

plkeman, fronted with a shining breastplate of metal. The count's conductor knocked gently at the closed door, then opened it, holding it so that the count could pass in, and when he had done so the door closed softly behind him. To his amazement Winneburg saw before him, standing at the farther end of the small room, the Emperor Rudolph entirely alone. The count awkwardly was about to kneel when his liege strode forward and prevented him.

"Count Winneburg," he said, "from what I hear of you, your elbow joints are more supple than those of your knees; therefore let us be thankful that on this occasion there is no need to use either. I see you are under the mistaken impression that the emperor is present. Put that thought from your mind and regard me simply as Lord Rudolph—one gentleman wishing to have some little conversation with another."

"Your majesty," stammered the count.

"I have but this moment suggested that you use the title my lord. But leaving aside all question of salutation, let us get to the heart of the matter, for I think we are both direct men. You are summoned to Frankfort because that high and mighty prince of the church, the archbishop of Treves, has made complaint to the emperor against you, alleging what seems to be an unpardonable indignity suffered by him at your hands."

"Your majesty—my lord, I mean," faltered the count—"the indignity was of his own seeking; he sat down in my chair, where he had no right to place himself, and I—persuaded him to relinquish his position."

"So I am informed—that is to say, so his majesty has been informed," replied Rudolph, a slight smile hovering round his finely chiseled lips. "We are not here to comment upon any of the archbishop's delinquencies, but granting, for the sake of argument, that he had encroached upon your rights, nevertheless he was under your roof, and honestly I fall to see that you were justified in cracking his heels against the same."

"Well, your majesty—again I beg your majesty's pardon?"

"Oh, no matter," said the emperor. "Call me what you like; names signify little."

"If, then, the emperor," continued the count, "found an intruder sitting on his throne, would he like it, think you?"

"His feeling perhaps would be one of astonishment, my lord count, but speaking for the emperor I am certain that he would never lay hands on the usurper, or treat him like a sack of corn in a yeoman's barn."

The count laughed heartily at this and was relieved to find that this quieted him of the tension which the great presence had at first caused.

"Truth to tell, your majesty, I am sorry I touched him. I should have requested him to withdraw, but my arm has always been more ready in action than my tongue, as you can readily see since I came into this room."

"Indeed, count, your tongue does you very good service," continued the emperor, "and I am glad to have from you an expression of regret. I hope, therefore, that you will have no hesitation in repeating that declaration to the archbishop of Treves."

"Does your majesty mean that I am to apologize to him?"

"Yes," answered the emperor.

There was a moment's pause; then the count said slowly:

"I will surrender to your majesty my person, my sword, my castle and my lands; I will, at your word, prostrate myself at your feet and humbly beg pardon for any offense I have committed against you, but to tell the archbishop I am sorry when I am not and to cringe before him and supplicate his grace, well, your majesty, as between man and man, I'll see him first!"

Again the emperor had some difficulty in preserving that rigidity of expression which he had evidently resolved to maintain.

"Have you ever met a ghost, my lord count?" he asked. Winneburg crossed himself devoutly, a sudden pallor com-

ing over his face. "Indeed, your majesty, I have seen strange things and things for which there was no accounting, but it has been usually after a contest with the wine flagon, and at the time my head was none of the clearest, so I would not venture to say whether they were ghosts or no."

"Imagine, then, that in one of the corridors of your castle at midnight you met a white robed, transparent figure, through whose form your sword passed scathlessly—what would you do, my lord?"

"Indeed, your majesty, I would take

to my heels and bestow myself elsewhere as speedily as possible."

"Most wisely spoken, and you, who are no coward, who would face willingly in combat anything natural, would in certain circumstances trust to swift flight for your protection. Very well, my lord; you are now confronted with something against which your stout arm is as unavailing as it would be if an apparition stood in your path. There is before you the specter of subtlety. Use arm instead of brain, and you are a lost man. The archbishop expects no apology. He looks for a stalwart, stubborn man, defying himself and the empire combined. You think perhaps that the imperial troops will surround your castle and that you may stand a siege. Now, the emperor would rather have you fight with him than against him, but in truth there will be no contest. Hold to your refusal, and you will be arrested before you leave the precincts of this palace. You will be thrown into a dungeon, your castle and your lands sequestered, and I call your attention to the fact that your estate adjoins the possessions of the archbishop at Cochem, and heaven fend me for hinting that his lordship casts covetous eyes over his boundary, yet nevertheless he will probably not refuse to accept your possessions in reparation for the insult bestowed upon him. Put it this way, if you like: Would you rather pleasure me or pleasure the archbishop of Treves?"

