

# A GENTLE KNIGHT OF OLD BRANDENBURG—BY CHARLES MAJOR

## CHAPTER XII. (Continued)

### Mine Adversary Writes a Letter

**N**EXT morning when Henry awakened he was anxious to see Don't Care; and, though he was early at the fountain, he found the beautiful little Princess waiting for him.

"You see how shamefully eager I am," she said, holding out her hands to him. Henry kissed the tips of her fingers. "Ach! not my hands, man, not my hands!" said Don't Care, laughing and stepping close to him; but Henry failed to understand the invitation, and replied to her remark:

"I see how gracious and how condescending your Highness is in granting me this interview. I can hardly bring myself to believe that the beautiful Princess Charlotte has so greatly honored me. If I did not know my danger, I should indeed be in peril of a broken heart; but forewarned is forearmed, and your Highness need not fear that I shall lose my head."

"Oh, but I want you to lose not only your head, but your—" She touched his breast over his heart, and smiled invitingly.

"My heart may be beyond my control," answered

Henry, laughing nervously. The nervousness was, of course, assumed; "but unless I also lose my head, my heart's secret, if there should be one, will remain safe under lock and key, and would not dare to intrude itself upon a gracious Princess."

"Your prudence and caution anger me," said Don't Care pettishly, "and I half believe they are affected."

"In that case, I must ask your Highness' permission to take my leave," said Henry, bowing and taking a step backward.

"You surely are the most exasperating of men!" cried Don't Care, pouting and turning her back on Henry.

"Of all things, I should most regret to exasperate your Highness. Therefore, I had better go. If I had been wise, I should not have come."

**T**HUS adroitly leading the Princess, yet ever retreating from her, Henry held the situation in hand until he found an opportunity to introduce the name of the hereditary Prince of Bayreuth.

"Oh, tell me all about him!" demanded Don't Care. "Is he handsome?"

"I must not speak of your future husband unless I can speak flatteringly," answered Henry.

"Yes, yes, you shall! You shall!" she cried, stamping her foot impatiently and pouting exquisitely. "Tell me, I command you! Is he a handsome man?"

"Far from it," answered Henry. "He is very tall and was very thin when I knew him some years ago. In general style he resembles the Duke of Weissenfels."

"Ach Gott! I'll have none of him!" cried the little Princess. "Tell me more about him. Is he strong?"

"I believe he is not," answered Henry. "He is very tall; but his health is bad, and I have been told that his breath is nauseating. His teeth are very bad, and one of his eyes rolls about in his head, independent of the other. But I hear he is very honest, kind of heart, and very pious."

"Ach, Gott! that is all that's needed!" cried the little Princess, averting her face and holding up her hands as if warding off an evil. "That is all that is needed. I might have endured his other defects; but the pious man is like the mosquito,—his buzz, buzz, buzz, is varied only by an irritating sting when the opportunity comes. No pious husband for me—a Turk first, please! When ostentatious piety takes possession of a man, it surplants all other virtues and

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## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

**O**NE of the important steps in the designs of the Emperor of Austria in the 1730's to absorb Brandenburg and Prussia, then ruled by King Frederick William, was to arrange a marriage between Princess Wilhelmina, daughter of the latter, and Adolph, Margrave of Schwedt. Adolph was generally looked upon as a half-witted drunken fool; but beneath his maudlin exterior lay concealed a large kind heart and astonishing perspicacity. Adolph loved Wilhelmina, and was easily persuaded to journey to Berlin in obedience to the summons of Grumkow, who was Prime Minister of King Frederick William, but really the Emperor of Austria's tool and spy at the Berlin court.

At the same time Frederick Henry (known as Fritz Henry), hereditary Prince of Bayreuth, secretly left home to escape an expected offer of marriage to one of the daughters of August the Stark, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, the patron of Bayreuth. He traveled under the name of Captain Henry Churchill of England.

