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SYNOPSIS.

Richard Burgdorf, a young German artist, whose nickname is "Prince Chardo," and his friend, Florio, a literary student, in the course of their "Wanderjahre" through Germany, have reached the end of their resources, and find themselves weary, footsore and hungry by the wayside near a German town. Richard, whose artistic ability Florio has great faith in, slinks down and can go no further. Florio bestirrs himself to secure food and a bed for his friend. After one or two reverses he knocks at a promising looking door. A kindly old German woman receives him, gives him food for himself and Richard, and advises him to put on a bold face. He goes through the forward makes friends with an old workman, to whom he justly talks about his master, "Prince Chardo." The old man takes the remark seriously, and Florio is inspired with the idea of using his supposed master's name as a recommendation, in the manner of "Puss-in-Boots."

PART III.

Presently it was Prince Chardo here, Prince Chardo there, Prince Chardo round all the corners of the town, and the phenomenal size and sweetness of the melons, nectarines, peaches, strawberries and figs grown in those delectable lands and forwarded in huge hampers when his highness deigned to travel in foreign parts; Prince Chardo's castles, villas and hunting-grounds; his cattle, horses, dogs and game; his incomes, his forests, his immense retinue and oriental pomp. The taciturn old vintner hacked the stubborn earth, but Florio plainly perceived he was not listening.

"all right," the young man explained, pleasantly. "I've a mate with me," he added, "a nice fellow, but lazy. He'd not touch your vineyard."

"But you'll not fail me tomorrow," "Oh, dear, no. Only one thing could prevent. Sudden orders from Prince Chardo. It is fair to tell you that."

The peasant nodded approval. He hated strangers, and finally inspected him with a chuckle.

"Is your highness quite comfortable?" "Surprisingly."

Does Prince Chardo want any more to eat? There's a lot still in the basket."

"Oh, no, thanks, I'm full to the brim. Why does the old schoolboy name amuse you on a sudden so immensely?"

Florio slapped his thigh and laughed uproariously.

After awhile Richard said, half sadly: "You must not think me a glum if I do not always see the joke nowadays. I used to, you know."

"Oh, dear, no. Only one thing could prevent. Sudden orders from Prince Chardo. It is fair to tell you that."

"He is so awfully fastidious," he recalled, "and so many notions, it would be confoundedly hard luck if he should happen to stroll through the vineyards tomorrow and get a shock to his nervous system."

"Here, Chardo. What if you should stay in bed tomorrow and have a good rest? You need it badly. I'll tell the woman to look after you."

Richard smiled deprecatingly. "I really shouldn't mind much. It's a very good place. The best—except one—for dummies."

"You are weak and it will do you good," Florio continued evenly. "You must begin to recover your strength."

"It's a mystery to me how you evolve food and beds out of your inner consciousness."

"That's all right, little one. I'll tell you about it later. I'm going to evolve a lot of things. I've got some commercial transactions on hand. Now, you go to sleep and don't bother."

Richard was too exhausted to remonstrate. Florio soon lay listening to his friend's soft breathing, and relieved the day. Its vicissitudes, in spite of a certain, examining it contentedly before dropping it into his pocket. The toy had two little flexible pointed ends, and could be adjusted or removed in the twinkling of an eye. He also purchased and put on a high shirt collar. For this promenade he had taken the precaution to don Chardo's coat, it having no holes in the bow.

"Destiny is more just than we sometimes acknowledge," he had, while dressing informed his friend, "the seat of my trousers is intact."

Strolling on, he fraternized with sorty newsboys, and ne'er-do-wells. The sort of information he desired was the easiest to obtain.

"What's your line?" demanded the harassed director of a small variety theater, dazedly, because still writhing under a recent love-rejection.

"I'm a vaudeville artist," answered Florio, twirling his young mustache and cocking his eye over his new collar.

"This was evidently his favorite hobby. The tired man's tone softened. "Sing much?"

"Rather."

"Name?"

"Florio."

"Oh, that's all right," muttered the director, never shy of celebrities lying peddle. "Fresh, plenty of nerve."

"I'll be right with you, if you please. My Kapellmeister is here at the moment."

Indifferently, a trifle arrogant of mien, inwardly quaking, yet cheering himself on with adaptations of ancient wisdom, such as "modesty is the thief of time," "cheek is its own reward," "patient waiting gathers no moss," "coming events cast their shadows before," he never too late to throw Florio followed through dark, stuffy and tortuous passages, and finally found himself on a small, meagerly lighted stage before a dusky and crowded audience with chairs and tables ad redolent of tobacco and beer.

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"Oh, dear yes. I've sung it to him in private audience fifty times, if I have one."

The singer, under the name of Willy Winkler, was shortly being engaged by written contract on the gratifying terms hitherto in that chaste temple of art only to Ninette, the darling of the public.

"Mix, she's led me a pretty dance! She'll sing in a different key tomorrow morning. Six months?" he asked indignantly, glancing up from his desk to the youth sitting easily on the corner of a table, who shook his head oracularly.

"No, no! I have larger things in view. I may and may not stay with you some months, but I can engage only by the week. What time am I on tonight?" he asked languidly.

