TWO WOMEN'S LOVE AND ONE MAN'S PERIL.

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Gerald Winthrop, a wealthy young Englishman (in Bulgaria on a secret mission for his government to ascertain Russia's plans in respect to that country), finds the irresolute reigning Prince under the dominion of the unscrupulous Countess Bokaia. The Russian party is headed by Gen. Kolfort. The Bulgarian patriots rally round Winthrop to place Princess Christina on the throne. Winthrop and Christina love each other, but know their love to be hopeless on account of her rank. The Countess hates the Princess and seeks to kill her. Duke Sergius of Russia is selected by Kolfort as a husband for Christina. A duel is arranged between Sergius and Winthrop. Christina begs Winthrop to spare the Duke.

CHAPTER X.

The Duel and What Came of It.

WITH this idea I accompanied Zoloff to the ground. On the way I told him of the Princess's request that I spare the Duke and of my resolve to obey her, even at the cost of my life. Despite his protests I remained firm.

The Duke and I crossed swords. I quickly discovered he was not my equal in fencing. Though a good swordsman he was my inferior.

He made no attempt to wound me slightly, but sought with the vindictiveness of passion to get through my guard and thrust his blade into my heart. My fighting was all defensive; and after a short time my tactics evidently puzzled him. He thought my object was to wear him down. This cooled him, and he began to fight much more warily and cautiously, and with far less waste of energy and strength.

The first point fell to me, partly by accident. Making an over-zealous thrust at my body, which I parried with some difficulty, he came upon my sword point, which just touched his body and drew blood. The seconds interfered; his wound was examined and found to be slight, and we were ordered to recommence.

In the second bout he changed his tactics, and again attacked me with great impetuosity. The result was what might have been expected. He gave me more than one chance which I could have taken with deadly effect; and when he saw that I did not—for he fenced well enough to understand this—I saw him smile sardonically.

He might well wonder why I should wish to spare him. But each time Christina's words were before my eyes and ringing in my ears, and, bitterly though I hated him, I dared not, and would not, kill him.

Then he wounded me.

He thought he had found the opportunity he sought, and his eyes gleamed viciously as he lunged desperately at my heart. I parried the stroke, but not sufficiently, for I felt his sword enter my side, and for a moment I thought all was over.

But the thrust had gone too high; and, though I bled profusely, I was not disabled.

So we engaged once more.

But the cowardice of the man in seeking to kill an opponent who would act only on the defensive infuriated me, and for an instant I forgot my good resolutions and pressed him hard. He saw my intent and renewed the attack. I defeated his attempts without difficulty, and was even in the act of looking out for an opening to strike, when the remembrance of my pledge, and of what my love would say to me if I killed him, shot back into my mind, and at a stroke stopped all the desire to kill.

The change of mood must in some way have affected my fighting, as we know it will, for I left myself badly guarded, and like a dart of lightning his blade came flashing at me.

I was wounded again; but, fortunately, malice or fear or too great glee made him overconfident, so that his aim was awry, and instead of piercing my heart his sword glanced off my ribs, inflicting another flesh wound, but barely more than skin deep.

"This can't go on," growled Zoloff in my ear during the pause. "You could have killed him half a dozen times. We shall be here all day."

The absurd bathos of the speech made me smile despite the grim situation, and the smile was still lurking on my face when we crossed swords for the fourth time.

A glance at my opponent's face was enough to kill any smile, however; and almost as soon as our blades touched he commenced again to force the fight as though he meant to finish it off quickly. So vehement was his attack, that for a while I needed all my nerve and skill to defend myself; but I contented myself with defensive tactics—for the interval had cooled my temper—until, by a dastardly, unswordsmanlike trick, he tried to catch me at a disadvantage. In an instant my passion flamed up beyond restraint, and before there was time for me to regain control of my temper an opening came in his guard, and, unable to stay the fighting instinct to take advantage of it, I ran my sword through his neck.

WOUNDED!

"The blood came gushing out in a full crimson stream from the wound and through his parted lips, dyeing his shirt front; he staggered back, his sword dropped from his nerveless grasp, and he fell to the ground with a groan.