He was captured by emissaries of King Frederick William, who were seeking recruits for the famous Grenadier Regiment, and taken to Berlin. As soon as he saw Princess Wilhelmina, Henry astonished the King by expressing his willingness to serve in the regiment, and, after proving his ability, was given command of a company. The King

hated his son Frederick (afterward Frederick the Great), as well as Wilhelmina; and commanded the Crown Prince to make a companion of Henry, in the hope that the Prince might "learn something."

Henry endeared himself to Frederick by saving him from being caught by the King when playing the harpsichord, which the latter pretended to despise. And for the same reason Wilhelmina received him with great friendliness, and she was not displeased when he said that his only purpose in remaining in Berlin was to be near to protect her. Adolph told Henry that he wouldn't marry Wilhelmina in any circumstances, unless she loved him.

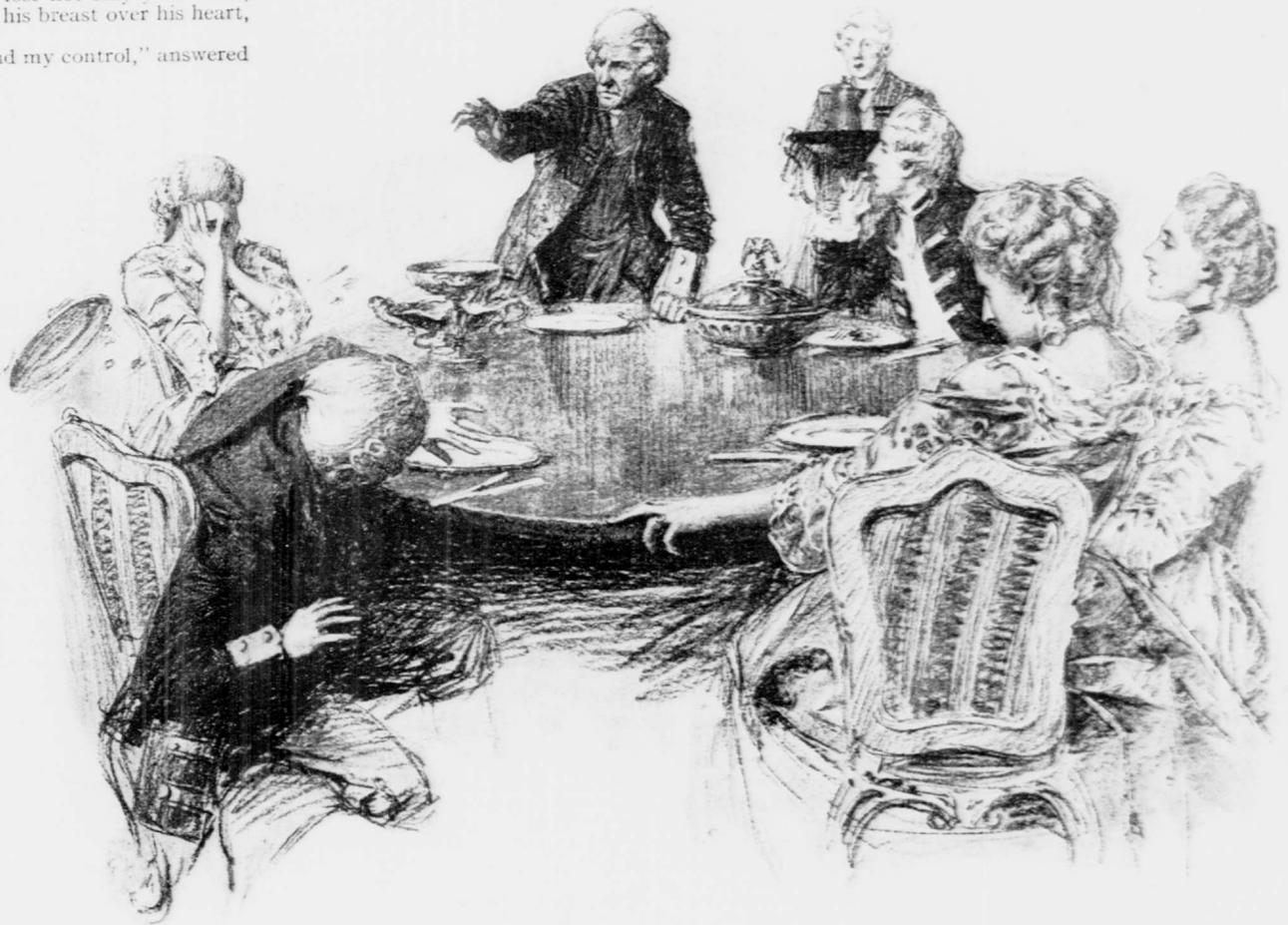
An unsuccessful attempt was made to assassinate the Crown Prince and fasten the crime on Henry.

