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CHAPTER II.
Now King Rudolph, in his great chagrin and dismay, had himself forgotten or at least neglected to warn the count of Festenbur that the Princess Osra, was residing at the castle of Zenda; for it was her favorite resort and she often retired from the court and spent many days there alone. There she was now with two of her ladies, a small party of servants, no more than half a dozen guards, and when Count Nikolais came to the gate, it being then after nine, she had gone to her chamber and sat before the mirror, dressed in a loose white gown and with her ruddy hair unbound and flowing over her shoulders, and was reading an old story-book containing tales of Helen of Troy, of Cleopatra, of Berenice, and other lovely ladies, very elegantly related and embellished with fine pictures. And the princess, being very much absorbed in the stories, did not hear or notice the arrival of the count's steward, who continued to read while Nikolais roused the watchmen, and the bridge was let down and the steward summoned.



And Sat Before Her Mirror.

Then Nikolais took the steward aside and showed him the king's order, bearing the king's seal, and the steward, although greatly grieved, could not deny the letter or the seal, but declared himself ready to obey and to surrender the castle; and the sergeant in command of the guard said the same; but they added, since the princess was in the castle, the man who informed of the matter must be the herald-in-arm.

"Aye, so," said Nikolais, sitting down in the great hall. "Tell her not to be disturbed, but to give me the honor of being her host for as long as she will; and say that I will wait upon her, if it be her pleasure." And he smiled to think of the anger and scorn with which Osra would receive the tidings when the steward delivered them to her.

In this respect the event did not fall short of his expectations; for she was so indignant and aghast that, thinking of nothing but the tidings, she turned away and took up her chair and the count here "me," and stood waiting for him there in her chamber, in her white gown and with her hair unbound and flowing down over her shoulders. And when he came she cried: "What is this, my lord?" and listened to his story with parted lips and eyes filled with tears, and when he had told her his letter and saw the king's seal, and the count of Festenbur, she said: "My lord, the king has lost the castle of Zenda, which is the home and cradle of our house. It was secured to the king's alone to lose. Have no terrors in thy heart."

"It was the fortune of the dice, madame," said she.

"Yes, my lord, as you play the game," said she.

His eyes were fixed upon her, and it seemed to him that she was more beautiful in her white gown and with her hair unbound over her shoulders than he had ever felt her to be before; and he was silent. Suddenly she looked at him, and for a moment he averted his eyes, but he looked again and her eyes met his. For several moments she stood rigid and motionless. Then she said: "My lord, the king has lost the castle of Zenda, which is the home and cradle of our house. It was secured to the king's alone to lose. Have no terrors in thy heart."

"It was the king's madame, and now it is mine," smiled Nikolais.

"Well, then, it is yours," said she; and taking a step toward him, she said: "Have you a mind to venture it, again, my lord?"

"I will venture it only against a great stake," said he, smiling still, while his eyes were fixed on her face, and marked every change in the color of her cheeks.

"I can play at dice as well as the king!" she cried. "Are we not all gamblers in the Elphbergs?" And she laughed heartily.

"But what would your stake be?" he asked smirkingly.

Princess Osra's face was now very pale, but her voice did not tremble and she did not flinch; for the honor of her house and of the throne was as sacred to her as her salvation, and more than her happiness.

"A stake, my lord," said she, "that many gentlemen have thought above any castle in preciousness."

"Of what do you speak?" he asked, and his voice quivered a little, as a man's dole in excitement. "For, par-

In the great hall were the six of the king's guard, and some of the servants of the castle, and many of the people who had come with Count Nikolais, who all stood in their feet when they saw him. But he took no heed of them but rushed at a run through the hall, and out under the portcullis and across the bridge, which had not been raised since he entered. And then he turned back, and as he held his horse, and he leapt on the saddle, setting one hand on the saddle and still holding Osra; and then he cried aloud:

"My men, follow me! To Festenburg!"

(To be continued)

NEWS OF OUR INDUSTRIES.

Happenings of Interest to the Staple Trades and Particularly to the Trade in Iron, Steel and Anthracite Coal.

The important announcement has just been made that the Steel Railmakers' association has advanced prices of steel rails from \$24 to \$28 per ton. It had been known for several days past that the market was undergoing improvement, and that the market price of iron and steel was steadily rising.

Count Nikolais' eye flashed and he drew his sword; then he took his dirk from his pocket, and he held it up before her, and he whispered, in an eager, hoarse voice:

"Name this great stake, madame, what is it?"

"It is myself, my lord," said Princess Osra.

"Yourself?" he cried, wondering, though he had half guessed.

"Aye. To be lord of Zenda is much. Is it not more to be husband to the king's sister?"

"It is more," said he, "when the king's sister is the Princess Osra; and the count of Festenbur, and other lovely ladies, very elegantly related and embellished with fine pictures. And the princess, being very much absorbed in the stories, did not hear or notice the arrival of the count's steward, who continued to read while Nikolais roused the watchmen, and the bridge was let down and the steward summoned.

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