quickly.

"It's growing late," he remarked, as the adjutant came back; "if we are to be there on time we must start."

He was going toward the bell when voices in the next room told him the princess was coming; and she entered—a slender officer in a long military coat, and a soft felt service hat.

The two men mechanically raised their hands in salute, and she acknowledged it with formal motion and a merry laugh.

"Will I pass?" she asked.—"See, the hat covers my hair, and its wide brim shadows my face; the coat reaches almost to my feet, and its big collar quite hides the back of my head; and, as for what's under the coat, see again!"—and loosing the frogs, she swung it back, disclosing the tunic of her blue guards, and, below it, the close fitting knee skirts, and high spiral puteses of a shooting suit.

"And is that as unattractive as you could make yourself?" the archduke asked, with affected seriousness, as he fastened her coat and adjusted her sword.

"It's as unobtrusive as I could make myself—some day, if you wish, sir, I'll show you just how unattractive I can be."

But he only laughed, and, taking her hand, hurried her to the carriage.

On the drive, he told her briefly how they were to reach Mrs. Spencer's apartments, and cautioned her, as tactfully as he could, against doing anything which might serve to disclose her identity.

"Don't worry, dear," she said, "I'm going simply to see the book; I shall not even speak without permission—you are in command, not I;—and she found his hand, and held it; rather sorry now that she had ordered her adjutant inside with them, when he was about to mount his horse to follow.

"Will there be others with us?" she asked, presently.

"Yes, Captain De Coursey and Lieutenant Marsov, of the Courassiers; both guaranteed by Colonel Moore to be skillful swordsmen, and friendly to me as against Lotzen."

"And besides," the adjutant added, "devoted to an adventure, and in discretion unsurpassed."

"Will you tell them who I am?" she asked.

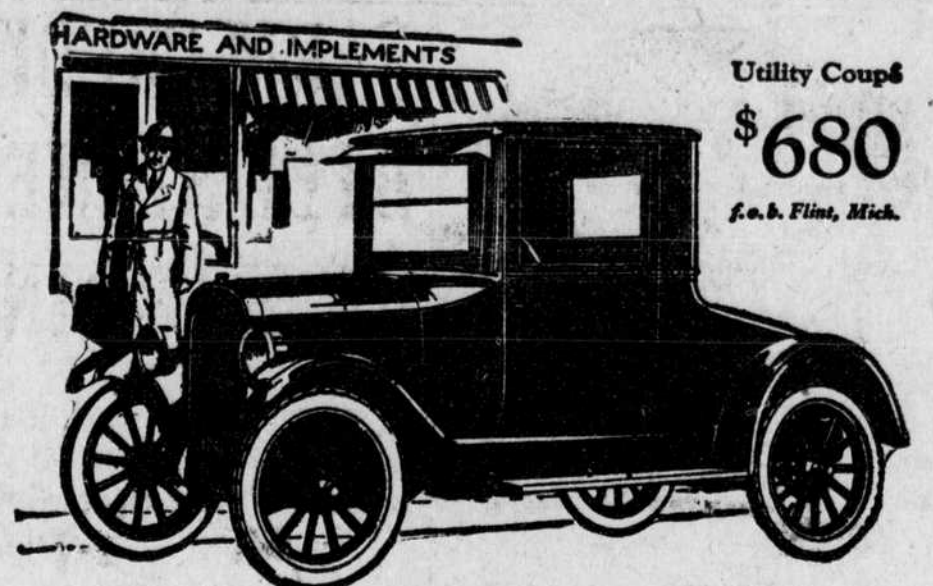
The archduke hesitated. . . .

"No, not unless it becomes necessary; it would only make them unduly nervous; but if trouble come, the most know."

"I can protect myself, a little while," said she, slapping her sword in laughing bravado; though indeed she was very clever with the foils.

(To be Continued Next Week.)