"I looked on more than a little aghast at my work. If he should die! And at the thought the picture of Christina's face as she would meet me flashed before my eyes, and for the moment I would have given all I was worth to have called back that laggard thrust.

"Zoloff and Spernow came and stood by me, as I waited, sword in hand, to know if the fierce combat was to go on still further. Then his chief second crossed to me, and in a formal tone said:

"'My principal can fight no longer.'

"'Is the hurt dangerous? Will he die?' I asked, and the man glanced at me in evident surprise at the concern in my tone.

"'Not necessarily. The wound is severe, but the doctor says the artery has not been touched.' Then after a pause he added, as if in involuntary compliment to the skill I had shown: 'It is surprising that the fight lasted so long. Count Benderoff, I can bear witness that he owes his life to your forbearance.' And with a bow as formal as his tone he went back to the others.

"I dressed and, with my seconds, went to where our horses awaited us.

"'Where to?' asked Zoloff when we were mounted.

"'Back to Sofia,' I answered promptly. 'I am going straight to Gen. Kolfort to ascertain the meaning of last night's attempt on me,' and I clapped my heels into my horse's flanks and started at a sharp pace for the city.

On the way, however, a new idea came to me. I stopped at a village and wrote out a full account of all that had happened to me, the condition of the Russian scheme and the designs of Kolfort and the Russian party toward myself.

This I addressed to the British War Office and gave the packet to Spernow, asking him to carry it at once across the frontier and, in case I should not send him word to the contrary in twenty-four hours, to forward it to England.

"'That ought to checkmate Kolfort if he has any ideas of killing or imprisoning me,' I mused as I rode to the General's house and entered his presence.

He looked even harder and grimmer and sterner than ever as he glanced up from his desk and fixed his eyes on me.

"'What is your business with me?' he asked curtly.

"'That is the question I have come to put to you,' I retorted, quite as shortly.

"'Why to me?'

"'Because I have heard, not quite incidentally, that you have been sending to my house to inquire for me.'

"'You appear to have been called away suddenly.'

"'Driven away, I should say rather,' I retorted. 'May I ask why you have dared to make such an attempt?'

"'Dared?' he returned, with a flash of his eyes at the word.

"'Dared,' I repeated.

"'I am not answerable to you for the steps taken in the exigencies of State.'

"'Exigencies of State you term it. A singular name to describe an act which in plain terms means that when one of your chief men has forced a quarrel on me and challenged me you would shut me up to prevent our meeting, so that he might have an opportunity of branding me as a coward.'

"'I do not think you are a coward,' he answered slowly.

"'Nor does your Duke Sergius now,' said I.

This touched him, for he asked with evident interest: "What has happened this morning? A good deal may turn on your answer."

"'He is not dead, if that's what you mean—only badly wounded;' and I gave him a brief description of the fight. He listened closely, but without a sign of his feelings on his face.

As I finished he said:

"'I must arrest you, Count. It is no longer safe to leave you at large. I warned you, you will remember. Before night you shall be on your way to prison at Tirnova Fortress. The story of your being a British subject shall not avail. For no one shall hear of your fate.'

He rose as if to call the guard.

Then I calmly informed him of the despatch I had just sent to the British War Office.

A long tense silence followed. He broke it by asking abruptly, seeking to catch me unawares:

"'What's this I hear about your love for the Princess Christina?'

"'How on earth can I know what your spies or my enemies tell you?' I replied, not for a moment off my guard.

"'Do you dream of making her your wife?'

"'Hasn't she promised to marry the Duke Sergius?'

"'Is it true that you love her?'

"'If it were you are scarcely the man to whom I should bring such a confidence.'

"'What's your object here in Sofia?'

"'To be allowed to mind my own business.'

"'What is that business, as you call it?'

"'My own concern,' I retorted as sharply as I could rap out the words. It was as clear as daylight that I had touched him with my threat, or he would never continue to question me as I was winning.

