BY HAROLD MACGRATH. (Continued from last week.) "Will herr keep perfectly quiet if I

mouth?" he asked. I nodded, bewil-

handkerchief from his

"What in tophet does this mean?" I asked. I did not say tophet, but it looks better in writing. 11

"It means nothing and everything," was the answer. "In the first place, herr will fight no duel. The man with whom you were to fight was sent on an errand to this out of the way place as a punishment for his dueling at the capital. I know him by reputation. He is a brawler, but a fair swordsman. He would halve you as I would a chicken. There is another who has a 1 prior claim on him. If there is anything left of Herr Lieutenant at the end of the fray, you are welcome to it. Wes: there will be a duel, but you will not be one of the principals. It is all

"But I do not understand," I cried. "It is not necessary that you should." He laughed and rubbed his hands pleasurable anticipation. "There is young man down stairs who arrived a few moments before the lieutenant. He has a special affair. There were words. Herr Lieutenant is mad enough to fight a whole company."

"Then why in heaven's name am I up here in this condition?" I cried. "Let me go and be the young man's second, though I can't for the life of me see where he has come from so suddenly and I might say opportunely. Come, cut me loose."

"It is too late." "Too late?"

"Yes. Herr Lieutenant has been informed that you ran away." "Ran away!" I roared. "You told him that I ran away? Curse your insolence! I'll break every bone in your

"The ropes are new," said he. "You'll

body for this!" I cried, straining at the

"You told him that I ran away?" This was too much.

"Yes. Ah, but you will be surprised. The duel will last five minutes. Herr Lieutenant will thrust. The thrust will be parried. He will feint; useless. Thrust on thrust, parry on parry. Consternation will take the place of confidence. He will grow nervous. He will try all his little tricks, and they will fail. Then his eyes will roll and his breath come in gasps. Suddenly he thinks he sees an opening. He lunges. Ach, the fool, it is all over!" The old man's voice quivered with excitement. He had passed his time in the barracks and had seen many a sword skirmish. "Well, are you going to take off these

"No. You would break every bone in my body." I groaned in exasperation

"You will soon be out of breath." Oh, could I have but loosened those

"Stahlberg, who left the service a year ago, will act in the canacity of second." Stahlberg was at the head of the vineyard. "I shall watch the affair from the window here. The scene of action will take place in the clearing beyond. It will be an affair worth wit-

"And where is Gretchen?" "Where she should be-at the bar, a dutiful barmaid." Then I heard nothing but the deep cachinnations of the innkeeper. There was something in the affair which appealed to his humor. I could not see it. For ten minutes my vocabulary was strictly unprintable.

"Will you kindly tell me what the meaning of all this is?" "Herr Winthrop, the idyl has come to an end. The epic new begins."

CHAPTER XIL

The golden summer moon was far up now, and the yellow light of it came into the window and illumined the grim face of the innkeeper, throwing a grotesque shadow of him on to the floor. The leaves rustled and purred against the eaves. As the branches moved so did the light and darkness move over the innkeeper's visage. He was silent and meditative.

"An epic?" I said. "An epic." said 1, "if I give you my word of honor not to molest you or leave this room will you let me be a

He passed into the gloom, then back into the light. "This is no trick?" suspiciously. "I have a deal of regard for my old bones, old as they are."

"Well, I'll do it. It is in the blood of us all. But a false move on your part, and I promise you that this knife shall find a resting place in you."

He cut the ropes, and I was free. But my arms ached. The two of us took our stand by the window and waited for the principals in the drams

ata ut to be enacted in the clearing. confess that my conscience was ill at ease. Why I knew not. I was dreading something. I knew not what The innkeeper's hand trembled on my arm.

"Sh! They come," he whispered. As I looked beyond his finger I saw four figures advance over the sward. One of them, a slight boyish form, was new to me. The fellow walked briskly When they came to the clearing, they topped. The seconds went through

places in the village in and around the barracks. He took his position, back to me, so I could not tell what he was like. The moon shone squarely in the lieutenant's face, upon which was an expression of contempt mingled with confidence. My heart thumped, for l had never seen a duel before.

"I do not know where you came from," I heard the lieutenant say, "but you managed nicely to pick a quarrel. It is all on your own head. It is too bad that cur of an Englishman had to

The innkeeper's knife was so close that I could feel the point of it against my ribs. So I gave up the wild idea of yelling from the window that I hadn't run away. The lieutenant's opponent shrugged. He placed himself on guard. That was his reply. Suddenly the two sprang forward, and the clash of swords followed. I could not keep track of the weapons, but I could see that the youngster was holding his own amazingly well. Neither was touched the first bout.

