

there was time to intercept him, time to carry off Sophy and the other inmates of the castle, send them back to safety within the walls of Volensl and himself ride on to meet Mistitch with his mind at ease.

Relying on Zerkovitch's information, he assumed that the troopers had not started from Slavna till 7 in the morning. They had started at 6. He reckoned also on Zerkovitch's statement that they were but fifty strong. They were a hundred. Yet, had he known the truth, he could not have used more haste, and he would not have waited for another man. He stayed to tell no man of Volensl the news about his father except Lukovitch. But as his twenty rode out of the gate behind him he turned his head to Zerkovitch, who trotted beside him, for Zerkovitch neither could nor would rest till the game was played, and said, "Tell them that the king is dead and that I reign." Zerkovitch whispered the news to the man next him, and it ran along the line. A low, stern cheer, hardly more than a murmured assurance of loyalty and service, came from the lips of the men in sheepskins.

Mistitch saw them coming and turned to his troop. He had time for a little speech, and Stafnitz had taught him what to say: "Men, you are servants of the king and of the king only. Not even the Prince of Slavna can command you against the king's orders. The king's orders are that we take Baroness Dobrava to Slavna, no matter who resists. If need be, these orders stand even against the prince." Stafnitz's soldiers—the men he petted, the men who had felt the prince's stern hand—were only too glad to hear it. To strike for the king and yet against the hated prince—it was a luxury, a happy and unlooked for harmonizing of their duty and their pleasure. Their answering cheer was loud and fierce.

It struck harsh on the ears of the advancing prince. His face grew hard and strained as he heard the shouts and saw the scolded body of men across the path, barring access to his own castle. And within a yard or two of their ranks by the side of the road sat the figure which he knew so well and so well loved.

Now Mistitch played his card, that move in the game which Sophy's cool submission to his demand had for the moment thwarted, but to which the prince's headlong anger and fear now gave an opening, the opening which Stafnitz had from the first foreseen. He would need little to make the fiery start of prudence when he was before the face with Mistitch. It was not a waste game for Mistitch personally—both Stafnitz and he knew that—but Captain Hercules was confident. He would not be caught twice by the Volensl trick of sword! The satisfaction of his revenge and the unstinted rewards that his colonel offered made it worth his while to accept the risk and rendered it grateful to his heart.

Sophy sat smiling. She would fain have averted the encounter and had shaped her maneuvers to that end. It was not to be so, it seemed. Now, she did not doubt monseigneur's success, but she wished that Zerkovitch had not reached Volensl so quickly; that the prince had stayed behind his walls till his plans were ready, and that she was going a prisoner to Slavna to see the king, trusting to her face, her tongue, her courage and the star of her own fortune. Never had her buoyant self confidence run higher.

On the top of the causeway Max von Hollbrandt looked to his revolver, Peter Vassip loosened his knife in its leather sheath. A window above the gate opened, and Marie Zerkovitch's frightened face looked out. The women servants jostled old Vassip in the doorway. The grooms stood outside the stables. No one moved. Only the prince's little troop came on. When they were fifty yards away Mistitch cried to his men, "Draw swords!" and himself pricked his horse with his spur and rode up to where Sophy was.

Mistitch drew his horse up parallel to Sophy's, head to tail, on her right side, between her and the approaching force. With the instinct of hatred she shrank away from him. It had all been foreseen and rehearsed in Stafnitz's mind. Mistitch cried loudly, "In the king's name, Baroness Dobrava!" He leaned from the saddle and caught her right wrist in his huge hand. He had the justification that at his first attempt to touch her Sophy's hand had flown to her little revolver and held it now. Mistitch crushed her wrist. The revolver fell to the ground. Sophy gave one cry of pain. Mistitch dropped her wrist and reached his arm about her waist. He was pulling her from her horse, while again he cried out: "In the king's name! On guard!"

It was a high jump from the top of the causeway, but two men took it side by side—Max von Hollbrandt, revolver in hand, Peter Vassip, with knife unsheathed.

As they leaped, another shout rang out, "Long live King Sergius!" The prince rode his fastest, but faster still rode Zerkovitch. He outpaced the prince and rode right in among Mistitch's men, crying loudly again and again, "The king is dead! The king is dead! The king is dead!"