"There is no question as to that," answered the count.

"Then it will please me well if you promise to apologize to his lordship the archbishop of Treves. That his lordship will be equally pleased I very much doubt."

"Will your majesty command me in open court to apologize?"

"I shall request you to do so. I must uphold the feudal law."

"Then I beseech your majesty to command me, for I am a loyal subject and will obey."

"God give me many such," said the emperor fervently, "and bestow upon me the wisdom to deserve them!"

He extended his hand to the count, then touched a bell on the table beside him. The officer who had conducted Winneburg entered silently and acted as his guide back to the thronged apartment they had left. The count saw that the great crimson curtains were now looped up, giving a view of the noble interior of the room beyond, thronged with the great of the empire. The hall leading to it was almost deserted, and the count, under convoy of two lancers, being nearly as tall as their weapons, passed in to the throneroom and found all eyes turned upon him. He was brought to a stand before an elevated dais, the center of which was occupied by a lofty throne, which at the moment was empty. Near it on the elevation stood the three archbishops of Treves, Cologne and Mayence, on the other side the count palatine of the Rhine with the remaining three electors. The nobles of the realm occupied places according to their degree. As the star-wart count came in a buzz of conversation swept over the hall like a breeze among the leaves of a forest. A malignant scowl darkened the countenance of the archbishop of Treves, but the faces of Cologne and Mayence expressed a certain Christian resignation regarding the contumely that had been endured by their colleague. The count stood stolidly where he was placed and gazed at the vacant throne, turning his eyes neither to the right nor the left. Suddenly there was a fanfare of trumpets, and instant silence smote the assembly. First came officers of the imperial guard in shining armor, then the immediate advisers and counselors of his majesty and last of all the emperor himself, a robe of great richness clasped at his throat and trailing behind him, the crown of the empire upon his head. His face was pale and stern, looking what he was, a monarch and a man. The count rubbed his eyes and could scarcely believe that he stood now in the presence of one who had chatted amiably with him but a few moments before.

The emperor sat on his throne, and one of his counselors whispered for some moments to him. Then the emperor said in a low, clear voice that penetrated to the farthest corner of the vast apartment:

"Is the Count of Winneburg here?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Let him stand forward."

The count strode two long steps to the front and stood there, red faced and abashed. The officer at his side whispered:

"Kneel, you fool, kneel!"

And the count got himself somewhat clumsily down upon his knees, like an elephant preparing to receive its burden. The face of the emperor remained impassive, and he said harshly:

"Stand up!"

The count, once more upon his feet, breathed a deep sigh of satisfaction at finding himself once more in an upright posture.

"Count of Winneburg," said the emperor slowly, "it is alleged that upon the occasion of the last meeting of the council of state for the Moselle valley you, in presence of the nobles there assembled, cast a slight upon your overlord, the archbishop of Treves. Do you question the statement?"

The count cleared his throat several times, which in the stillness of that vaulted room sounded like the distant booming of cannon.

"If to cast the archbishop half the distance of this room is to cast a slight upon him, I did so, your majesty."

There was a simultaneous ripple of laughter at this, instantly suppressed when the searching eye of the emperor swept the room.

"Sir count," said the emperor severely, "the particulars of your outrage are not required of you, only your admission thereof. Hear, then, my commands. Betake yourself to your castle

of Winneburg and hold yourself there in readiness to proceed to Treves on a day appointed by his lordship the archbishop, an elector of this empire, there to humble yourself before him and crave his pardon for the offense you have committed. Disobey at your peril."

Once or twice the count moistened his dry lips; then he said:

"Your majesty, I will obey any command you place upon me."

"In that case," continued the emperor, his severity visibly relaxing, "I can promise that your overlord will not hold this incident against you. Such, I understand, is your intention, my lord archbishop?" and the emperor turned toward the prince of Treves.

The archbishop bowed low and thus veiled the malignant hatred in his eyes.