"Two minutes," murmured the old rascal at my side, "It will be over this time." al alari D) Or adf amibros "You seem to have a good deal of

confidence in your man," said L "There is not a finer swords-swordsman in the kingdom, or on the continent for that matter. There, they are

Step by step the lieutenant gave ground. The clashing had stopped. It was needlelike work now. Gradually they began to turn around. The blades flashed in the moonshine like heat lightning. My pulse attuned itself to every stroke. I heard a laugh. It was full of scorn. The laugh-it recalled to me a laugh I had heard before. Evidently the youngster was playing with the veteran. I became fascinated, And while the innkeeper and I watched a curious thing happened. Something seemed to be slipping from the youngster's head. He tried to put up his free hand, but the lieutenant was making furious passes. A flood of something dimly rellow suddenly fell about the lad's shoulders. Oh, then I knew! With a snarl of rage I took the innkeeper by the throat and hurled him, knife and all, to the floor, dashed from the room, thence to the stairs, down which I leaped four at a time. Quick as I was, I was too late. The lieutenant's sword lay on the grass, and he was clasping his shoulder, with the sweat of agony

"A woman!" he groaned. "A woman!" Then he tottered and fell in the arms of his subordinate. He had faint-

"This will make a pretty story?" cried the young officer as he laid his superior lengthwise and tried to stanch the flow of blood. "Here's a man who runs away and lets a woman -God knows what sort-fight his duels

I never looked at him, but went straight to Gretchen. Stahlberg gave me a questioning glance and made a move as though to step between,

"Stand aside, man!" I snapped. "Gretchen, you have dishonored me." "It were better than to bury you," lightly. "I assure you he caused me no little exertion."

Yet her voice shook, and she shuddered as she cast aside the sword. "You have made a laughing stock of me. I am a man and can fight my own



battles." I said sternly. "My God," breaking down suddenly, "supposing

you had been killed!" "It was not possible. And the man insulted me, not you. A woman? Very well. I can defend myself against everything but calumny. Have I made a laughing stock of you? It is nothing to me. It would not have altered my"- She was very white, and she stroked her forebead.

it would not have altered my deternination to take the sword in hand

She put her hand to her throat as though something there had tightened. "Ah. I am a woman, for I believe that am about to faint. No!" imperiously as I threw out my arms to catch her. "I can reach the door alone with-

had always loved her. I had never loved any one else. I was a coward to I crushed her to my breast and kind her lips, not once, but many times.

"How dare you?" weakly. "How dare I, Gretchen, dear Gret- the line, with the enemy thundering chen?" I said. "I dare because I love toward you sabers flashing in the sun-

we you. Shall I tell you for a regiment and a bad moment for Still, there is left"-"Dan, what are you talking about?"

you love me!"

tched woman in the world. Do not

follow me, berr. Leave me; I beg you

And she passed through the doorway

into the darkness beyond. I did upt

move from where I stood. I grew

afraid that it was a dream and that

I moved it would vanish, I could ret

in my arms. My lips still tingled and

loved me! She had not told me so, bu

knew. She had put her heart before

mine. My life was dearer to her than

her own. I could have laughed for joy.

She loved mel My love overwhelmed

"I know you," said a barsh voice a

my elbow. It startled me, and I wheel-

ed swiftly. It was the lieutenant's

brother officer. "I thought from what I

heard of you that you were a man

worth trouble and caution. Ach, you,

the man we have scoured the country

for? I should not have believed it.

To let a woman fight for him! And

she-she is more than a woman-she is

a goddess!" with enthusiasm. "If I

I had to hunt in heaven and hell for

her. And what does she see in you?"

warn you that your race is run. You

cannot leave a railway station within

the radius of a hundred miles. The

best thing you can do is to swim the

river and stop in the middle. The

prince is at the village, and be shall

"Young man," said a voice from over

my shoulder from the doorway, you

should by right address those imperti-

nent remarks to me. I am Hillars, the

And I had forgotten his very ex-

istence! What did he know? What

"You may inform Count von Wal-

den," continued Dan, "that I shall

await his advent with the greatest of

impatience. Now let me add that you

are treating this gentleman with much

injustice. I'll stake my life on his

courage. The Princess Hildegarde is

alone responsible for what has just

"The Princess Hildegardel" I cried.

is none of your business or mine.

Why she substituted herself concerns

her and this gentleman only. Now go,

and be hauged to you and your prince

and your count and your whole stupid

The fellow looked first at me, then

"I apologize," he said to Dan, "for

mistaking this man for you." He click-

ed his heels, swung around and march-

I dumbly followed him up to my

"Got any tobacco?" he asked, taking

out a black pipe. "I have not had a

good smoke in a week. I want to smoke

I now knew that he had been a wit

ness to all or at least to the larger part

"There is some tobacco on the table,"

I said humbly. I felt that I bad wrong-

ed him in some manner, though unin-

tentionally. "The Princess Hildegarde!"