"No, 14, between ten and eleven. Be here on time, if you please. The Kapellmeister may want you a moment. Second entrance left. The bills are out of course, but I'll announce you with a rousing placard."

"I say," the awkward fellow by luggage, I had forgotten, I can't sing tonight."

"Donnerwetter! What do you mean?"

"Why, my frog costume, man! You don't suppose I can sing my song without my own complete frog-mask? You'll have to wait till next week."

"Wait till next week? Not to save your soul! Well, you artists are all alike, as two peas. You all want your own capricious little way, don't you? No, sir. You don't know what you are talking about. You'll find a first-class frog-costume in your dressingroom, sir. Trust me for that. And it's an admirable idea. Herr Willy Winkler, and on three nights. Not sing for want of your own costume? You shall be satisfied, sir. Only look in early enough to try it."

Florio sat for awhile on a bench in a park and played with his cap. His features wore the happy, artless smile we love to see upon the face of youth, stepping into a shoe he begged to be allowed a glance at a directory, from which he copied a long list of picture dealers.

"Have you anything by Richard Burgdorf?" he inquired of each and all of them.

They regretted to say they had never even heard of him.

Polite but unmistakable surprise upon the open countenance of the young man, obviously the intelligent servant of a magnate. They noted the name of the artist.

Most of these shops were too sumptuous, too lavishly provided with super-numeraries, to suit the delicate palate of Florio's designer. Finally he found in a quiet street a place of modest yet apparently prosperous character, apparently a picture dealer.

"I've been on a walking tour with a friend, and not yet looked up my luggage. I don't mind singing with no accompaniment."

Florio nonchalantly sauntered toward the footlights, and began "The Bullfrog's Roundelay," a mocking, nonsensical, wise, delicious thing, written by his dear, dead father, and set to music by the equally dear and whimsical genius of a friend, for a Christmas merrymaking ten a decade ago. It seemed to Florio but yesterday he was one of a chorus of rapturous urchins who cringed and crouched on their hind legs during the solo, and croaked and gurgled the refrain, while hopping, after the agile manner of the frog, and sang, remembering the kindly light of other days, the present grievous straits looked black enough, and in his throat were divers gulping foreign to the original composition, but he acquitted himself creditably for all that, and the director rubbed his fat hands.

"A good thing," echoed the pleased Kapellmeister. "I'll get you a fine accompaniment, sir. Strings?"

"Strings," decreed the lofty Florio, with a vile desire to weep.

"You sang in 'F.' The Kapellmeister struck some chords, and ran prettily through the melody.

"Just give me some sudden double-croaks in the refrain, will you? Horn, flageolet, bassoon, and that sort of thing," you know," suggested the singer, as one born in the music hall purple.

"You shall have them, never fear."

"Good morning," he said amiably. "I'll just look in at the Coliseum."

"Oh, I say, come back. You're a spoiled one, I see plainly. I'll not deny it. I want your song. It's fresh."

"It's not bad," Florio admitted negligently. "In fact, it's one of my best. It is Prince Chardo's favorite."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Of course, I have a good deal to learn. Won't you come in and look about? I've got one or two nice things, and some fine engravings I'd be happy to show you."

"Oh, guilelessness," sighed Florio. "How beautiful thou art! To think, I too, was once like that, before I got hungry and hardened."

"You have painter's materials, I see," he said, pleasantly. "Very tolerable stock."

"Oh, yes. Everything."

"He's a good fellow. It's a pity. It's almost like lying to the blessed granny of my dreams. Whereas the thrifty husbandman and the serpentine director got not a whit more than they deserved. Still—"

"We shall soon be wanting a lot of things in that line, I suppose," he observed carelessly. "My master, Prince Chardo, paints."

"Should be honored by his highness' patronage," returned the young man, erect, brisk and respectful.

"Just hand me your business card, will you? I'll try to remember to come again. I always attend such things. Of course, we are besieged by tradespeople, and being new here," he muttered vaguely.

"What painter was it you asked for?"

"Oh, yes—Burgdorf, Richard Burgdorf. My master is uncommonly interested in his work, and thinks the world will hear great things of him yet. By the way, could you recommend me a studio? A quiet, simple place? The prince will be wanting something of the sort. He naturally prefers not to work among the colonies of painters in great art buildings. His highness works very steadily, you understand, needs a good studio, but secluded, where he can get about in privacy."

"I know just the place," exclaimed the young man, with animation. "An artist led suddenly only this morning. But it's always in demand. If you don't hurry, you won't get it."

"I'll hurry fast enough."

"I'll write the address for you."

"Here, just write it on your card."

"It's not far. Up the street to the fountain, then turn to the left, up the hill and the long stone steps to the gardens. They are quite old people. A well-kept and the usual things, please. I don't really know what is needed."

He made an easy movement toward his pocket.

"Oh, never mind. Pay with the larger order."

"Bless you, honest Johannes Mezler, all the days of your pilgrimage!" said the schemer to himself as he walked away. "You shall never lose one penny through me. After all, it is not as if Chardo were not a born genius. That he is, I swear it."

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