"'What does your Government want?' he asked, after a pause to recover from his chagrin at my former replies.

"'How should I know—except to have their subjects left unmolested.' I was determined to rub this in, and I could see he relished this last rub no better than the first.

"'If you refuse to answer my questions you leave me but one alternative,' he threatened.

"'Take it,' I answered lightly. 'You take it, of course, with your eyes open.'

The taunt enraged him. His eyes flashed fire, and a flush of wrath tinged his dried, wrinkled, parchment cheeks. He sprang to his feet and sounded the bell on his table furiously.

"'I will put your devil-may-care humor to the test. You shall go to Tirnova.'

"'As you please,' I answered, surprised now in my turn, for I had not thought he would dare to push matters to extremes. 'I will tell you one thing. My arrest will be the signal for that despatch to be forwarded. If I do not go to Tirnova, that will not go to London.'

"'I care nothing for your Government,' he exclaimed, all self-control gone in his anger. 'They dare do nothing, even if they would.'

At that moment an officer entered in response to the bell, followed by a file of men.

"'Arrest the Count Benderoff,' cried the General, pointing at me a finger that trembled with rage. "'Give up your sword, sir. You are a traitor, unworthy to bear it.'

"'I shall do nothing of the kind,' I said desperately. 'The man who lays a hand on me may look to himself.'

"'I beg you to save trouble,' said the officer, courteously.

"'I will not,' I cried furiously. 'If I am to be murdered, it shall be done here, in the presence of my murderer,' and I set my back to the wall and whipped out my sword.

(To be Continued.)

TWO WOMEN BURGLARS.

Entered House by Means of False Keys and Came to Grief.

Two women burglars were held for trial to-day in the Lee Avenue Police Court, Brooklyn. They are Mrs. Richard Alfrkins, of No. 112 Suencer street, and Mrs. Jane Brown, of No. 113 Spencer street. The husband of Mrs. Harkins was also held as an accessory.

By the means of false keys yesterday afternoon the two women entered the home of George Better, a baker, at No. 717 Myrtle avenue, and stole a quantity of bedding and Mr. Better's clothing. He saw them leave the place and followed them.

Seeing them enter Mrs. Harkins's home, he notified the police. When the officers arrived they discovered that Harkins had pawned much of the stolen goods and he and the two women were enjoying an alcoholic revel.

"Price of Peace" Opens To-Night.

The first American performance of "The Price of Peace" will be given at the Broadway Theatre this evening. Owing to the length of the performance the curtain will rise at 8 o'clock precisely.

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Mr. Grau Makes Reyer's Opera a Beautiful Spectacle — Saleza's Bit of Realism—The Music Dull.

Lashed with whips, tripped and buffeted until blind with pain and rage, Matho, the Lybian mercenary General, in the person of Saleza, the French tenor, came tumbling down the thirty or forty feet of broad steps that led to the Forum of Carthage on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House shortly before 12 o'clock last night, and writhed and twisted under the blows that were rained upon him. Seldom is a more realistic scene presented upon any stage.

It was the first production in this city of "Salammbo," an opera in five acts by E. Reyer, Camille du Locle having written the libretto, from the story by Flaubert. The plot is laid in Carthage in the third century before Christ. After helping the Carthaginians to defeat the Romans, the hordes of mercenaries revolt under Matho and threaten the city. Matho penetrates to the Temple of Tanit and steals the Zaimph, a miraculous veil, which Carthaginians venerate. To rescue this, Salammbo, daughter of Himilcar, the Carthaginian General, goes to Matho's camp. He surrenders the veil, but the pair fall in love. Meanwhile the camp is surprised by her father, the mercenaries are defeated and Matho is made prisoner. He is sentenced to death and Salammbo is made his executioner. Instead of killing him she stabs herself and, Matho following suit, the final curtain falls upon the lovers dead in each other's arms.

