

The Captain of Lilies

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESSEY
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CHAPTER XXXIV.

He is introduced to the conspirators. "In an hour or two he will be still more pale."

He struck Ferdinand's cheek with his open palm.

"Dog!" it was Ferdinand who spoke. He struggled vainly to rise.

"A live dog is better than a dead lion, Ferdinand. That flag at half-mast is significant of many things. It tells its story eloquently, in the beautiful flag—a clearly as a little stamp that has frightened you so much."

"Interpret the flag's moving tale for this puppet king," beseeched Bratinau, chuckling savagely.

"First of all, then, your Majesty must understand that it is the standard of England with the royal arms in the center surrounded by a garland of flowers. Your Majesty knows quite as well as I on when such a flag floats, whether on sea or land, it is a signal of the presence of an English ambassador. But it flies at half-mast because the ambassador in this chamber is dead—dead as you will be, vain king, when the midnight hour has struck. Pardon us if we have given a mere ambassador precedence over a king; but you are a little late."

My blood boiled. I was impatient to interrupt Starva's narrative. It was Locke's curiosity that delayed our rescue. He restrained me with a gesture. "There is plenty of time," he said. "It is hardly 11 now, and Ferdinand is to die at midnight. I am anxious to hear more concerning this flag. And remember, please, that you have my revolver."

I was too easily persuaded. I had listened to Dr. Starva's words in wonder. It was I, or rather fate, who had lowered that flag at half-mast. My perplexity was not lessened as I heard what followed.

"But when," continued Starva, "you entered my carriage to escort you hither in state, this flag was floating in the breeze at the rear of my staff. Not until you Majesty stepped on the terrace did it fall at half-mast. Shall I tell you why? When it fell at half-mast it was a signal that you were in our power. There are others anxious to welcome your coming, Ferdinand. They have watched that flag with burning eyes. They will come soon, the rest of the reception committee. Listen to the noise of the silence—two and silence—one and then three. It is they, Bratinau. Open the door while I guard this ass in a lion's skin that will cease to bray at midnight."

I deplored my folly in delaying the attempt at Ferdinand's rescue. Even now, while Bratinau rushed to the door to draw its bolts, I should have fired at Starva had not the others kneeling at Ferdinand's side, twisting a cord about his wrists to fasten him in the chair in which he sat. The action exposed Ferdinand; Starva's body was shielded by that of the king. The advent of the conspirators had taken Locke and myself completely by surprise. And when we had heard the knocking on the door we had hoped that a timely rescue would be effected.

I counted five of them. Locke and I were hopelessly outnumbered now. We had missed our chance. I confess that something very like fear clutched at my heart when I heard the bars grate back in their sockets. I know that Locke himself was pale enough. Unless some accident favored us, not only was Ferdinand doomed, but perhaps ourselves as well.

But I forgot our own danger in the extraordinary scene that followed. Starva had sprung on a chair close to Ferdinand. With rigid jest he introduced each of his confederates as they stood about the two in a half circle. As each man's name was mentioned he stepped in front of Ferdinand and mocked him.

"Your Majesty," cried Starva, bowing low, "all of your reception committee is present except one. He will come presently—and his name will arouse you from the snail that seems to oppress you. In the meantime, may I have the honor of introducing to you each of these gentlemen:

"Col. Ignatieff, of Roumania! He is an admirer of the ladies, and he will be charmed to introduce to you with a lock of your hair as a souvenir."

"I prefer your heart, Ferdinand, to be preserved in a beautiful funeral urn for myself," cried the ruffian.

"Mimiri Gortschakoff, of Servia! He is groom of the bedchamber of King Alexander. He should be kinged with his own dirty fist."

"But I have unselfishly sacrificed myself to administer to your comfort," was the brutal comment.

"Count Nicolai Pitscheli, of Bosnia. You should feel at home—you see we have aristocrats present."

"I am so much of an aristocrat that I am jealous of one who is above me in rank to dwarf my own importance."

"Gornj, of Montenegro! He is only a common soldier, and is better known by his sobriquet, 'The Cat.' He will use his claws presently."

