

CHAPTER IV.

At this instant in the room in the gate-tower of the castle overlooking the moat there had fallen a dead silence.



"If I Have a Fair Face It Should Inspire Fair Deeds."

great cause and in a great attempt. "I shall not be called a cheating gamester, madame," said he, a smile on his pale face.

front of the door in the wall with a sneering smile on his face. The bishop of Modenstein never loved to speak afterwards of what followed, saying always that he rather deplored than gloried in it, and that when a man of his sacred profession was forced to use the weapons of this world it was a matter of grief to him, not of vaunting.

"I am here to escort her wherever it may be her pleasure to go." He spoke confidently, but he was in his heart alarmed and uneasy because he had not found the princess.

her face with her hands, and waited in dread to hear the sound of their swords clashing. But the bishop looked very happy, and setting his cap on his head with a jaunty air, he stood on guard. For ten years or more he had not used his sword, but the secret of its mastery seemed to revive, fresh and clear in his mind, and let his soul say what it would, his body rejoiced to be at the exercise again; so that his blood kindled and his eyes gleamed in the plea of strife.

Now behind the count was a window which he had himself caused to be enlarged and made low and wide, in



By an Ace It Missed Her Head.

"It wants some time yet before matins," answered the bishop. "My lord, where is the princess?" "What do you want here, and who are you?" cried the count, with a blasphemous oath.

"I find nothing about the third blow in Holy Scripture." "At this instant the Princess Odra, who had been half stunned by the violence with which Nikola had thrown her on the floor, came to her full senses, and, hearing the bishop's voice, she cried out loudly for help. He hearing her, dashed in an instant across the room and was at the door of the little chamber before the count could stop him.

"Save me! Save me!" "You are safe, madame, have no fear," answered the bishop. And turning to the count he continued, "Let us go outside, my lord, and discuss this matter. Our dispute will disturb and perhaps alarm the princess."

quivered deepest in the wood of the door. When the Bishop of Modenstein saw this hesitation and mercy passed out of his heart, and though the man had now no weapon, he thought of sparing him no more than he would have spared the man who had slain the beast; he drove his sword into his body, and the count, not being able to endure the thrust without flinching, again lay on his back, and before it. Then came from his lips a loud cry of dismay and despair, for at the same moment that the sword was in him he staggered back, fell wounded to death through the open window. The bishop looked out after him, and Princess Odra heard the sound of a great splash in the water of the moat below. For very horror she sank against the door, seeming to be held up more by the sword that had pinned her hair than by her own strength.

Then dropping his sword, he ran across to the princess and drew the count's sword, that was wet with his own blood, out of the door, releasing the princess' hair; and seeing that she was very faint, he put his arm about her and led her to the couch; and she sank down upon it, trembling and white as her white gown and murmuring, "Fearful, fearful!" and she clutched his arm, and for a long while she would not let him go, and her eyes were fixed on the count's sword that lay on the floor by the entrance of the little room.

order that he might look from it over the surrounding country, but in time of war it was covered with a close and strong iron grating. But now the grating was off and the window open; and beneath this window was a fall of seventy feet or hard upon it into the moat below. The count looked into the bishop's face and saw him smile, and suddenly he recollected the window, and fancied that it was the bishop's design to drive him on to it so that he could give back no more; and, since he knew by now that the bishop was his master with the sword, a despairing rage settled upon him, and, determining to die swiftly since die he must, he rushed forward, making a desperate lunge at his enemy. But the bishop parried the lunge, and always seeming to be about to run the count through the body, again forced him to retreat, till his back was close to the opening of the window. Here Nikola stood, his eyes glaring like a madman's; then a sudden devilish smile spread over his face.

"Will you yield yourself, my lord?" cried the bishop, putting a restraint on the wicked impulse to kill the man, and lowering his point for an instant.

In that short moment the count made his last throw; for all at once, as it seemed, and almost in one motion he thrust and wounded the bishop in the left side of the body, high in the chest near the shoulder, and though the wound was slight, the blood flowed freely; then, drawing back his sword, he seized it by the blade halfway up and flung it like a javelin at the princess, who stood still by the door, although she had been ready to die without fear, yet the sight of men fighting frightened her, and she veiled

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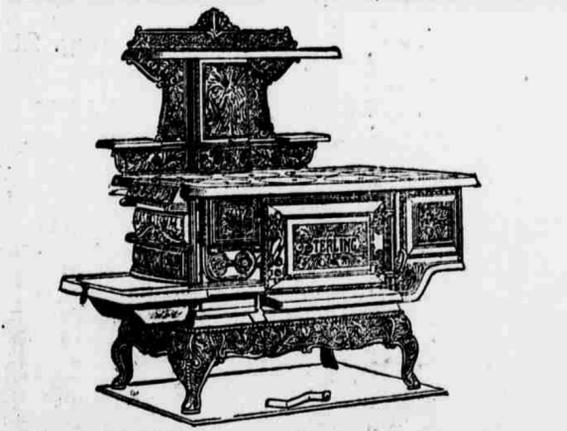
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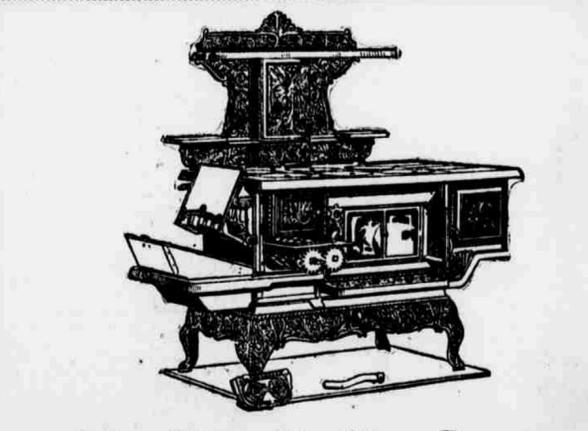
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