

# The Knight of the Silver Star

A Romance of  
Drussenland

By PERCY BRENNER

Copyright, 1907, by R. F. Fenno & Co.

[CONTINUED.]

Purposely, I think, the princess did not keep the council waiting. I had



"BEHONEST MEN, NOT POOLS OF PASSION."

taken my place only a few moments when the curtains were drawn, and she stepped to her seat. She shot one swift glance at me—so swift that I doubt if any other noticed it. She bowed proudly as a roar of voices welcomed her, but she looked pale and anxious.

"It has ever been our custom in Drussenland to let even a prisoner speak an answer to his accusers." It was a relief to hear her voice break the silence. She spoke softly, yet so clearly that she must have been heard even in the farthest corner. "In these days, however, it has pleased certain of our subjects to speak bitterly of one who is not a prisoner—one who came to us and was welcomed by us as a knight long expected in our land. The judgment that he was what he has claimed to be rested not with us. Wisdom greater than ours declared his coming to be propitious to our state, and in arms he has borne himself gallantly, as many a valiant warrior can here attest. Yet some among us have spoken bitterly of him, and more—have, in their hearts, condemned him without a hearing. That is indeed injustice.

"But worse offense has been committed. In our own palace, at our very door, was this knight attacked while he guarded our person. If the assassin's knife were raised against us, then truly we and all our loyal subjects owe this knight thanks for his protection of us. If, as some affirm, the attack was made upon the knight, then are there some among us whom it would be well to stamp out, since for lack of courage they seek to murder and are no true Drussenlanders. We know that the hand which held the knife was not the hand of him who devised the crime. The tool paid dearly for his part, and so in good time shall they who planned and who, to screen themselves from our anger, silenced forever the guards who could have betrayed them. Now we are here not to judge, nor of our wish is this council called together. It is by the wish of the knight you have accused; not all of you, but some. Only vaguely he has heard the charges brought against him, and, since there can be no steady answer to vague rumor, it is our will that you who have sought to say speak and that the knight shall answer you. You who listen," and she swept her arm round to include every upturned face in the hall—"you who listen give a patient hearing. We seek not to guide you, but be honest men, not fools of passion to be led by every one who tries to move you. Be Drussenlanders, not wretches making our street corners dangerous, men ready to creep in the dark and stab from behind. I have gloried in that I am your princess, gloried in the brave hearts I rule, gloried in your deeds, have been proud to cry to the whole world that I am a princess in Drussenland, but show me that you are cravens, men afraid to meet their enemy face to face, and I will fling this golden circle of my sovereignty among you. Make whom you will your ruler. I should think it shame to call such men my subjects."

For a moment there was silence; then a murmur ran through the hall and then a great roar. She had touched them. Dextrously she had paved the way for me.

"You, our priests, have somewhat against the knight," she said when the shouting had ceased, "and you, our loyal knights. Speak honestly, and you, Sir Verrall, answer honestly, so justice shall be done."

She looked first at the chief of the priests, then at Count Vasca and then at me.

The priest began to speak in a rather singsong tone, as though he were reciting a lesson he had committed to memory.

"The expected knight was to do many things in Drussenland," he said. "He was to bring peace and plenty into it. That he should be mighty in achievement I believed, but with that I have nothing to do. My office hinders me from wielding a sword, and, though my heart may leap at the sight of brave deeds, I can have no part in them. My office is to watch over the sacred things of this land, to punish those who bring our great religion into disrepute, giving occasion to those of lesser intellect to revile and turn the God we worship into a jest.

"Your highness has broken a law, and therefore your people have broken a law. Think you peace and plenty shall be poured into the laps of those who sin? I rejoiced at the knight's coming, so is my sorrow keen that he has made his mission of none effect. For him punishment awaits at the hand of him who sent him. Our duty is not to delay his going. If it be so willed that as he came miraculously so miraculously can he be taken from us, then it shall be. But death is the only means we mortals know of by which he can return. Therefore by death should we seek pardon for ourselves. I would my words could take a happier tone. If my eyes are blinded, if I have not read our laws aright, then power will be granted to the knight to increase my wisdom. I wish not to condemn him unheard. It is not I that condemn him—it is our religion which does so."

"For my own part, I had rather remain silent," said Count Vasca. "It may seem envious in me to seek to condemn a knight who in tournament has met me honestly and in the field has fought valiantly. Indeed, I speak only for the many as chief of the knights who attend your highness."

"That we know, Sir Vasca," said the princess, looking fixedly at him.

