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The Knight
Of the Silver Star

By PERCY BREBNER

CHAPTER XXI (Cont'd.) igorously, and his arm looked capable

"Shall I be allowed to speak?"

Oh, yes, but it would be well to have a care what you say, ch. cap

who had stood silently with folded arms, burst out laughing.

temptuously toward O'Ryan. "Rascal!" exclaimed the Irishman ex citedly.

"Steady." Costa interposed. "You will doubtless have the pleasure of withessing your enemy's discomfiture. but it is not for you to administer the punishment."

The city turned out to see me on



"I AM NO TRAITOR."

sat Count Vasca and next to the count Lady Aldrida. The count was paleproceedings thoroughly amused her. How difficult some Christian laws are to obey! How could I help hating this woman and this man?

Then the smiles went from the king's face, and those around him were si-

"I Suffered Years

for work and often results in permanent disability.

induced me to try

As long as pain is present in any part of the body rest is impossible and the system becoming weakened is exposed to any form of disease to which the sufferer may be inclined.

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"Madame," he said, turning to Daria. there is little need for us to tell you of what you are accused. In Drussenland there cannot be two rulers. It has pleased you to set yourself up against your rightful king and with the help of traitors to their king and their country to defy us for this long season, bringing war where peace should be. At your door lie in heaps the men who have fallen in defense of their country, and their blood cries to us to be avenged. Are there any words that can say aught in your defense? If so, speak them. This count shall judge you, not we, and truly your fair face should find many a one to deal

"I am no traitor." The words came firm and clear, no suspicion of trembling in her voice. She was as much a queen now as when I had first seen her, surrounded by her knights.

out lenient judgment."

"I stand here princess of Drussenland," she said. "The fortune of war places me here standing, while the real traitor remains seated in my presence. You, who call yourself the king, are no king, nor are you established here in Yadasara by the will of true Drussenlanders. You are king only by the help of these paid foreigners, whose very names and country are unknown to you. For the judgment of your court I care nothing."

"We shall find means to subdue that bold spirit within you, madame," said the king.

"To kill it, not to subdue it," she answered. "So have many spoken. Words come

easily. But let us argue a little, madame. In your accusations be just. We are not all foreigners. Am I not a Drussenlander?" "One I should have delighted to

honor had you been true to your country and your sovereign," was the an-I expected to see the king become

savage, but he astonished me by laugh. ing heartily. There was something of our own Charles II. about this monarch. If an answer were ready enough he could appreciate it, even if it were against himself

"See what we have lost. By being a king we forego the happiness of being honored by a queen. What will you say then, madame. of Count Vasca? Surely he is a true Drussenlander since he is your kinsman?"

"There are no words fitting. You and your assumption of majesty I can understand. You have fought me face to face, a determined struggle in which you have won. It was treach ery, indeed, but it was treachery open to the sun. If treachery can be honest, yours was. But for the man who hides his treachery behind a smile, who works in secret to destroy those he professes to honor; for the false friend, the coward who dare not be an open enemy, there are no words: Gather all the scoundiels there are in Drussenland together, take from each one the meanest trait he has, and of these traits build you up a man. Even then shall you have a man I would rather claim kindred, with than with Count Vasca.

"It seems you are a dangerous friend," said the king, turning to him. "Your majesty has not found me so."

"True. You see, malame, it is well sometimes to use similar weapons to those used by an adversary. If your enemy sends a spy we, too, must do the same or our ignorance may lose us the day. Count Vasca has received harsh language from your lips. What have you to say to your knight there? True. he was faithful to you, but be just. He is a spy. By a lie he entered Yadasara. He betrayed his friend, one Captain O'Ryan, who is with us to bear witness against him. More be attempted to kill him. What harsh words have you for that man there?"

The king's finger, pointed at me, caused all eyes to turn toward me: Da-

"Gather the best in Drussenland," she said-slowly. "Take what is bravest, truest, from them all and make me a man. A great Drussenlander indeed would he be, yet head and shoulders over him would rise Sir Verrall-Clinton Verrall-my knight of the Silver Star."

For some moments there was silence, and no voice was raised to sneer at the character which had been given me. "You have a powerful advocate, Sir Knight," said the king presently, "but there is another side to the question

which condemns you deeply." "I am not worthy either of such high praise, your majesty, or such deep condemnation." "You are modest as well as valiant,

it would seem." "I lay claim to being an honest gentleman. The world holds no higher distinction."