"The very person," said Hillars. He

lit his pipe and sat on the edge of the

bed. He puffed and puffed, and I

thought he never would begin. Pres-

ently he said, "And you never suspect

"On my word of honor, I did not,

Dan," said I, staring at the faded de-

signs in the carpet. The golden gal-

leon had gone down, and naught but a

few bubbles told where she had once

so proudly ridden the waters of the

ea. The Princess Hildegarde! The

"I am glad you did not know," said

Dan, "because I have always believed

in your friendship. Yet it is something

we cannot help, this loving a woman. Why, a man will lay down his life for

his friend, but he will rob him of the

woman he loves. It is life. You love

"Yes." I took out my own pipe now.

But what's the use? She is a prin-

cess. Why. I thought her at first a

barmuid-a barmaid! Then I thought

her to be in some way a lawbreaker, a

socialist conspirator. It would be droll

if it were not sad. The Princess Hilde-

garde!" I laughed dismally. "Dan,

old man, let's dig out at once and close

the page. We'll talk it over when we

"No: we will face it out. She loves

you. Why not? So do I." He got off

the bed and came over to me and rest-

ed his hands on my shoulders. "Jack,

my son, next to her I love you better

than anything in the world. We have

worked together, starved together,

smoked and laughed together. There

is a bond between us that no human

force can separate. The princess, if

she cannot marry you, snar not marry

the prince. I have a vague idea that

it is written. The moving finger

writes and, having writ, moves on,

meditation is neither rashness nor

ecklessness. Jack, life has begun with

When there is nothing more to live for,

it is time to die. But how? That is

the question. A war would be a god-

are a lazy lot or cowardly or both. Had

I a regiment, what a death! Jack, do

"Dan, you will do nothing rash or

We cannot cancel a line of it."

dream was gone. Castles, castles!

room. He struck a match and lit the

country. Come, Jack!"

"Come," said Dan.

awhile before I talk."

ed who she was?"

her, of course."

Hillars went on: "Why she did this

know. Woe to you you meddler!

man you seek."

He snapped his fingers derisively.

was betrothed to her, I'd find her

burned with the flame of hers.

exultant wave swept over me.

my shame, engulfed it. Then-

"I am the mos

Death-grim, gaunt and gray death, fail of snow; death, the silent one, as the Indian calls him." He knocked the ash from his pipe and stuffed the brier into his pocket.

"Jack, I am weary of it all. If I cannot die artistically. I wish to die a sudden and awful death. What! Do I look like a man to die in bed, in the inebriates' ward? For surely I shall land there soon! I am going to pieces suppose I'm talking nonsense. After all, I haven't as much to say as I I'm tired. You see, those fellows moved me around today."

CHAPTER XIII. Hillars and I stood in the middle of the road. He held the binoculars. "How many can you make out?" I

"Four. All on horseback. There's a coach of some sort following on behind. But everything is blurred, and my hand trembles. The whisky here is terrible. Here, look for yourself," handing the glasses to me. "Tell me

is Count von Walden! There are two soldiers in the Hohenphalian uniform, cavalry. I do not know who the fourth "Describe him to me," said Hillars,

trying to roll a cigarette with his tremfingers. "Curse it"-throwing away the rice paper-"I've got so bad that I can't roll a cigarette! Well, what's he look like?" "He's in civilian dress; has a little

black mustache and an imperial." "Look snything like Napoleon III?" "You've hit it. Who is he?" "They say he's Prince Ernst of Wor-

tumborg," said Hillars, "but it is my opinion that he's the devil on a fur-"Then he is the man"- I began. "He is Your love affair is all over once be gets here, unless"- Dan look-

ed at the sky as though he was undeelded about the weather. "Unless what?" I asked. "Oh, just unless," said he. "I'd give £5 for a glass of homemade whisky." "You've got a plan of some sort,"

said L "Speak it out." "It wasn't a plan; it was just an idea. It's gone now. Maybe it will come back later. Are you going to stay here or come with me and tackle a bottle of the innkeeper's Rhine wine? The German vinegar used to make you hila-

"What's the coach for?" I asked. "Are they going to carry us off like & couple of chickens?"

"I presume it is for her serene highness. I wonder how they found out she was here? Probably the lieutenant you were going to fight, but didn't, informed them. At any rate, the coach will not be for us. The prince will no bother with you and me while the princess is here. I don't know what they will do with us. Possibly noth ing; possibly put us in jail. Come along; I'm thirsty."

It was late in the afternoon of the day following. I had not seen her se rene highness the Princess Hildegarde -Gretchen. She had remained in her room, and all efforts of mine to hold communication with her had proved futile. I had stood at her door and supplicated. She had told me to go away. The innkeeper had scowled when I suggested that he carry a note to his mistress. He had refused.