"Yes, your majesty," he replied, "providing the apology is given as publicly as was the insult, in presence of those who were witnesses of the count's foolishness."

"That is but a just condition," said the emperor. "Remember that the council will be summoned to Treves to hear the count's apology. And now, Count of Winneburg, you are at liberty to withdraw."

The count drew his mammoth hand across his brow and scattered to the floor the moisture that had collected there. He tried to speak, but apparently could not, then turned and walked resolutely toward the door. There was an instant outcry at this, the chamberlain of the court, standing in stupefied amazement at a breach of etiquette which exhibited any man's back to the emperor, but a smile relaxed the emperor's lips, and he held up his hand.

"Do not molest him," he said as the count disappeared. "He is unused to the artificial manners of a court. In truth, I take it as a friendly act, for I am sure the valiant count never turns his back upon a foe," which imperial witticism was well received, for the sayings of an emperor rarely lack applause.

The count, wending his long way home by the route he had come, spent the first half of the journey in cursing the archbishop and the latter half in thinking over the situation. By the time he had reached his castle he had formulated a plan, and this plan he proceeded to put into execution on receiving the summons of the archbishop to come to Treves on the first day of the following month and make his apology, the archbishop, with characteristic penitence, leaving the inviting of the 15 nobles who formed the council to Winneburg, and thus his lordship of Treves was saved the expense of sending special messengers to each. In case Winneburg neglected to summon the whole council, the archbishop added to his message that he would refuse to receive the apology if any of the nobles were absent.

Winneburg sent messengers, first to Beilstein, asking him to attend at Treves on the second day of the month and bring with him an escort of at least 1,000 men. Another he asked for the third, another for the fourth, another for the fifth, and so on, resolved that before a complete quorum was present half of the month would be gone and with it most of the archbishop's provender, for his lordship, according to the law of hospitality, was bound to entertain free of all charge to themselves the various nobles and their escorts.

On the first day of the month Winneburg entered the northern gate of Treves, accompanied by 200 horsemen and 800 foot soldiers. At first the officers of the archbishop thought that an invasion was contemplated, but Winneburg suavely explained that if a thing was worth doing at all it was worth doing well, and he was not going to make any hole and corner affair of his apology. Next day Beilstein came along accompanied by 500 cavalry and 500 foot soldiers. The chamberlain of the archbishop was in despair at having to find quarters for so many, but he did the best he could, while the archbishop was enraged to find that the nobles did not assemble in greater haste, but each, as he came, had a plausible excuse for his delay. Some had to build bridges, sickness had broken out in another camp, while a third expedition had lost its way and wandered in the forest. The streets of Treves each night resounded with songs of revelry, varied by the clash of swords, when a party of the newcomers fell foul of a party of the town soldiers, and the officers on either side had much ado to keep the peace among their men. The archbishop's wine cups were running dry, and the price of provisions had risen, the whole surrounding country being placed under contribution for provender and drink. When a week had elapsed, the archbishop relaxed his dignity and sent for Count Winneburg.

"We will not wait for the others," he said. "I have no desire to humiliate you unnecessarily. Those who are here will bear witness that you have apologized, and so I shall not insist on the presence of the laggards, but will receive your apology tomorrow at high noon in the great council chamber."

"Ah, there speaks a noble heart, ever thinking generously of those who despectfully use you, my lord archbishop," said Count Winneburg. "But no, no; I cannot accept such a sacrifice. The emperor showed me plainly the enormity of my offense. In the presence of all I insulted you, wretch that I am, and in the presence of all shall I abase myself?"

"But I do not seek your abasement," protested the archbishop, frowning.

"The more honor then to your benevolent nature," answered the count, "and the more shameful would it be of me to take advantage of it. As I stood a short time since on the walls I saw coming up the river the banners of the knight of Ehrenburg. His castle is the farthest removed from Treves, and so the others cannot surely delay long.

We will wait, my lord archbishop, until all are here. But I thank you just as much for your generosity as if I were craven enough to shield myself behind it."

The knight of Ehrenburg in due time arrived and behind him his thousand men, many of whom were compelled to sleep in the public buildings, for all the rooms in Treves were occupied. Next day the archbishop summoned the assembled nobles and said he would hear the apology in their presence. If the others missed it, it was their own fault; they should have been in time.