"A cat can look at a king, they say. Yes, I can scratch well enough. A king's tyranny has made me groan; I hope you will not die so quickly, Ferdi-

and, that I shall not have time to laugh at your groans." He struck Ferdinand a violent blow with his clenched fist.

"Oh, la, la, la! Looe Majesti!" shouted Bratinau. "Restrain your enthusiasm, comrade."

"Otto Kuhn, of Macedonia! He is an old acquaintance of your Majesty's. But you will not have the joy of thrusting your hand, Ferdinand, into his pocket for his American dollars. They are to be spent in a better cause. And lastly (for Counselor Bratinau and I, of Bulgaria, are old friends and need no introduction), Counselor Ginzgaja, of Moldavia."

"You see, your Majesty," cried Ignatieff, "this is an international affair. Will it be a comfort to you to know that you will not be the only king that sets out on his last mysterious journey during the next 24 hours? It is not Bulgaria alone or Servia that are to taste the sweets of liberty, though King Alexander and his paramour and yourself are to lead the procession this night."

"And now, messieurs," shouted Starva, "that we are introduced, and his Majesty is thoroughly at his ease, let us eat, drink and be merry, for at midnight he dies!"

My friend Jacques had wheeled a table from the dining-room into the hall. It was loaded with viands and bottles. Savage toasts were drunk; there were cries of liberty and free-



"I Will Neither Be Coaxed by Lies Nor Frightened into Obedience!"

dom; glasses were held tauntingly at Ferdinand's mouth; every indignity was showered on him.

There is a glamor about a crown that dazzles even a democrat, let him boast his indifference as he may. I am not ashamed to say I felt a strange horror as I saw the prince disdainfully facing his enemies in silence. A vain monarch Ferdinand might be, and no doubt his feign had not been altogether a wise one, but his calm courage, his kingly dignity awakened in me a romantic desire to die for him if need be.

The confusion in the hall below was so great that Locke and I could converse freely and be in no danger of being overheard.

"Have you noticed Kuhn and Ginzgaja?" whispered Locke excitedly.

"Yes," they are strangely distrust and somber. Kuhn has lived most of his life in America. Though he was born a beast, his brutish instincts must have been a little subdued by the Stars and Stripes."

"I have noticed," I nodded grimly. "I saw, too, that Dr. Starva gave them no opportunity of speaking when he sent out their names. They will be watching those two. Perhaps we are not to fight alone for Ferdinand presently."

"Heaven grant it!" exclaimed Locke. "I am jealous of one who is above me in rank to dwarf my own importance."

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the door, and had held up his hand for silence.

Never again shall I see on the faces of men a look of such terror, tense excitement. Some of them were trembling; more than one was catching his breath in sobs; one snapped the stem of his wine glass.

Three raps and silence—two and a pause—two, and again three. Bratinau drew the bolts.

It was the messenger whom they had waited for. He was breathless in his haste; the sweat stood on his forehead; above his head above his head a telegram in triumph. He staggered into Bratinau's arms.

Bratinau tore open the dispatch. As he read, his gross face became purple with passion. His eyes glowed like two living coals. He tried to speak, but his emotion suffocated him.

The paper was snatched from his grasp by Starva. Again he leaped to the chair by Ferdinand. His bull voice thundered:

"Liberty, comrades, freedom; and death to tyrant Alexander of Servia and his paramour Draga were dragged from their beds not to know. They are dead of a hundred wounds. Drink, drink to Servia, who has led the way to liberty!"

Ferdinand's head had fallen; he had fainted in his chair, his body huddled grotesquely.

Gortschakoff of Servia, maddened with excitement, raised his dagger to strike the senseless king. Starva felled him with a blow, then ran from one to the other of the conspirators imploring, demanding silence.

"Patience, comrades!" he shouted. "Are we children that we cannot make history this night as men? Let us do all things calmly and in due order. Patience a little longer. Who is there that has a better right to strike the blow than I, Starva of Bulgaria?"

"I," clamored Bratinau. "I also am a Bulgarian."

"No, it is mine!" shouted one.

"Mine!" clamored another.