She did not take her eyes from him while he spoke. Perhaps he saw distrust in them, for, after beginning so humbly, he went on bitterly enough: "The priest has spoken of the laws. With them I have nothing to do, but since the priests and I have been often at variance, in that we are agreed in this matter proves the justice of our complaint. The knight was to accomplish two things with which I am concerned—to place your highness on the throne in Yadasara and to find a treasure that should bring plenty to our land. I blame not that these things are not yet accomplished, but that nothing has been done. We are at present a divided country, and whichever side finds the treasure wins also the throne in Yadasara. These foreign dogs the king has brought into this land would leave him tomorrow were they paid for doing so, and there are hundreds of men in this city who would march to Yadasara tomorrow were the treasure in the king's hands. The time is ripe to win or to lose, for success or rebellion. They expected much of Sir Verrall's coming. They believe they are doomed to disappointment, therefore they cry out. Though, as a true Drussenlander, I have no pity for those who attacked the knight when he stood your highness' sentinel, still I affirm that he has only himself to blame. If he is the expected knight let him fulfill his mission; if not let him answer for the lie which made us give him welcome."

A murmur of approbation sounded through the hall. Then all eyes turned toward me. I found courage in the look that was in the princess' eyes as she turned to me.

"I am accused of breaking a law or of causing your highness to break it," I said. "It is true. That I succeeded, though with difficulty, as you, who heard me make my petition, know well, is the greatest good I have accomplished since I have been in Drussenland. I will tell you why. Your priest said if he had judged amiss I should have power to increase his wisdom. That power I have, I wish him power to understand, and not only the priest, but all you who hear me. From whence I came you do not know. You have a legend which you look to be fulfilled, and at my coming you welcomed me. Think you fulfillment comes exactly as men expect? The priests have wisdom, and they prophesy, but I came into Drussenland from a more enlightened country, where the wisdom of your priests would be but as the idle prattling of a child. This law of yours that prisoners of war shall be slain was framed when men knew little of him they worshipped. This he bids me tell you—that to kill men as you would kill your prisoners is murder. In that the priests prophesy disaster to this land because that law is broken they err most grievously. I prophesy peace for this land if you let mercy rule you rather than vengeance. I fear nothing of what you can do to me. Death! What is it? A moment in time that sends me to a life of rest. But I have a mission, as every true man has, and if in living I cannot fulfill it I shall be fulfilled in dying. That is my answer to your priests. They err from ignorance. I have been given power to speak wisdom to them. Let them beware how they shut their ears to the voice that speaks the truth."

"Count Vasca's accusation is of a different kind. I have not yet placed your princess on the throne in Yadasara. I have not yet found the treasure hidden in this land. But he has made a graver accusation, not against me, but against you. What men are they who hold loyalty so lightly, who care so little who reigns over them, who grumble so loudly and who would so readily march to Yadasara to fight against her highness? Who are they? Speak! In her highness' name, I promise pardon to any man who confesses to disloyalty. No answer? What! Are we so strangely

divided that in this hall only loyal subjects find a place? Are all the murmurers without? Remember, the count accused you, not I. I have fought beside some of you. I have witnessed many of you do gallantly. I have more faith in you than the count has."

And then, turning quickly to the princess, I added:

"These are honest men, your highness, but they feared to contradict your kinsman."

The rafters rang again. I had become an orator to some purpose.

"You see, Count Vasca, you were mistaken. Why, when the enemy fled across the river the other day were we not led to follow them? You are a soldier. You know why. The time was not ripe. It would have been to court defeat. We knew not at what point the city was least defended. Neither is the time ripe for the finding of the treasure, but it ripens."

"Any knight could speak so. We expect deeds, not words, from Sir Verrall," he answered.

"You have forced me to words. Mark you not!"—and I spoke to those in the hall—"mark you not how the two things go together? To set the princess on the throne in Yadasara and to find a treasure. At the sword's point must one be accomplished. Is it not the sword's point which shall unlock the hiding place of the other? Your treasure lies hidden where only knightly deeds can win it. Your treasure is valueless until the foreigner is driven from the land. Where think you a treasure would most likely lie in Drussenland? Where but in the greatest stronghold the land contains—in the fortress of Yadasara?"

Again the rafters rang. The knights shouted as good knights will shout at the promise of conflict. Even the priests forgot to scowl and listened.

"Here are swords in plenty. Lead us to victory!" So the knights shouted, and I knew that the greatest danger was over.

"I will do more," I said. "Three days hence I will go to Yadasara. I will enter the city and spy out its weakness—that is, if her highness gives me leave."