Then came the prince. He rode full at Mistitch. His men followed him and dashed, with a shock, against the troopers of Mistitch's escort. As they rode they cried, "Long live King Sergius!" They had unhorsed a dozen men and wounded four or five before they realized that they met with no resistance. Mistitch's men were paralyzed. The king was dead. They were to fight against the king! The magic of the name worked. They dropped the points of their swords. The Volensl hesitating to strike men who did not defend themselves, puzzled and in doubt, turned to their ballist—their king—for his orders.

As the prince came up Mistitch hurled Sophy from him. She fell from her

horse, but fell on the soft, grassy roadside and sprang up unharmed save for a cruel pain in her crushed wrist. She turned her eyes whither all eyes were turned now. The general battle was stayed, but not the single combat. For a moment none moved save the two who were now to engage.

The fight of the Street of the Fountain fell to be fought again, for when Peter Vassip was darting forward, knife in hand, with a spring like a mountain goat, his master's voice called, "Mine, Peter; mine!" It was the old cry when they shot wild boar in the woods about Dobrava, and it brought Peter Vassip to a stand. Max von Hollbrandt, too, lowered his pointed revolver. Who should stand between his quarry and the king, between Sophy's lover and the man who had so outraged her? Big Mistitch was the king's game and the king's only that day.

Mistitch's chance was gone, and he must have known it. Where was the sergeant who had undertaken to cover him? He had turned tail. Where was the enveloping rush of his men, which should have engulfed and paralyzed the enemy? Paralysis was on his men themselves. They believed Zerkovitch and lacked appetite for the killing of a king. Where was his triumphant return to Slavna, his laurels, his rewards, his wonderful swaggerings at the Golden Lion? They were all gone. Even



Mistitch fell with a mighty crash, shot through the head.

though he killed the king, there were two dozen men vowed to have his life. They must have it, but at what price? His savage valor set the figure high.

It was the old fight again, but not in the old manner. There was no delicate sword play, no fluctuating fortunes in the fray. It was all stern and short. The king had not drawn his sword; Mistitch did not seek to draw his. Two shots rang out sharply—that was all. The king reeled in his saddle, but maintained his seat. Big Mistitch threw his hands above his head, with a loud cry, and fell, with a mighty crash, on the road, shot through the head. Peter Vassip ran to the king and helped him to dismount, while Max von Hollbrandt held his horse. Sophy hurried to where they laid him by the roadside.

"Disarm these fellows!" cried Zerkovitch. But Mistitch's escort were in no mood to wait for this operation, nor to stay and suffer the anger of the king. With their leader's fall the last of heart was out of them. Wrenching themselves free from such of the Volensians as sought to arrest their flight, they turned their horses' heads and fled, one and all, for Slavna. The king's men attempted no pursuit. They clustered around the spot where he lay.

"I'm hit," he said to Sophy, "but not badly, I think." From the castle door, down the causeway, came Marie Zerkovitch, weeping passionately, wringing her hands. The soldiers parted their close ranks to let her through. She came to the roadside where Sophy supported monseigneur's head upon her knees. Sophy looked up and saw her. Marie did not speak.

She stood there, sobbing and wringing her hands over Sophy and the wounded king. That afternoon, an hour after the first of the straggling rout of Mistitch's escort came in, King Alexis died suddenly! So ran the official notice, indorsed by Dr. Natcheff's high authority. The coterie were in up to their necks. They could not go back now. They must go through with it. Countess Ellenburg took to her knees. Stenovics and Stafnitz held long conversations. Every point of tactical importance in the city was occupied by troops. Slavna was silent, expectant, curious.

Markart woke at 5 o'clock, heavy of head, dry in the mouth, sick and ill. He found himself no longer in the king's suit, but in one of the apartments which Stafnitz had occupied. He was all alone. The door stood open. He understood that he was no more a prisoner. He knew that the king was dead.

But who else was dead, and who alive, and who king in Slavna? He forced himself to rise and hurried through the corridors of the palace. They were deserted. There was nobody to hinder him, nobody of whom to ask a question. He saw a decanter of brandy standing near the door of one room and drank freely of it. Then he made his way into the garden. He saw men streaming over the bridge toward Slavna and hastened after them as quickly as he could. His head was still in a maze. He remembered nothing after drinking the glass of wine which Lepage the valet had given him, but he was possessed by a strong excitement, and he followed obstinately in the wake of the throng which set

from the palace and the suburbs into Slavna.