"You see, comrades, each of us strives for the honor. But though Bratinau and I of Bulgaria have the

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"You see, comrades, each of us strives for the honor. But though Bratinau and I of Bulgaria have the

prior right, we do not wish to be selfish. We will cast lots—and in the darkness. Ferdinand shall stand upon by the spiral staircase in front of the tapestry. Two candles behind his head will make him a fair mark for a revolver. But the man who has been singled by fate, concealed by darkness, shall do his work in darkness. No one will know to whom the lot has fallen; then, he looked steadily at Kuhn and Ginzgaja, "if there are any here whose courage falters and who would turn traitors at this late hour, their treachery will be powerless. For each man by his presence here shares the guilt of the rest. No one can betray another himself. Is it agreed?"

"It is agreed!" they shouted. But Kuhn of Macedonia was silent.

"Is it agreed, comrade Kuhn of Macedonia?"

"Yes," he replied hoarsely, moistening his parched lips with the glass he held in his hand. "If Ferdinand must die, he must."

"What! You are not convinced of the necessity of that?"

"I refuse to be a puppet, Starva. To dance before you because to pull the strings!" cried Kuhn, his rage bursting the bounds of decency. "I will neither be coaxed by lies nor frightened into obedience."

"No," questioned Starva softly, but his smile was frightful. "Is it not a little late, comrade, to be making excuses at this hour?"

"For one wish to know that you lied to me this morning. I have been tricked into this desperate move."

"And who has tricked you?" demanded Starva, with a gentleness that was more terrifying than his anger.

"You told me yesterday that Sir Mortimer Dreit was dead. He was

in the village of Atheronham this morning. You told me that England had refused absolutely to countenance Ferdinand's invasion of Macedonia. Not a hour since I received secret information from my catering in London that instructions had been sent to Sir Mortimer that he need hesitate no longer—that England would see he had a hand. I say I have been tricked."

"And I!" echoed Ginzgaja.

"This is treachery, if it is true," added Count Pitscheli of Bosnia.

"By my Almighty!" gasped Locke at my side; "I believe there is a lightning chance for us yet."

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Fight on the Staircase.

Had not Kuhn been supported by the other two his temerity would doubtless have cost him his life. As it was, he was able to stagger toward him, drawn drik in his hand. Starva set it spinning along the polished floor.

"Imbecile!" he hissed. "There is none here who will be more loyal to our cause than Otto Kuhn of Macedonia. There is none who can help it so much. He needs but to be convinced. It is not so, comrade?"

"By my Almighty!" gasped Locke at my side; "I believe there is a lightning chance for us yet."

"But we will have no traitors," Gornj grumbled.

"And if any have forced their way into this meeting and are unwilling to pay the price of admission, they must be put to death, out of this world!" cried Ignatieff.

The four assassins most zealous ranged themselves side by side, facing the three. Starva stood between them.

"I am not a traitor," he pleaded. "It is not I who have placed the electric light wires on the first floor of the Leuthner building. I am not a traitor. There can be no traitors among us. No one may leave this room to-night until he is committed irrevocably to the cause. If it is, each man by his presence has committed himself. There must be complete harmony among us. Ferdinand is to die. But he and Alexander merely laid the cornerstone. There are others to follow them into Hades. And that is only the beginning of our work. We shall find half of Europe arrayed against us. The new republic will have to be refounded by its existence. We shall need money, and comrade Kuhn has pledged his millions to the cause—"

"But only on the condition that England should refuse to aid Ferdinand," interrupted Kuhn defiantly. "I say you have tricked me into committing myself."

"And I," fiercely shouted Gortschakoff of Servia, the British ambassador were actually living—if he could promise what he has been vainly asked, it could avail nothing now. Has not Ferdinand heard the names of all of us? Can he not see us? I know of this man talk. Gornj speak with reason. We can have no traitors among us. If Caesar fell pierced by the daggers of 50 senators, Ferdinand will be choked with eight. But there can be no striking. Each man must have a hand in his death."

"All in good time. But first of all I would answer our skeptical friend here. Yesterday Kuhn, that the ambassador is living. If I show him to you on his bed will you believe me?"