The whale is worth more money than any other living creature. A single Greenland whale will have in its mouth about a ton of whalebone, which alone is worth from \$7,500 to \$10,000. From its blubber 25 tons of oil may be obtained. As a whale oil brings something like \$100 a ton, this represents another substantial sum. Another species, the sperm whale, not only provides enormous quantities of the finest oil, but may also prove to contain ambergris, which is worth considerably more than its weight in gold.



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10c Changes Last Year's Frock to New

Putnam Fadeless Dyes—dyes or tints as you wish

Plant Growth and Sunlight.
Recent experiments show that the amount of light that a plant has affects its growth fully as much as climate. The iris, for example, which ordinarily blooms in May or June, would not bloom under hothouse conditions in winter until its period of daily light was artificially lengthened by six hours. The October chrysanthemum was made to bloom in midsummer by shortening the daily light period; lettuce by the same means was held in the rosette stage for a long time; and the radish, with only seven hours of daylight, grew for more than a year before it finally shot up its flower stem and died.

Hubby's Position.
The lady of the house had often asked her cook what her husband did, and the cook always replied that he was connected with a penitentiary in the capacity of a trustee. This seemed somewhat strange to the good lady, and one day she said as much to her husband. He thought perhaps he could get at the facts, so the cook was called in.

"Mirandy, you say your husband is a trustee in the penitentiary?"

"Yes, boss," she replied promptly.

"Don't you mean a trusty?" the lady persisted.

"Dat's it."

Air's Coolest Time.
At a height of one and a half miles in the air, the coolest time of the 24 hours is during the day instead of at night, as might be expected.

Talk does much less harm in circles where nobody believes anything that anybody says.

Find What CANADA has to offer YOU!

If your dream of success seems like a hopeless ambition, if you are discouraged trying to get ahead on high priced land, if your present location fails to give you opportunity, there is a new deal for you, a new chance in the fertile, virgin farms of Western Canada, where wheat produces 20 to 40 bushels to the acre, where the 1922 crop was biggest in history, where oats, barley and hay and fodder crops are the basis of a great dairy industry, and a man's work brings him success and prosperity.

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In Western Canada you still can buy virgin prairie land at \$15 to \$20 per acre, on long terms if desired, near to town, railroads, etc.—land such as has for many years produced the world's prize winning wheat, oats, barley, flax, rye, alfalfa. Canada had no "war time" land boom; prices are not inflated—you get in on the ground floor.

Taxes Favor the Farmer as Values Increase

The tax laws of Western Canada encourage the producing farmer. The tax on land is reduced when it is brought under cultivation—while on your buildings, machinery, improvements, personal property, automobile, there is no tax at all. A single crop is often worth more, acre for acre, than the cost of the land.

Rent Now—Buy Later Pay Out of Profits

Canada welcomes the industrious settler. What you have now isn't so important. If your capital is small, or you cannot sell your present holdings to advantage, rent a fertile Canadian farm and "try it out" for a season or two. Make a good living, increase your capital, and buy later. Farms may be rented from successful settlers on easy terms; in some cases with option of purchase.

Buy on Exceptional Terms—32 Years to Pay

For the benefit of those wishing to buy land a national non-profit sharing organization—the Canada Colonization Association—has been established with head office at Winnipeg, and United States office at St. Paul. This Association offers selected land convenient to railroads—much of it at \$15 to \$20 per acre—on very small cash payment; no further payment until third year; balance extended over thirty years, but purchaser may pay up and obtain title at any time if desired. Interest six percent per annum on deferred payments.

We Help Find Your Opportunity

The Canadian Government maintains information bureaus in leading American centers, where you can get full information, without cost, about all parts of Canada. The men in charge are Government officials, interested only in the service of the prospective settler.

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MAIL THE COUPON. Let us know something of your position, and receive free book with maps, and free service of the Canadian Government Agent in your territory; also information how special railway rates can be arranged for a trip of inspection.

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