The Broken Coin

A Story of By EMERSON HOUGH

Mystery and Adventure

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to plece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

FOURTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XV.

If Your Majesty Please. In full view of the spectators, who now had left the dancing floor and gathered in groups at a respectful distance from royalty, Kitty received the envelope from the messenger-the same packet which she had herself sent to the palace that morning for delivery at midnight.

She did this with a fine air of insouciance, for she felt quite sure that success now had met all her plans; nor did the outward appearance of the packet afford any reason to suspect otherwise.

Yet, even as she took the envelope in her hand, there came to her a sharp conviction that something was wrong. It had a strange lightness-it did not seem quite the same as when she herself had sealed it that morning. Hastily, she opened the envelope, her lips compressed. It was empty!

Yes, the mysterious coin was gone. Entrusted to the safest messenger she could find; sent to the king himself; received by the king's trusted official; guarded, as was to be supposed, every moment of the time since it had left her hands-none the less, the coin had disappeared as though some specter hand had abstracted it.

The blank book of surprise which came to her face was something not to be mistaken. King Michael frowned. "What is this, mademoiselle-are we made the subject of some sport? How

Kitty stood regarding first one, then the next of the faces about her. On was sure of that. Then another hand had come into the game! Some other mind also was interested in the mysterious coin of Gretzhoffen.

"What then, mademoiselle?" demanded Michael, himself not yet so fully advised as others regarding the nature of this packet which had been intended for him. "What was it that you were so good as to intend sending

· Kitty dared not answer this direct question. She concluded quickly that it would be far safer to add as little as possible to the number of those who knew the full story of the traveling coin.

"Your majesty," said she, turning upon him so dazzling a smile as would have made any man forget all else. "It was nothing! It was but a small favor I would have sent your majesty. to show the acknowledgment of my own country, since your majesty has done such honor to me tonight. Perhaps someone in my humble menage has been unfaithful—if so, it was but small loss after all. If your majesty will forget it and give me a few added days of grace, I will explain-I will try again, I hope with greater for-

Michael was ready enough to agree to anything which would bring back to his society this dazzling young creature who stood beside him.

"Very well, mademoiselle," said he. "as you like."

A certain relief was felt by all conserned, as now he turned and made a sign to the leader of the orchestra, who stood, baton poised.

"With us, excellenza?" The king offered his arm. The king and the young American, of whose origin he knew, and apparently cared to know, nothing whatever, were the observed of all. Michael at least could dance, and as for Kitty, she was an American girl.

As they swept on in the evolutions of the dance, Kitty caught sight of the dark face of Count Sachio.

That she had earned this man's dislike, or at least, had deeply hurt his masculine vanity, Kitty was well enough aware.

As for King Michael, he was extraordinarily sober; which, in his case, was equivalent to saying that he was

not extraordinarily happy. Count Frederick evaded the throngs about the king. Unwillingly he turned away his eyes from the beautiful figure of the young American as she danced. He never had seen a woman who thrilled him thus. He himself did now counseling calm consideration, not dance. This was no evening of dispersal.

pleasure for him. He had other plans. Count Frederick started toward the his mind. If there should for any rea-

king's good graces. Because, revolution or no revolution, the throne of Gretzhoffen was not worth having unless his owner had both halves of this missing coin. Frederick cared not to

ed coin could give any king of Gretzhoffen actual wealth and actual power. The murmurs of the people, vague, indefinite, had from time to time been entrance.

"Why do we starve while they dance?"

They began to edge towards the pal ace steps, a dark, dense mass. The soldiery were not eager to oppose them with steel. The soldiers were themselves of the people. Moreover, they had had small cause for loyalty to the king and court of Gretzhoffen. They were ill paid and ill governed.

The people lacked leadership, Count Frederick had hinged his own plans of action upon one event-the public disgrace of the king-and that event had not occurred.

He frowned as he stood looking out over the dense mass which filled the streets. Even he began to feel, almost in spite of himself, some sort of a vague pity for these less fortenate

Still over the voice of the strings and reeds rose the low mutterings of the mob, etrange to hear, impossible to describe.

King Michael heard this sound. All heard it, this voice of the people, as yet undecided. The king's face paled -terror smote home upon his soul. The courage of his usual alcoholic stimulant being tonight denied him, his weak nerves gave way.

He saw Count Frederick, now returning to the salon, from the great entrance door. The latter saw the terror on his monarch's face, and recognized on the instant the opportunity for himself to strengthen his own position in the king's good graces.

"Your majesty," exclaimed the astute nobleman, now advancing and offering his hand, "forgive me! I was in fault the countenance of Count Frederick today in my conduct toward your mashe read only chagrin and surprise jesty. Twas but a mad jest of my equal to her own. There was no own. Give me but opportunity to trace of guilty knowledge there-she prove my loyalty to your person and our country, and you shall not find me lacking. The people are about us -yes, it is true-there is danger of revolt, of revolution. I shall not attempt to deny that; but give me leave



"Come to Me Tomorrow at My Hunting Lodge."

to handle them, your majesty, and promise you safety. I promise you to send them away.