"Prove to me what you say," said Kuhn unshakably.

"I tell you that it is you who would have been tricked had it not been for my vigilance. Sir Mortimer Dreit has been dead these four days. With his death ended the schemes of the woman, the Countess Sarahoff, Ferdinand's spy. But by one of those jests of fate she found a ready tool to aid her as a price for her services. This tool of hers bears a marvellous resemblance to the dead minister. It was he whom you saw this morning and not Sir Mortimer. He came to this chamber with the Countess Sarahoff to play the part of the English minister. It was he who was to trick have you to say?"

"This sounds too improbable to be believed without proof," Kuhn replied, turning his attention to the ambassador who stood on either side of him.

"I shall show you the proof," thundered Starva, his patience at an end, "and that before you leave this castle. I hold them all in the hollow of my hand—the countess herself, her accomplice, and the king's messenger. Now what have you to say?"

"Show me this man who has tricked me on my own heart and soul," was Kuhn's response. His words were brave enough, but they were those of a man forced into a corner.

"I told you that I wish only to go into this affair with my eyes open."

"You see, friends," said Starva, "a little patience was all that was necessary. Our comrade needed but to be convinced. I shall satisfy his curiosity without delay." He raised his voice: "Jacques!"

The servant came forth from the dining-room and stood silent before Kuhn and the ambassador.

"Jacques, go to the tower and bring to me the friend of Countess Sarahoff. You are armed? If he gives you any reason call it out."

"He will give me no trouble," said the man, contemptuously, starting on his errand.

Locke and I instinctively poised ourselves to leave our hiding place to meet Jacques when he should near us.

"But when this man comes," objected Ignatieff, angrily, "is he to recognize me? How can he be so with Ferdinand?"

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largest ever used in modern times for a similar purpose, weigh 40 tons each, and it required a week to move each one from the Wheaton station to the cemetery. The highest moving speed of the stones was three-quarters of an inch a second. Charles G. Blake is superintending the placing of the stones.

Wife Gone; Glee, Jaane.

Lewis-ton; Believing that he is followed and handicapped by a wizard and a witch, Elijah Hodson, of near Avon, has become mentally deranged and it was found necessary to bring him before the county court here to have an inquiry made as to his sanity. Hodson was once a miner and owned a little home of his own near Avon, when life was happy to him. His wife left him four years ago and the man has lived by himself ever since. A delusion has grown upon him to the effect that a changeable personage follows him to do him harm and that this certain person contrives all sorts of schemes to get him out of the way.

Emanuel Blom Guilty.

Chicago.—Emanuel Blom was convicted of uric acid and sentenced to a life term in the penitentiary. Blom stabbed his wife, Emma, with a butcher knife, last July. He asserted in defense that she slipped and fell on the knife. Jealousy is supposed to have been the motive for the crime.

Spring Valley Bank Pays Dividend.

Spring Valley—Receiver H. M. Trumble has begun payment of a long promised dividend of five per cent. on the Spring Valley National Bank. This is the second dividend paid since the Devlin failure, the first dividend being 20 per cent.

\$50,000 Estate to Widow.

Virginia.—The will of the late James Matthew Quigg was read in the probate court. The estate is valued at \$50,000 and is left to the widow and only child, George, ten years old.

Illinois State News

Recent Happenings of Interest in the Various Cities and Towns.

BIG FIRE IN PEORIA.

Flames Spread to Adjoining Buildings and Cause Nearly \$500,000 Loss.

Peoria.—Fire, which started in the Leuthner building, 104-108 South Washington street last Tuesday caused damage to the extent of nearly \$500,000. The building was occupied by Brownlee & Brothers, agents for the Flint Wagon company; Kircher Carriage company, Peoria's implement company, and the Wheelock Wholesale Crochery company which occupied the basement as a storage house. The fire spread to the two adjoining buildings on either side and occupied by Jobst Bethard & Co. wholesale grocers, and Arthur Lethman wholesale liquor dealer, respectively. The property loss sustained by those firms will estimate \$300,000, partly covered by insurance.

