

The Princess Dehra

BY JOHN REED SCOTT.

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When they had gone, Lotzen dismissed every one with a nod, and sitting down drew Madeline Spencer on his knee.

"You're my good angel," he said; "you came at the psychological moment; another instant and I would have sent them all to the devil."

She slipped her arm around his neck, and kissed him lightly on the cheek.

"And then the sunrise," she whispered, with a shudder.

He caught her to him.

"And even Paris is better than that, my duchess!" he cried; "Paris or anywhere, with you."

Presently he laughed. "I should like to see Dehra's face when she opens that book," he said.

Madeline Spencer sprang up, pointing to the clock.

"We are wasting time," she exclaimed. "Don't you see that we must go to Dornlitz this very night—that, now, tomorrow will be too late."

"You're right!" he said; and, with wrinkled brow and half-closed eyes, sat, thinking—then: "We may not use a special train, for we must go disguised; but the express for the south passes Porgia at 4 o'clock; we will take it; if it's on time we shall be in Dornlitz at 7 in the evening, which will allow us an hour to get to the summer palace—after 8 o'clock not even I would be admitted, in the absence of the regent. Should we be delayed, as is very likely, we can go out early the following morning. The American won't know we left here, and will not be in any haste to return—and even if he is, it's not probable he will leave before late tomorrow night, which will bring him to the capital about noon—long after we have been in the library and got the book."

He strode to the door and shouted into the corridor for Durant.

"Captain," said he, "have the fastest pair and strongest carriage before the door at once. Madame and I are off instantly for the capital; but see that no one in the castle knows it; close the gates, and let none depart. In half an hour, send four of your trustiest men to cut the telephone line, in various places, between Porgia and Dalbery castle; keep it cut all day, and prevent, in every way possible, any messages reaching the castle. If the regent, or the American archduke, leave by train before tomorrow night, wire me immediately. Do you understand?—then away. . . . Come along, duchess, only 10 minutes to dress!"

With a laugh he swung her up in his arms and bore her to the doorway, snatched a kiss, and left her.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Book in the Cloth.

As is usually the case when a man retires before his accustomed hour, the archduke's slumber was capricious and broken, finally ending in complete wakefulness and an intense mental activity that defied sleep. At length he switched on the reading lamp beside his bed and looked at his watch. It was only 3 o'clock. With an exclamation of disgust he got up and dressed, and went down to the library. The draft of Lotzen castle was not as distinct in his mind as it should be; he would have another careful look at it and then, alone on the ramparts, with plenty of room to walk and think, he would work out the plan of campaign for the morrow.

He had put the plan and Jessac's keys together in the desk, the top drawer on the right.—They were not there—nor in the next—they were not in any of next—they were no tin any of them. He searched again, and carefully . . . they were gone. He went to the far corner where Major Meux had got the portfolio; its place was empty. He frowned in puzzled irritation; who would have presumed to meddle with them? Moore, possibly, to study the draft, but he would not have taken the keys; they would be wanted only when—

"God! might be!" he cried aloud, "might it be!" His mind flashed back through the day: Dehra's solicitude that he should not go tonight—borrow Bernheim—early to bed—a dozen other trifles now most indicative. With a curse at his

stupidity, he ran to Moore's quarters—empty—the bed untouched; then to Bernheim's—the same there; to De Coursey's—to Marsov's—both the same. He burst unannounced into the ante-chamber of the princess' apartments, bringing a shriek from each of the sleepy maids.

"Your mistress—is she here?" he demanded.

"Her highness retired hours ago, sir," one of them replied tremblingly, fright still upon her.

"But is she there now?—Send Marie here instantly."

The French girl came, wrapped in a long chamber robe.

"Is your mistress asleep?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur le Prince, hours ago."

He reached over and flung back her robe.

"Then why are you still dressed and waiting up for her? Don't lie to me, girl; where is her highness?"

"Monsieur doubts me?"

The archduke made an angry gesture.

"Go to her—say I must speak with her at once."

He pushed her aside and went on into the next room. She sprang after, and caught his hand.

"Your highness!" she cried, "you would not!—you would not!"

He seized her by the arm.

"You little fool! the truth—the truth—if your mistress isn't here, she is in awful peril—may be dead." He shook her almost fiercely. "The truth, I say, the truth!"