"The princess receives po notes," he had said. "Gretchen-it was a differ-And Hillars had slept till after noon. had been a bad morning for m

The wounded lieutenant had been carried away the night before, and there had not been anything for me to de but wander about-waiting. "Will you help me with the Rhine wine?" asked Hillars.

"No. My head is ruadled enough a

"And why you?" "I shall know better how to irritate them," with a laugh, "They will no take any particular interest in you when they set eyes on me. Homo sum! I am the man they are looking for. They will find plenty of me. I shall

be a syndicate in myself. Where they

expect to find one man they will find a

dozen, all alive and kicking. It will be good sport." "What the devil are you up to?" I "Wait and see; wait and see. Come, let us receive them in the hall. The affair must be conducted on the line of court etiquette. First, we shall try to avert hostilities by the aid of diplo macy. If that fails, the princess herself will be made to vindicate us. And

"You are not going to drag her in!" "My dear Jack, of course not. Th prince and the count will do that for ns. You understand that she is con-

cerned in all that is to take place, do you not? Well, then, it will cost her "But this fellow, the prince!" I cried "Let us get out while there is time." Dan regarded me seriously.

"You aren't afraid of him. What de you want to run away for? My son there will be some very good sport be fore this is done. You will miss it by

marry her—the woman I love. The "To marry her-the woman I love! But it isn't any worse for you than for

m? Now, look pleas

prince, who was followed by two caralrymen. Hillars and I stood sliently by our chairs and waited. The prince, a man with a hooked nose, black eyes with balf shut lids, regarded me curiously. He had the air of one amused. When his eyes grew accustomed to the semidarkness of the room, the count sounded a note of satisfaction. "Ah, so you are here? You have

given me a devil of a chase!" eral," said Hillars, with a good humored smile. "But, may I ask, what the devil have you been chasing me for?" For reply the count turned to the cavalryman. "Arrest that man and bind him!" he said.

"You might make the order whole-sale," said I, stepping over to the side of Hillars.

"I told you there would be some sport," whispered Dan. He put his arm across my shoulders. "And who, in the name of Weimar, are you?" bawled the count. He scrutinized me intently. Then a light of recognition broke over his face. "The

other one! A nest of them!" "Count," interposed the prince, seating himself at the table, "let me have a short talk with them before you act. There may be extenuating circumstances. Anything of this sort amuses and interests me. Let us use a little diplomacy in the matter."

"Yes," said Hillars; "let us lie a lit-"And who can do it better than a

journalist?" the prince laughed. "Diplomatists," Hillars sent back. "What is her serene highness to you?" resumed the prince. "Nothing; positively nothing."

"Then you are afraid to acknowledge your regard for her?" "I?" Hillars dropped his arm from

my shoulders. "I am not afraid of



My hands were around the throat of Prince Ernst.

SDITHING-BUT even the const neise. Then he laughed. "If her serene highness was anything to me, your highness, I should not be afraid to say so any time, before the king himself,"

"You impudent"- But a wave of the prince's hand silenced the count. "Have patience, my friend. This is not impudence; it is courage and prudence. I believe," readdressing Hillars, "that once you were on the point of eloping with the Princess Hilde-

Hillars thrust his hands into his pockets. "So they say." "And yet you deny your regard for

"Oh, as to that affair," said Hillars easily, "it was the adventure more than anything else! It is not every man in my position who has such a chance. And then, perhaps, I saw a good newspaper story." The muscles in his faws hardened, despite the airy tone he

"I see that there is nothing to be got from you." Then the prince directed his glance to me. "And you Bir; what is she to you? What is her serene highness to you?" "She is everything in the world to

The consternation which followed cannot be described here. The count

stepped back dumfounded. Hillars regarded me as though he thought I had suddenly gone mad. The countenance of the prince alone remained unruffled. "Count," he said, laughing, "it seems that the princess gathers lovers as a woolen coat does teasels. Her lovers-

there must now be a legion!"

"You lie!" said Hillars, in an oddly suppressed tone. "You know that you The prince's lips drew to a thin line but that was all. "Still, who will dis

prove it?" he asked. "If you will allow me," said a voice behind usingso, sell rot place a modelo a We beheld the princess framed in the doorway. There was a pallor and

a look of utter weariness in her face. At the sight of her the count uncovered and the prince rose. "Your arrival is quite timely," said he. "Here are two champions of yours.

Come, which do you love?" A fury sprang to my head, and I in our patience. I warn you that I have no fear of the sabers back of

The same sabers leaped from their scabbards and fell stiffly against their ewners' shoulders instinctively. "Has it come to this," said the pi my honor must needs be defended by strangers and allens?' For the brief est space her glance plunged into my eyes. She moved toward the prince

"It is the will of the king," said the prince, a mocking smile on his lips. "And, though my honor is doubtful," went on the woman I leved, "you still would marry may!

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