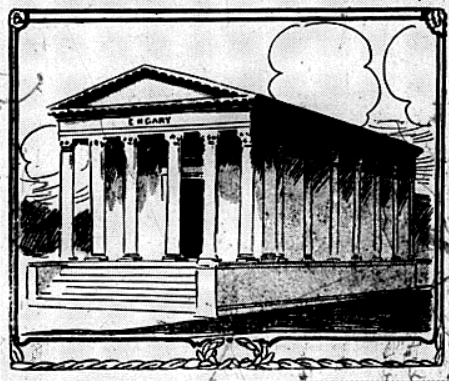
The fire was discovered shortly after one o'clock in the morning by the night clerk at the Grand hotel, who turned in the alarm, and who Fire Marshal O'Connell arrived on the scene a general alarm was sent in, bringing the entire department to the blaze, confining it as much as possible to the three buildings. Ben Butler, a fireman, was seriously injured by falling debris. The origin of the fire, it is said, was defective electric light wires on the first floor of the Leuthner building.

TAKES WEEK TO REMOVE STONE.

Remarkable Engineering Feats in Building New Mausoleum.

Wheaton.—The mausoleum being constructed by Chairman E. H. Gary, of the United States Steel corporation at Wheaton, is now nearing completion. Two of the large granite blocks used for a portion of the roof have been placed in position. The stones, which are said to be the

MAUSOLEUM ERECTED FOR E. H. GARY, HEAD OF BIG STEEL CORPORATION.



largest ever used in modern times for a similar purpose, weigh 40 tons each, and it required a week to move each one from the Wheaton station to the cemetery. The highest moving speed of the stones was three-quarters of an inch a second. Charles G. Blake is superintending the placing of the stones.

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DIVORCE INTERESTS SIX STATES.

Quincy's Automobile Set in Again in Senator's Limelight.

Quincy.—Quincy has a divorce suit which spreads over six states—that of Dr. Frank E. Stannus against Frances Whaley Stannus. The automobile set has scattered to other states for the week, and only those are left behind who were served with a summons. Dr. Stannus came from Keokuk. His wife was born in Cheotah, I. T., and it is said that her beauty is further enhanced by the Indian blood in her veins. She is 22 years old, while her husband is 35. In the beginning she sued for a divorce, but was soon met by her husband's cross-bill alleging indiscretions in the states of Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Indian Territory and Texas, beginning only a few weeks after their honeymoon in 1904. The wife made charges in her bill alleging that it was impossible to live with Stannus. Dr. Stannus made three specific charges. The first correspondent mentioned is Eck E. Brock, and the incident is supposed to have occurred at Muskegon, Brock is one of the foremost lawyers and lawmakers of the southwest. The second named man is Ira Rasbach, with whom she is supposed to have associated at Pawnee, Kan. The third is C. Henry Fostate, of Quincy, society man and proprietor of the Hotel Newcomb, and the incident is averred by Stannus to have taken place in Fostate's apartments at the hotel on the day on which her husband's summons were served, May 23.

SEEK CLEVER DIAMOND THIEF.

Roba Woman of Jewels Worth \$1,600 by Swindler's Trick.

Joliet.—Joliet police are assisting in the search of Prof. Bishop, a clever diamond thief, who formerly resided

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Fire Kills 130 Mules and 24 Horses.

East St. Louis.—Fire destroyed Turner Brothers' barn at the National stock yards, spread to two residences, which were partially burned, destroyed 130 mules and 24 horses, and the flames licked up four cars of feed before being extinguished. The total loss is estimated at \$35,000. The cause of the fire has not been determined.

Hall Affects Corn Yield.

Hopdale.—Farmers in this section affected by the severe hailstorms of the early summer find that their corn is yielding even less than they had anticipated.

To Probe Theft from Police Station.

Clinton.—Several city officials of Clinton have been summoned to appear before the grand jury to answer for the disappearance of gambling goods, valued at \$1,000, secured in a raid of the Bum Notch Saloon. The cause stems from the police station under suspicious circumstances.

Pork Packing Shuts Down.

Bloomington.—On account of the remarkable slump in hog values the Continental Pork Packing company here has shut down its plant.