With a cry the girl sank to the floor.

"Peril!—death!" she echoed.

"She but went for a ride, sir; I do not understand—"

The archduke was gone; he required no further information.

A quarter of an hour later, with 30 of the garrison at his back—all that could be provided with horses—he set out for Lotzen castle; leaving it for Courtney, whose official position denied him the privilege of going along, to telephone the commandant at Porgia for troops.

"She went to save me, Dick," he said; "now I will save her or—good-bye," and the two men had gripped hands hard, then the archduke rode away.

At first, his anger had been hot against Moore and Bernheim, but now that sober second thought was come, he knew that they were not to blame, that the regent herself had ordered them to the service and to silence. And presently his hope rose at the thought of the one's skillful sword and sure revolver, and the other's steady head and calm revolver, and the other's steady head and calm revolver; together, with De Coursey and Marsov, there might be a chance that the princess would come out alive. But the hope grew suddenly very slender, as he reached the valley road and saw the great light of Lotzen castle shining far away, and remembered his own sensations as he had stood under it that afternoon, and who its master was and what.

They had been obliged to go slowly down the steep and winding avenue, now he swung into a gallop and the six score hoofs went thundering through the valley, leaving the startled inhabitants staring, and wondering at the strange doings of all who came from the south. But them the archduke never saw—nor anything, indeed, save the track before him and the light ahead, riding with hands low on the saddle, face set and stern; implacable and relentless as the first Dalberg himself, the day he rescued his lady from that same Castle of Lotzen and hung its baron quarters from the gate tower.

Only once did the archduke pause; at the Dreer, a moment to breathe the horses and let them wet their throats. In the darkness he did not see a bunch of horsemen round the turn in front and trot slowly toward him, nor could he hear them for the thrashing of his own horses in the water. The first he knew of them was Colonel Moore's peremptory hail:

"What force is that yonder?"

With a shout that rang far into the night, Armand sent his mare bounding through the stream.

"The princess! the princess!" he cried, "is she safe?"

And her own voice answered, joyful and triumphant.

"I'm here, Armand, I'm here." What need to tell what he said, as reining in close he drew her over to him! The words were a bit incoherent, may be, but Dehra understood; and presently she put her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Come, sire," she said, "let us go on—and when we get to the castle, your majesty shall have again the book of laws."

"The book! you cannot mean you've been in Lotzen castle?"

She laughed her merry little laugh. "And out again—and the book with us, from under our dear cousin's very eyes."

"You brave girl!—you foolish child!—you wonder among women!" he marvelled.

She put out her hand, and took his; and so they rode back through the valley and up the avenue to the castle, and as they went she told him the story of the night.

"But better than the book, sweetheart," she ended, as they drew up before the entrance, "it saves you for Valeria and for me; had you been there, helpless under his guns, not all the troops in the kingdom would have held Lotzen's hand."

"And better than all else," he said, as he swung her down, "is your own dear self."

"Nonsense," she replied, "I'm but a woman—you are the Dalberg and a king. . . . Colonel Moore, bring your package to the library, and summon all our friends."

When they had come, the princess took the bundle, still wrapped in its black cloth, and handed it to Armand.

"Sire," said she, "the laws of the Dalbergs—found this night in Lotzen castle."

Without a word he bent and kissed her hand, then, laying the package on the desk, he cut the strings and removed the cloth, exposing the big leather-covered, brass-bound volume.

"Read the decree, sire!" she exclaimed.

He opened the book—stopped—turned a page—then slowly closed it.

"Suppose we wait, your highness, until the royal council is present," he said.

But something in his voice alarmed her—she sprang forward, pushed aside his restraining arm, and seized the book. One glance inside—an exclamation of bewildered incredulity; another glance—and the book dropped to the floor.

"False!" she cried! and flung herself across the desk in an hysteria of tears.

Instantly Courtney turned and quitted the room, and the rest after him, leaving her and the archduke alone together.

It was evening when the princess appeared again. She came just as the clock was striking 9, and taking the American ambassador's arm, led the way in to dinner, which here was en famille, and without any ceremony of the court.

"Tell me, Mr. Courtney, that I don't look quite so foolish as I feel," she laughed.