Mr. Grau presented the opera with such splendor as is rare. There were eight scenes in all and each was either a marvel of beauty, or solidity, or both. The first showed Hamilcar's gardens, with a broad flight of steps leading up to the massive doors of the palace. Underneath were the grated dungeons and at one side was an arched terrace about which Salammbo was carried by her slaves. Later the terrace was shown on the stage level, disclosing a beautiful picture of Carthage, the sea and the mountains under the bluest of skies. Then the moon came up and near the centre of the city the Temple glowed with roseate hues from the sacrificial fires.

The sanctuary of the Temple of Moloch was a vast room with great pillars, and on one side a huge figure of the god with the ox-like face. The whole place was aglow with the red light of fires never quenched. The camp of the mercenaries was in a lovely grove of tall palms and cocoanut trees, with luxuriant foliage all about. Outside the Temple of Tanit made an attractive picture, while the final scene, the Forum, already referred to, was audacious in its realism. When the curtain fell the great flight of steps was alive with people. Above palaces seemed to stand.

Not a veil, but a rich blue cloak of ample dimensions, glittering with jewels that flashed their reflected light all over the house, was the Zaimph. Handsome costumes abounded. Hamilcar and Salammbo were brought to the Forum in a fine triumphal chariot. Images of the gods were carried in the procession. Dancing girls pirouetted at every opportunity. It was indeed a gorgeous spectacle.

As to the music—that's another matter. Much of it was dull and insipid; none was truly inspiring or inspired. On the first act one irreverent person was overheard to remark that the reign of vaudeville must have set in ahead of time and he was wondering if Fay Templeton were to appear. But the second act was better. The chanting of the priests went well. In the scene on the terrace Salammbo had some interesting things to sing. The fourth act was the best, with its love duet between Salammbo and Matho. The double suicide at the end was uniquely effective.

Breval, made a beautiful heroine and her impersonation was good, but she was in poor voice and the faults of her method were much in evidence. Saleza acted with fine fervor and sang well. Scott, who was Hamilcar, expended too much force and was scarcely as satisfactory as usual. Salignac completely disguised himself as the High Priest of Tanit, and did well. Journet was the Numidian King who was traitor to Matho, and was in good voice. Sigaldi was a fervent Spendius, the Greek Slave. Gilbert was Giscon, Dufriche Autharite, and Carrie Bridewell Taanach.

Mancinelli conducted and had trouble with the chorus occasionally. The brass band introduced in the last act bothered him some, too.

The audience was of fair size, but not as large as a first hearing of the work, the enterprise of Mr. Grau and the sumptuousness and costliness of the production deserved.

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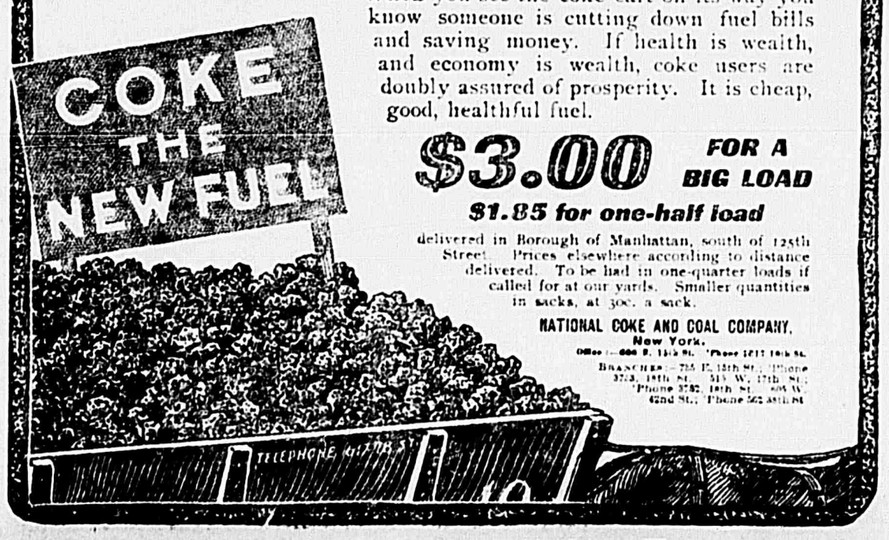

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