Don't Care became passionately in love with the Bayreuth Prince.

Henry confessed his love for Wilhelmina, and received a part avowal in return.

At a meeting of the Tobacco Parliament, Grumkow accused the Crown Prince of treason in uttering his intention of killing the King; but Henry and the Margrave gave Grumkow the lie direct, and their word prevailed.

It was announced by Don't Care that she was to marry the hereditary Prince of Bayreuth.



The Mad King Hurlled the Plate, Cabbage and All, at the Crown Prince's Head.

stimulates all other vices. I'll have none of our friend of Bayreuth, and I'll tell my father and Grumkow as much this day."

**S**HE moved closer to Henry and continued, "Now I'll tell you my news. Grumkow is your enemy and seeks to destroy you. Ramen says you offended him at The Tabagie."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Henry. "Please tell me all you have heard, and your Highness may be sure I'll be grateful."

The little Princess, leaning affectionately against Henry, continued her story. "Grumkow wrote a letter to his ladylove, Ramen, and I accidentally found it. There is nothing like a letter as a weapon of offense and defense. Some one in the Bible said, 'Oh, that mine adversary had written a book or a letter!' or something. He was wise. I have the letter. Your enemy has written it, and it tells the whole story. But you must promise to tell no one that I showed it to you."

"I promise."  
"Well, here it is," said Don't Care, unhooking her bodice and bringing forth the letter from her corsage. Henry read as follows:

DEAR MISTRESS—You doubtless have heard ere this of the manner in which the King's new favorite, a low bred fellow, offered me insult at The Tabagie, and thwarted my

plan to entrap the Little One. Old Stumpy was ready to act. Seckendorf and I had worked the crazy old fool almost to the point of frenzy. He swallowed our story, which I believe was almost if not quite true, hook and bait. If this low fellow that has caught the King's fancy had kept still, a trial for treason would now be in progress, and our august master would be growing more violent hour by hour.

We must get rid of this long Captain. Therefore, I write to ask you to keep watch on him for any word or act that may discredit him with the King. If he loses the King's favor, we shall find a way to hang him quickly enough. The Little Hussy will soon marry the Fat Fool or the Lean Idiot, I care not which. Then the Old One will hang the Little One. That will arouse the people against Stumpy, and his reign will soon afterward come to an end. The Fat One will be made King; but your friend will be the real King, and you, the fairest of women, shall be the real Queen. But first we must rid ourselves of this troublesome Captain. Your sharp eyes and quick wit will, I am sure, soon accomplish that small matter by discovering or inventing a charge against him: that the King will believe. Bear in mind my oft repeated admonition: burn this letter. With deep affection,

YOUR DEVOTED GRUMKOW.

Henry's sensations on reading the letter were a mixture of horror and joy,—horror because of the black villainy it betrayed; joy because the letter had fallen into his hands and would fill Don't Care's definition of a weapon of defense so completely as to leave little to be desired.

"I thank your Highness with all my heart for giv-