He let his eyes linger on her—this lovely woman who was a nation's toast—the imperially poised head, with the glorious, gleaming hair, and the haughty, high-bred face that, when she willed, could be so sweet and tender; the slender, rounded figure in its soft, white gown of clinging silk—he shook his gray head.

"If you feel as you look," he answered, "you are not of this world, but of paradise."

"O—h, monsieur! and Lady Helen just across the table."

He fingered his imperial a moment, then leaned close.

"Helen is an angel, too," he said.

"You mean—?" she exclaimed.

He smiled. "Yes, I mean—on our ride this afternoon—but don't tell it, now."

She took his hand low under the board.

"I'm so glad," she said; "Helen's dear—and so are you." Then she gave a little laugh.

"This seems to have been a rather busy afternoon for cupid."

"Another!—Mlle. d'Essolde and Moore?"

She nodded. "Yes, but not a word of it, either—not even to Helen," quizzically.

"No, not even to Helen," he said with well affected gravity, his lips twitching the while.

A footman entered and passed a note to Colonel Bernheim, but the princess' eyes had caught the pink of the envelope and she knew it was a wire, and of exceeding importance to be brought there now—and it was for the

archduke; if it were for her, Moore would have got it. Chatting gayly with Courtney, she yet watched Bernheim, as he read the message, holding it down, out of sight.

It seemed to be very brief, for almost instantly he glanced at the archduke—hesitated—then sent it to him.

"What is it, Armand?" she said, as he took it. "What has Lotzen done now?"

"Why Lotzen?" he laughed, spreading the sheet on the cloth before them.

It was dated Dornlitz— "The duke arrived here at 8:30 this evening on the express from the north. He was in disguise."

"Epping," said she.

"Neither do I," he answered; "That's the trouble with our cousin, he is always doing queer things."

"But he was at Lotzen castle this morning."

"And is in Dornlitz now;—" he shoved the wire across to Courtney. "Dick, what do you make of this—what's doing now?"

Courtney read it, then stared thoughtfully into his wine glass, twirling it slowly the while, the amber bubbles streaming upward.

"I make enough of it," he said, "to urge that you hurry back to the capital. The false book was intended primarily to lure you here, where you could be killed more easily, but its purpose also was to get you away from Dornlitz. The first failed, because her highness forced Lotzen's hand so quickly he was unprepared; the second, however, has won,—he has eluded you. I have always insisted that he hasn't the book, but now I am persuaded that he knows where it is, and has gone for it."

"Let us go, Armand!" the princess exclaimed "let us go instantly."

He put his hand on her arm.

"We will go, dear," he said—"see—" and turning over the sheet, he wrote:—

"Epping, Dornlitz. Keep him under surveillance. We leave tonight; reach Dornlitz by 10 a. m. Armand."

"Yes," said the princess, "and add that he is to call the royal council for half after 10 at the summer palace.—I'm going to give Lotzen a chance to explain a few things."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Canopy of Swords.

When the train had crossed the long and the towers of Dornlitz shone far off to the front, the following morning, the princess sent for the archduke.

"Armand," said she, "I have been thinking—much of the night, indeed—and I am persuaded that this day will see the end of our quest; don't smile; wait, wait until the day has passed. Lotzen knows where the book is—he hasn't it—he never has had it—he would not have needed a counterfeit if he had; besides, do you fancy he would have left it behind when he went to Lotzenia—or that he would have come back here if he had it with him? If he knows now where the book is, he has known all along—then why hasn't he got it? Because it's been impracticable, no adequate opportunity. Where is the opportunity now that he hasn't had before?—the summer palace—with the household gone, he can spend a day in it without explanation or interruption—and the king's suite is vacant. There Adolph hid the laws—and Lotzen knows where—and they are what he has gone for; that is why he left his castle night before last, within an hour after me; he realized the false book would send us back to Dornlitz and that he must go instantly if he would be there first. Oh, it's all plain now—to me at least."

The Archduke went over and stood beside her, stroking her fair hair softly with his finger tips.

"Sweetheart," said he, "there is much force in what you say, and you will also remember that Elsie d'Essolde saw Lotzen come from the library the day you charged him with killing Adolph and stealing the book. Yet the answer to it all is, that the entire palace has been searched and vainly—and the king's suite torn almost into bits. Hence, under the facts, your theory seems unavailing."