The streets were quiet. Soldiers occupied the corners of the ways. They looked curiously at Markart's pale face and disordered uniform. A dull roar came from the direction of St. Michael's square, and thither Markart aimed his course. He found all one side of the square full of a dense crowd, swaying, jostling, talking. On the other side troops were massed. In an open space in front of the troops, facing the crowd, was Colonel Stafnitz and by his side a little boy on a white pony.

Markart was too far off to hear what Stafnitz said when he began to speak—nay, the cheers of the troops behind the colonel came so sharp on his words as almost to drown them, and after a moment's hesitation, as it seemed to Markart, the crowd of people on the other side of the square echoed back the acclamations of the soldiers.

All Countess Ellenburg's ambitions were at stake. For Stenovics and Stafnitz it was a matter of life itself now, so daringly had they raised their hands against King Sergius. Countess Ellenburg had indeed prayed, and now prayed all alone in a deserted palace, but not one of the three had hesitated. At the head of a united army, in the name of a united people, Stafnitz had demanded the proclamation of young Alexis as king. For an hour Stenovics had made a show of demurring; then he bowed to the national will. That night young Alexis enjoyed more honor than he had asked of Lepage the valet—he was called not prince, but majesty. He was king in Slavna, and the first work to which they set his childish hand was the proclamation of a state of siege.

Slavna chose him willingly or because it must at the bidding of the soldiers, but Volensl was of another mind. They would not have the German woman's son to reign over them. Into that faithful city the wounded king threw himself, with all his friends.

The body of Mistitch lay all day and all night by the wayside. Next morning at dawn the king's grooms came back from Volensl and buried it under a clump of trees by the side of the lane running down to Lake Taiti. Their curses were the only words spoken over the grave, and they flattened the earth level with the ground again that none might know where the man rested who had lifted his hand against their master.

The king was carried to Volensl sore stricken. They did not know whether he would live or die. He had a dangerous wound in the lungs, and, to make matters worse, the surgical skill available at Volensl was very primitive.

But in that regard fortune brought aid and brought also to Sophy a strange conjecture of the new life with the old. The landlord of the inn sent word to Lukovitch that two foreign gentlemen had arrived at his house that afternoon and that the passport of one of them described him as a surgeon. The landlord had told him how things stood, and he was anxious to render help.

It was Basil Williamson, Dunstanbury and he, accompanied by Henry Brown, Dunstanbury's servant, had reached Volensl that day on their return from a tour in the Crimea and around the shores of the sea of Azof.

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Time Table

In Effect April 26, '08

NORTH BOUND.
No. 236—Paducah-Cairo Accommodation leave.....6 42 a.m.
No. 206—Evansville and Louisville Express arrive.....11 20 a.m.
No. 26—Chicago-Nashville Limited.....8 15 p.m.
SOUTH BOUND.
No. 25—Nashville and Chicago Limited.....6 42 a.m.
No. 205—Evansville-Paducah-Louisville Express arrive.....6 25 p.m.
No. 821—Evansville and Nashville Mail.....8 50 p.m.

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TIME TABLE.

TRAINS GOING NORTH.
No. 52—St. Louis Express, 10:16 a.m.
No. 54—St. L. Fast Mail, 10:05 p.m.
No. 92—C. & St. L. Lim., 6:09 a.m.
No. 56—Hopkinsville Ac. 8:55 p.m.
No. 94.—Dixie Flyer, 5:43 p.m.
TRAINS GOING SOUTH.
No. 51—St. L. Express 5:19 p.m.
No. 53—St. L. Fast Mail 5:37 a.m.
No. 93—C. & N. O. Lim. 11:50 p.m.
No. 55—Hopkinsville Ac. 7:05 a.m.
No. 95.—Dixie Flyer, 9:37 a.m.
No. 52 and 54 connect at St. Louis points west.
No. 51 connects at Guthrie for Memphis, Louisville, Cincinnati and all points north and east thereof. No. 53 and 55 also connect for Memphis and way points.
No. 92 runs through to Chicago and will not carry passengers to point South of Evansville. Also carries through sleepers to St. Louis, Memphis, Jackson, Augustina and Tampa. Via Also Pullman sleepers to New Orleans. Connects at Guthrie for points East and West. Will not carry local passengers for points North Nashville Tenn.