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The count drew his mammoth hand across his brow and scattered to the floor the moisture that had collected there. He tried to speak, but apparently could not, then turned and walked resolutely toward the door. There was an instant outcry at this, the chamberlain of the court, standing in stupefied amazement at a breach of etiquette which exhibited any man's back to the emperor, but a smile relaxed the emperor's lips, and he held up his hand.

"Do not molest him," he said as the count disappeared. "He is unused to the artificial manners of a court. In truth, I take it as a friendly act, for I am sure the valiant count never turns his back upon a foe," which imperial witticism was well received, for the sayings of an emperor rarely lack applause.

The count, wending his long way home by the route he had come, spent the first half of the journey in cursing the archbishop and the latter half in thinking over the situation. By the time he had reached his castle he had formulated a plan, and this plan he proceeded to put into execution on receiving the summons of the archbishop to come to Treves on the first day of the following month and make his apology, the archbishop, with characteristic penitence, leaving the inviting of the 15 nobles who formed the council to Winneburg, and thus his lordship of Treves was saved the expense of sending special messengers to each. In case Winneburg neglected to summon the whole council, the archbishop added to his message that he would refuse to receive the apology if any of the nobles were absent.

Winneburg sent messengers, first to Beilstein, asking him to attend at Treves on the second day of the month and bring with him an escort of at least 1,000 men. Another he asked for the third, another for the fourth, another for the fifth, and so on, resolved that before a complete quorum was present half of the month would be gone and with it most of the archbishop's provender, for his lordship, according to the law of hospitality, was bound to entertain free of all charge to themselves the various nobles and their escorts.

On the first day of the month Winneburg entered the northern gate of Treves, accompanied by 200 horsemen and 800 foot soldiers. At first the officers of the archbishop thought that an invasion was contemplated, but Winneburg suavely explained that if a thing was worth doing at all it was worth doing well, and he was not going to make any hole and corner affair of his apology. Next day Beilstein came along accompanied by 500 cavalry and 500 foot soldiers. The chamberlain of the archbishop was in despair at having to find quarters for so many, but he did the best he could, while the archbishop was enraged to find that the nobles did not assemble in greater haste, but each, as he came, had a plausible excuse for his delay. Some had to build bridges, sickness had broken out in another camp, while a third expedition had lost its way and wandered in the forest. The streets of Treves each night resounded with songs of revelry, varied by the clash of swords, when a party of the newcomers fell foul of a party of the town soldiers, and the officers on either side had much ado to keep the peace among their men. The archbishop's wine cups were running dry, and the price of provisions had risen, the whole surrounding country being placed under contribution for provender and drink. When a week had elapsed, the archbishop relaxed his dignity and sent for Count Winneburg.

"We will not wait for the others," he said. "I have no desire to humiliate you unnecessarily. Those who are here will bear witness that you have apologized, and so I shall not insist on the presence of the laggards, but will receive your apology tomorrow at high noon in the great council chamber."

"Ah, there speaks a noble heart, ever thinking generously of those who despectfully use you, my lord archbishop," said Count Winneburg. "But no, no; I cannot accept such a sacrifice. The emperor showed me plainly the enormity of my offense. In the presence of all I insulted you, wretch that I am, and in the presence of all shall I abase myself?"

"But I do not seek your abasement," protested the archbishop, frowning.

"The more honor then to your benevolent nature," answered the count, "and the more shameful would it be of me to take advantage of it. As I stood a short time since on the walls I saw coming up the river the banners of the knight of Ehrenburg. His castle is the farthest removed from Treves, and so the others cannot surely delay long.

We will wait, my lord archbishop, until all are here. But I thank you just as much for your generosity as if I were craven enough to shield myself behind it."

The knight of Ehrenburg in due time arrived and behind him his thousand men, many of whom were compelled to sleep in the public buildings, for all the rooms in Treves were occupied. Next day the archbishop summoned the assembled nobles and said he would hear the apology in their presence. If the others missed it, it was their own fault; they should have been in time.

"I cannot apologize," said the count, "until all are here. It was the emperor's order, and who am I to disobey—my emperor? We must await their coming with patience, and indeed Treves is a goodly town, in which all of us find ourselves fully satisfied."

"Then my blessing on you all," said the archbishop in a sour tone most un-

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