She looked up at him with a half disappointed smile, but with an insistent shake of the head.

(To Be Continued Next Week.)

SAFEGUARDS, DEMAND OF U. S. ENVOY

Grew in Brief Statement Announces American Position at Opening Lausanne Meet—Concessions Discussed.

Universal Service. Special Cable Dispatch. Lausanne, April 23.—The new sitting of the Near East peace conference was formally opened, but without ceremony, Monday with Sir Horace Rumbold, of Great Britain, in the presiding officer's chair.

The American representative, Joseph C. Grew, envoy to Switzerland, presented a note which declared: "We are here for the same purpose and in the same capacity as before the adjournment. We are participating, not on the footing of belligerents nor as a party to the treaty of peace under negotiation, but none the less in a fully representative capacity with full competence to speak on behalf of the government of the United States in the ensuing deliberations."

Demands Safeguards. "We wish to see safe guarded the legitimate national interests of the United States on principles of impartial opportunity for all nations and humanitarian considerations upon which our views have already been expressed. If new issues arise I will make a further statement."

A number of committees were appointed.

CHESTER GRANT TO FORE. London, April 23.—Despite the efforts of all concerned to keep the discussion of the Chester concessions off the program of the Lausanne conference it is "already clear that until the difficulty caused by their acceptance of the Angora assembly is settled, nothing else is to be discussed here to rival them in interest," says Percival Landon in his cables to the Daily Telegraph.

After reviewing the history of the granting of the original concessions and telling how Baron Marischall put his foot down on them because they menaced the rights of the then proposed German controlled Bagdad railway, Landon declares the concessions were renewed by the Angora assembly a few weeks ago by the Turks in order to draw the United States into the Near East imbroglio.

States British View. Landon points out that the concession is a repetition of those of 1908, but adds: "Britain will refuse to listen to the proposed Mosul-Suleimaniyah line, or concessions granted in territory over which Britain holds mandate. The concessionaire undertakes to construct 3,900 kilometers of obligatory and 1,025 kilometers of optional lines and has to exploit all the minerals within 20 kilometers of the line, including the famous Argana copper deposits.

"The syndicate undertakes to open a technical school and has paid 50,000 Turkish pounds as earnest money. The agricultural concessions include the right to sell machinery."

"The Turks are proposing other concessions which would call for the restoration of devastated districts, large irrigation projects and the establishment of schools."

Says Concessions Important. "We must not dismiss the Chester concessions as merely fantastic, as certain quarters are inclined to do. The concession bids fair to color any new concessions at Lausanne more than the subject of oil did the earlier negotiations."

The Daily Chronicle comment on the Lausanne conference says that Turkey by its concessions to France in 1914 secured its immediate ends by enmeshing the Greeks. Since then they have been looking around for newer and richer friends in America. But the quarrel is not Britain's, it is declared.

2 AVIATORS ARE KILLED

Washington D. C., April 23, A. P.—Ensign Gordon Gunther, of the naval reserves, and Chief Machinist Mate W. Hill, of the regular navy, were killed today when the seaplane in which they were cruising above Hampton Roads crashed into the bay.

Gunther's home was in Cambridge Mass., and Hill was from Ocean View, Va.

MADISON SCOUTS WIN CUP. Norfolk, Neb., April 23 (Special).—Madison's scout troop won the silver loving cup in the district boy scouts' rally which just closed here. Neligh scouts took second place. Camp Sheldon was featured in talks by scout troop leaders.

BRYAN COMMENDED ON COW TUBERCULAR STAND

Lincoln, Neb., April 23 (Special).—Gov. Bryan, Monday, received a letter from Henry Williams, a dairyman of Norfolk, Neb., in which the writer commends the attitude of the governor in his opposition to the bovine tuberculosis eradication bill.

Mr. Williams says the tuberculosis testing machinery of the state has proved a hardship to him, causing a personal loss of \$2,500, besides putting him out of the dairy business.

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Hope Leads Onward. Fear of evil may keep men from going backward, but only hope of something better carries them on.—James Freeman Clarke.

Odd Birth Records. In Fiji and Samoa it is common practice to tattoo on the hand of a mother the dates of her children's births.

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