"You are indeed my friend, after all Count Frederick!" exclaimed Michael What you counsel seems wise. Use your own discretion, but disperse them

-disperse them." Count Frederick, hastened to address the people, who now halted, uncertain as to what move next to make. His own agents had been among the people, and had made known his own plans. Yet here was their master, evidently, for some reason, disinclined to give the word for actual outbreak, and

"My good people," began he, as he stood at the head of the great stairdoor before a second thought came to way above them-"his majesty thanks one whose identity she did not know. you for the honor you have done him son be miscarriage of his plans-if in coming out upon this occasion. He there should be need for yet greater himself has found great pleasure in delay before his final overt act was coming here to meet you tonight, al- intrusion; "listen, while I tell you committed—then he ought to have a though he arose from a sick bed to do what is the real key to all these mat tion as the state ball, the faithful

great ball in order that you might see the equaminity of his own soul in these events, so difficult alike for a king and his people to endure. Therefore, remain loyal to your king, whom I represent before you. The ballroom soon will be cleared. Let the streets also be cleared. Go to your homes. Wait, and depend on us who have your true welfare at heart."

There surged up to him now the figures of more than one man, some in uniform, from places in the throng, in the street. "What is it-what is wrong -why do we not have the order to march on the palace?" they demanded eagerly.

"All's wrong," whispered the Count them. "For some reason, best known to himself, the king is not drunk tonight, but sober. His people are not turned against him-on the contrary, they seem to respect him more than be a penniless king, and only the unit- they have done for months-there would be division among them if we started a new revolt now.

"Here, take this gold, my friends," he added, and stripped himself of audible at the open door of the grand some considerable sums he had brought with him. "It is all I have Give it to those who need it most. Take them away from here-let them go to the drinking places. See that these places are filled now, and that the toast shall be 'Long live King Michael!'

"We may not yet cry 'Long live King Frederick?"

The nobleman shook his head. "Not yet," said he. "They still shall cry 'Long live King Michael.' That will do for the time at least."

Count Frederick returned through the great entryway and rejoined King Michael where he stood. "Your majesty," said he, "your people are returning to their homes."

"Frederick, my friend, my savior!" The weak king, his features working, grasped the hands of the stronger man. "You tell me they will disperse?"

"Even new they do so, your majesty."

Kitty, by this time somewhat forgotten in the king's vacillating mind, stood looking from one to the other of these two. As she read the situation, it carried something of defeat to her. An instant ago she herself had dominated the scene. Otherwise now; for Count Frederick gave her a somewhat sarcastic smile. It was the time of his triumph and of her discomfiture.

"Mademoiselle is distrait?" said he. 'She is not dancing-she will return to her hotel, perhaps? What can one do for mademoiselle?"

Kitty turned toward him calmly. "If I might ask one of you gentlemen to secure my car for me?" Count Frederick smiled and bowed as he

But Kitty was not so soon to leave the great salon of the palace that night. She passed toward the entrance slowly, caught in the crush and confusion of others who were crowding out in the flasco of the much-vaunted black and white ball. For the time, she found herself in the shelter of a great column, where she was willing enough to pause. As she halted here she heard voices just behind her-one deep voice, which it seemed to her she had surely heard before.

"It is a pity that the affair did not come off tonight, your excellency," she heard another whisper hoarsely. have everything in our own hands now. I have all the plans of the fortifications, the maps of the avenues, the specifications for each street crossing. It would have been entirely simple for the army of Grahoffen to march through this ramshackle city as it

"Yes!" broke in the deep voice which haunted Kitty's memory, "I suppose so; but what would we do if we could not pay our troops the next day? How much better off than Gretzhoffen would then be our own case? No, Frederick is right in his main plan. The throne alone is worth nothing-it is worthless in his kingdom or in our kingdom, or in any othera poverty-stricken kingship is no business for any man. Why have you not a diagram of the treasure's burial place-with that, now, the matter would be somewhat different tonight."

"Hush!" she heard the other voice whisper. Apparently warned, at least, by their suspicions, they moved away, although Kitty shifted her own posttion so that her presence was not known.

Was it Count Sachio's voice she had heard-was he, the king's friend, Count Frederick's friend, the worst traiter of all, and was he also plotting for the restoration of the two lost bits of Gretzhoffen coin?

"Which way should she turn now? To Frederick? Impossible. To Michael? Equally impossible.

The two men whose talk she had overheard passed now from behind the pillar toward the interior of the palace. Apparently they were known there and welcome, for surely they were not stopped by any of the king's guards or chamberlains, and Kitty herself, equally well identified, passed readily just behind them.