The count's lip curled.

"You will not return," he said.

"I shall, Count Vasca. I shall return to lead loyal men to victory."

I turned to face the now excited crowd. I spread out my arms, and I cried to them:

"Sir knights, loyal men of Drussenland, have I answered my accusers? Shout your trust in me, or, if there is no trust, see here I stand unarmed, draw your weapons and slay me."

I had played a bold game. It had served me well. I had won.

## CHAPTER XIV.

WE did not move until the princess had risen, which she did almost immediately. There was a flush upon her face as she retired. I could read in it a look of triumph, but I think no one else there could tell whether she was pleased or not at the turn things had taken. The moment the curtains had fallen behind her the priests moved away in procession, their chief looking at me for a moment almost as if I had increased his wisdom, but he left me without speaking. Then several knights, my friends, gathered round me. I had their good will, but I noted that I had not converted a single one who was avowedly opposed to me. They crossed to Count Vasca, and he smiled. So we stood in two parties upon the platform.

"The rabble is easily moved, Sir Verrall," he said contemptuously.

He passed down the steps and across the hall, followed by more than half the knights who had stood round the princess.

"The people shouted 'Sir Verrall,' but not all," said a knight beside me. "We will go with you to your quarters."

"I thank you, gentlemen. I would willingly keep my life a little, since I have so much to do in it."

From a shadow a lady stepped suddenly—the Lady Aldrida.

"By your leave I would speak with Sir Verrall."

She came close to me, and there was that in her face that made me look at her hands. They were empty, hanging at her side.

That she was agitated need hardly be stated. Our conversation was hurried, but every word she uttered showed that she felt I had played her wrongfully. In conclusion she said:

"You shall regret the friendship, Sir Verrall. You may escape the swords of your enemies, but I will so contrive that you shall not escape my vengeance. It is a dangerous thing to play with such a woman as I am."

She moved away from me, and the knights came to my side again.

She laughed bitterly.

"Guard him well, gentlemen, if you would keep him. I do not envy you so false a friend."

We were leaving the hall when Jasar met us. Two of the princess' guards were with him.

"Her highness commands your presence, Sir Verrall," he said.

"Her highness thinks I need protection," I said to my comrades. "It will save you the trouble of seeing me to my quarters. We are of one mind. Is it not so? Each one of us holds his life as naught beside the safety of the princess."

I turned and went with Jasar through the hall and along the maze of corridors which led to the secret entrance to the princess' apartment. The priest and I entered.

The princess was alone and rose to meet me. I would have knelt to kiss her hand, but she would not let me. I raised her hand to my lips as I stood instead.

"It was bravely done, but why put off your going for three days?" she asked.

"Are you so anxious for me to be gone?"

"Nay, but three days is a long time. Much may happen in it."

"I had almost hoped that much might happen," I answered softly.

She looked at me, and then her eyes fell. I have ever understood that it is a good sign with women.

"You led me to hope so when we parted last night," I said. "I made a confession which I shall never make to any other woman. I grant it might have angered you, yet it seemed not to do so."

"Indeed, I was not angry."

"And now?"

"Now I think only of your safety, though I doubt whether you are not going to greater danger in Yadasara. But three days give opportunity to your enemies. They could watch for you. You must not wait. You must go tonight. Within your prison—and he pointed to the room where I had been nursed so tenderly—"you will find a peasant's dress. Your man O'Ryan says that so it will be safest for you to go, and I trust his wit. Jasar, send one of the guards to attend the knight. Return quickly, Sir Verrall, for midnight will not be long in coming."

I was not long in returning to her dressed in my peasant's garb, but I retained my sword. Jasar did not come back to the princess with me. The priest had quick understanding, for which I was duly thankful.

"Sit by me," she said. "I would not let you go if there were any other way. But there is none, for the door which leads to the world beyond is a secret one."

"But if I find the key?"

"If it is the only way open, I"—

"Yes?"

"You may ask me again if I will come."

"Be sure I shall not return to that other world alone."

She let her hand rest lightly on my arm, but I fancied there was a soft caress in it.

"And be sure I shall think well before I answer. Ah, no, do not speak; words will not convince me. I have had leisure to note how much value there is in words."

"You are thinking of the Lady Aldrida?"

She smiled.

"Perhaps. Is it strange, since you loved her first?"

"I never loved her. It was your treatment of me that made me seem to. Your cold reception stung me, although I had no right to expect any other, and when a man loves he grows desperate. You cared nothing for me."