Kitty needed but one glance at the man she trailed to see it was indeed Count Sachio whose voice she heard. The men passed new to a little room at one side of the main hall, which traversed that portion of the palace. A window and a door, both lightly curtained, opened from

the hall within. Kitty, as she drew up, could see them now-Sachio, and "Listen now," she heard Count Sachio's voice boom out, since here they felt themselves quite safe from



the missing treasure of old King | might be by remaining at the hotel Michael. He died rich, but like a miser, he hid his gold. He left a clue, yes-I have told you all of that. That clue was the broken coin.

"That coin was the same as a deed in the old days. All transfers of realty, as you remember, were made on parchment always was cut in two across the desert." pleces on a waving line. The seller kept half the parchment, the buyer the other half. And always it ran This indenture witnesseth.' The 'indenture' was the waving line which divided the parchment; and the parchment was proof of the transaction, so each holder held half the proof.

"Now, this indenture of the broken coin of Gretzhoffen witnessed that Michael the First had transferred to his people his treasure-their treasure-he kept half the deed for himself, or for the man who was to stand for himself. In some way he meant to give the people the other half-that is to say, the other half of the indenture went somewhere, no one to this day can guess where-except myself!

"These papers of old told of the torture chamber somewhere under the fort. Our maps cover that, but they do not mark the spot of the treasure's hiding. Only the old coin restored, indenture to indenture—the one-half to the other-ever can settle that.

"Now, look here, my friend," Count Sachio held up before him a little object, which caused Kitty to start where she stood:

It was the king's coin! Yes, there was the half coin which she with her own hands had sent for delivery to the king on the dancing floor at midnight that night-and Count Sachio. by means which he only knew, had been the thief! It now was plain to her. Here was one more claimant for the treasure of the dead king of Gretz-

noffen. Count Sachlo went on "This is one half only of the coin. Alone, it does not serve. I knew well enough where lies the other half. Within the next twenty-four hours I will have it-I will have both halves within my own hands. Then, my friend, we shall see what we shall see! Events will happen which will surprise this part of the world, at least.

"Come to me tomorrow at my hunt ing lodge in the forest, at the edge of the neutral lands. That is the rendezyous of the other half of the coin. I shall seek a messenger to secure it. I know well enough how. Have our men there, for I, Count Sachio, will be prepared to show them all the reading of a riddle which has puzzled both these kingdoms for so long."

Had Kitty remained a moment or so longer she might have seen what the conspirators themselves, anxious as they were, did not see. The face of a strange man peered in at the window of the room which they occupied. He, too, could see now all that Kitty had seen, although he had not been noticed by the latter at the time of her departure.

The grand salon by this time was well cleared, and Kitty made her way rapidly toward the main exit. Suddenly she found herself face to face with a little group made up of the king and notables of his court. They too, for a time had been absent from the grand salon-apparently for a certain purpose. King Michael now did not lack the stimulus of wine. "Our fair young American again!" he exclaimed, as he came. "What, mademoiselle has not even yet departed?"

"It is my fault, your majesty," said Count Frederick. "I promised to seto find service of the usual sort."

An attendant of the palace escorted her to her car-willing enough to conclude the events of the day.

"Tomorrow," said she to herself, as at length she composed herself for a brief slumber-"tomorrow I must be at the hunting lodge of Count Sachio once more!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Another Seeks the Coln.

Debarred by his own station in life from participating in any such func- party of which we know. I will tie care to retain some footing in the so. He wishes you to be calm in these | ters. It is this document, bearing on | Roleau had contented himself as best | me."

until the return of his mistress. By morning, as soon as he got word of her presence in her apartments, he sent word that he was in readiness to be at her commands.

"Roleau," she said to him when they met, "listen. We have still more to parchment, written in pen, and the do. There is still another journey

"Whither, excellenza?" inquired Roleau.

"To the hunting lodge of the Count Sachio-the same place where you and I took the part of two horse thieves, Roleau!"

A few moments later the two, once more provided with a speedy motor car, were on their way down the avenues of the capital

"I think it might be well to drive past the two palaces," said Kitty Gray. 'We might pick up some news there. First, let us go to the palace of Count Frederick-perhaps he is not out this

But, early though it was, Count Frederick was astir-was indeed ready for the street apparently, as was also his guest, Count Sachio. Even as Kitty's car swept by the palace front they saw the count and Sachio step into their own car, which waited for them.

"Quick!" said Kitty, sinking back deeper in the seat that she might not be observed. "Drive around the block. Don't let them see me." She motioned also to Roleau to conceal himself as best he might. Their own car, swinging around the corner, gave way for the vehicle of Count Frederick, which sped on down the street.

lirected her own car to pass around the block and stop in front of Count Frederick's palace. This was done in the nick of time; for now, as they passed at lower speed, in order to have time for such examination as they cared to make of the exterior, they saw a man in some sort of official uniform walking from the front down the driveway for the side entrance of the great building.