"BE SURE I SHALL NOT RETURN TO THAT OTHER WORLD ALONE."

and, fool that I was, I tried to make you believe that I cared nothing for you."

"And, in truth, you succeeded."

"Why did you receive me so coldly? I looked for gladness in your eyes after the tournament."

"I had a secret to keep."

"Even then?" I asked.

"The princess could have smiled; the woman dared not. I was afraid of you, of myself, of all the world."

"Do you still doubt me?"

"I am waiting to be convinced."

"Lady Aldrida came to me after the council and accused me of being false," I said. "She spoke most bitterly."

"And you soothed her?"

"I fear not. I told her that imagination had played too great a part with her and that I had said no more to her than many others had done and will do again to so pretty a lady."

"And she left you amicably?"

"No—roving vengeance."

The princess started.

"She cannot harm me," I said. "Today has proved my friends, and they have sworn to protect your highness."

"I have no fear. What do you fear for me?"

"Because I love you I fear all things. Do you know that it is whispered in the city that I seek to become a king in Drussenland?"

"Who whispers it?"

"I know not who started it, but I heard it when I first entered the hall today, and Lady Aldrida had heard it, for she said prying eyes might look into even the princess' garden."

She turned sharply as if expecting to find that we were being watched now.

"It is well that you go tonight," she said suddenly.

"You regret what you said last night?" I asked. "Perhaps, for your sake, it would be well if I did not return."

"I do not regret. I have said you must return."

I could not answer her, for Jasar entered.

"All is in readiness, your highness."

"We will come. Leave us a moment. You will depart by a secret way, Sir Verrall, by a door which opens into the woods that touch the outer walls. The woods lie along the spur of the hill, so that you will pass the camp unnoticed. Two good horses await you, and for the rest your wit must serve. Go warily, for my sake. It may chance that it would be convenient to return secretly; there is the key."

She gave me the key, and I slipped it into the pouch at my waist.

Her hand was in mine, and so we stood looking into each other's eyes.

"Will you believe me when I say I love you, and only you?"

She did not answer.

"Once you angrily reclaimed the handkerchief I thought you had given me. Will you give me your handkerchief now?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

De Ghosts Haunt Swamps?

No, Never. Its foolish to fear a fancied evil, when there are real and deadly perils to guard against in swamps and marshes, bayous, and lowlands. These are the malaria germs that cause ague, chills and fever, weakness, aches in the bones and muscles and may induce deadly typhoid. But Electric Bitters destroys and casts out these vicious germs from the blood. "Three bottles drove all the malaria from my system," wrote Wm. Fretwell of Lucama, N. C., "and I've had fine health ever since." Use this safe, sure remedy only. 50c at O. M. Olsen.

# Electric Bitters

Succeed when everything else fails. In nervous prostration and female weaknesses they are the supreme remedy, as thousands have testified. **FOR KIDNEY, LIVER AND STOMACH TROUBLE** It is the best medicine ever sold over a druggist's counter.

WHEN IN MINNEAPOLIS

VISIT THE

## GAYETY

FINEST BURLESQUE THEATRE IN THE ENTIRE NORTHWEST

TWO SHOWS DAILY

MATINEE 2:30 EVENING 8:15

SMOKING PERMITTED

PRICES 10, 20, 30, 50 AND 75c.

## It Startled the World

when the astounding claims were first made for Bucklen's Arnica Salve, but forty years of wonderful cures have proved them true, and everywhere it is now known as the best salve on earth for Burns, Boils, Scalds, Sores, Cuts, Bruises, Sprains, Swellings, Eczema, Chapped hands, Fever Sores and Piles. Only 25c at O. M. Olsen

## UP - to - DATE MILLINERY AT REASONABLE PRICES.



MRS. CHAS. ROLLOFF

COME AND SEE OUR

## Perfection Blue Flame OIL STOVE

We carry the two and three burner with or without cabinet. We also carry a full line of ovens and Gasoline Stoves.

## New Ulm Hardware Company

## CREAM BREAD

Leads the Way to Easy Housekeeping

Relieves the housekeepers from the drudgery of doing the baking. Saves them the worry and disappointment of baking small batches at home.

Made of best flour. Has that "Good-Bread" taste.

Try just one loaf and you'll want another.

Wholesome and Hunger-Satisfying.

25 oz. loaf—nearly as large as 2 common loaves—10c

AT YOUR GROCER'S OR THE BAKERY

## THE HOME BAKERY

Wd. Eibner, Prop.