"Stop!" cried Kitty to Roleau-" know that man-that is a friend of Sachio! I saw the two of them together last night. It was to him Sachio showed the coin. I heard him tell this man where the missing half was Roleau, that man has gone to get

Count Frederick's half of the coin!" "Certainly, excellenza," said the stolid Roleau. "Count Sachio also means to put this and that together. does he not? What can we do? Is your excellency game to try one more entrance into Count Frederick's

"Yes," said Kitty. "Come-let us see if we can trace where this man is going."

Once more these two presented themselves at the door of Count Frederick's abode, and were admitted without question.

The two passed without detention through the main hall to the passageway which Kitty knew so well. They followed down this narrow hall, suspecting that the destination of the man whom they had seen about to enter was none less than Count Frederick's little bedchamber. Their suspicion was correct. Even

As they approached they heard someone in the room who had arrived before themselves. Roleau, followed closely by Kitty, stepped up to the door-peered in, and gave one mighty bound.

In the powerful hands of Roleau, the stranger, taken by surprise, was helpless. Roleau clapped a hand over his mouth, another to his throat, and held cure for her a car, but for the time I him until he himself made the sign lost sight of her. The confusion has of submission. "Silence!" hissed Robeen so great that it has been difficult leau. "Don't move-one word of alarm and I will end you!"

"What are you doing here?" manded Kitty virtuously-"what do you seek-tell me!"

The man, gone sullen now, looked from one to the other, and knowing well enough what failure would mean for him, refused to speak. "Well, whatever it was," said he at length, "I have not found it. At least, you came too soon."

"I will tell you, excellenza," said Roleau at length. "It will do us no special good to have him join yonder him up, if your excellency will allow

Accordingly he did bind the trate official of Grahoffen neck and crop. "Quick!" said Kitty. Stealing away silently they left the door locked and took with them the key.

CHAPTER XVII.

At Count Sachio's Lodge. Such speed did Roleau manage to get out of his own car that Kitty and he arrived at the hunting lodge of Count Sachio well in advance of all others bound thither that eventfu!

Kitty and Roleau moved about very much as they pleased after their entry. It pleased them best to hide themselves in a small room adjacent to the main hall where they fancied the main events of the day would perhaps find enactment. A door and window made connection between these two rooms, and behind the curtains in the smaller room they fancied they could be sufficiently concealed.

But there were others who had an interest in the events to occur in the hunting lodge of Count Sachio that morning. The tangled skein of the mysterious coin was expanding, drawing in yet others. Hardly had Kitty and Roleau secreted themselves before they heard footfalls under the window of the gallery which ran along that side of the chalet. They wondered who might be the author and what his purpose.

It was somewhat later before they heard the mingling of voices and the sound of footfalls.

"Rudolph!" exclaimed Count Sachio. "Why has he not come? What has gone wrong?"

But none could explain to him why Rudolph had not arrived-nor at the time did either Kitty of Roleau know who or what Rudolph might be-although, as a matter of fact, it was he whom they themselves had left tied hand and foot in Count Frederick's palace. Nor could any of these present know that before this time Count Frederick himself, returning to his palace, had found yonder intruder. bound and left helpless, in his own private apartment. The man had made such excuses as he could by deciaring that he had been robbed and thrown in the room by a ruffian, assisted by a beautiful woman. And Count Frederick, finding on the floor of his own apartment a tiny handkerchief, had needed scarce more than one guess as to who that young woman had been.

But as to all these side scenes which had been enacted, Count Sachio was altogether ignorant. Wherefore he now walked up and down, now exclaiming his own doubts. His irritation was obvious enough to Kitty as she peered through the veiled curtain and strained her ears to learn what he was saying

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbedthe author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them Once more, still undaunted Kitty as they watched-a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be-



In the Powerful Hands of Roleau the Stranger Was Helpless.

tween them, they will take away from Count Sachio what I want for myself!" He slipped in now from the gallery, through the open window. Stealthy as a cat, he crept up inch by inch upon the two watchers.

"I tell you," cried out Count Sachio, crashing his fist down upon the table, "there is no such thing as explaining a thing like this! This failure can never be justified. I sent Rudolph to get the coin-he knew where it was-he was not suspected by anyone—I told him precisely what to do. Has he done it? No. And here we wait. It is something I shall not forget."

These loud words caught Kitty's attention. She pressed forward eagerly, her figure still half shrouded. Her own senses, strained as they were to catch what was going on in the main room, were less regardful of what was going on immediately about her.

The silent man who had spied upon them crept inch by inch toward them. Slowly, deliberately, he raised his right hand above the unsuspecting girl. In that hand he held poised murderous-looking blade.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)