"Do honest men lie?" he asked severely. "You did, else had you not entered Yadasara the first time."

"Pardon, your highness. It was Captain O'Ryan who gave certain accounts of me, which satisfied you. In truth, my coming to the city was in the nature of a flight from my ene-

I was not disposed to spare O'Ryan. Why should I be?. "A valiant knight does not flee from his enemies," said the king "I fled from a would be assassin-

Count Vasca." "Truly, count, you have grievous. charges laid against you." "Who would believe the word of a

spy?" said the count savagely. "That is well spoken. Sir Knight. A spy! What say you to that?"

"Even what your majesty said just now. It is wise to handle similar weapons to those used by an enemy. In the princess camp there was not one spy, but a hundred. Ever since I came to Drussenland Count Vasca and his friends have been working to betray the princess. She had not been here now to hear your judgment had not that scoundrel turned against her in the day of battle, sealing a long season of treachery by a crime that any man must revolt at, that your majesty must hate."

You are here to defend yourself. Sir Knight, not to accuse our friends." "I have no defense," I answered. "I have fought for the princess I serve. I have done what a man can do, and my conscience acquits me. But I have a word for your majesty. if you will give me leave."

"Are words from such a man worth your majesty's attention?" said Vasca. When this man came to Drussenland he made great promises. He spoke boastfully that he would place the princess on the throne in Yadasara, that he would find the treasure which. it is said, is hidden in this land. This man has accused me of treachery, but my deepest sin has been in throwing in my lot with wiser men rather than be carried away by the boastful promises of a deceiver."

"That is not all your sin, Count Vasca," I said. "Your majesty has accepted the frendship of a man who. while he rawns upon you, is plotting your ruin"

The count laughed contemptuously. "The proof." said the king, rising from his chair.

"Captain O'Ryan can give it you." "The count spoke wisely when he said that your words were not worth our attention. We have heard that story from Captain O'Ryan's lips The captain has confessed that he was in error. His zeal for our safety and some personal dislike to the count, fostered by yourself, Sir Knight, made him hasty in his judgment. Their hands have met in confession and forgiveness. Is this all you have to say?"

"One man's word against another's is poor security for truth." I answered. "I would that I could prove the truth of my words at the sword's point with the count, with O'Ryan or any other man who doubts me."

"Enough, enough!" cried the king. Take him back to the fortress. At our pleasure he shall take back his lies and perchance tell some secret of this treasure. There are hard questioners in the fortress, as you will find." "They must be hard indeed to wring from me one good word for the villain

beside your majesty." of love for a man's worst enemy before now," said the king.

"Death puts an end to all questions." I answered. "In my country men feat not death if met in an honest cause, I claim no nity tory for no mercy. yet I would ask one favor of your majesty." "What favor?"

"Let me pay the penalty for myself and for this lady." Daria made one step toward the

king. "I pray you not to listen to the knight." "Truly, madame, his own sins are

heavy enough to answer for. It seems, count, that your rival as well as your accuser stands before us." "Not my rival, your majesty," and

Vasca laid his hand on Aldrida's arm. "We have no favors to grant," said the king. "Take them to the fortress:



We will appoint a day for the questioning. They shall both die. So valiant a knight and so fair a lady are too dan-

but the soldiers stopped her, and she was led from the hall. I heard Lady Aldrida laugh a merry, musical peal as I was taken away. I almost wished. that I had killed her that night in the

CHAPTER XXII.

MAN could hardly be in more was no knowing what horrors they might not persuade him to perpetrate upon me. Yet, strange to say, I was

not utterly cast down. Costa heaved a fat, heavy sigh of relief when he got me back into my dungeon.

"I said it was all waste of time," he remarked in a callous manner. "And you didn't take my advice. You spoke too much." He sat thoughtfully for a few mo-

"About these executioners?" "Well?"

"You must make friends with them."

exchange for their courtesy." "One doesn't do much for nothing in this country as a rule," he laughed, nor in any other country, for that matter. But we have a certain admiration for a brave man. It might be managed. We must make friends

with these executioners." His friendliness encouraged me! "Would you grant me a favor?" I

He was on his guard in a moment. "It is not easy to grant favors in my

position." "This is not a large one. Tell me, am I still allowed a daily constitution. al on the ramparts?" "Ob. yes. You will be treated well

until your last day dawns." "And the princess too?" "Yes, and the other prisoners too,"

"Could you not so arrange it that we might meet upon the ramparts?" "Impossible!" "Think, Costa, she is a woman. A

kind word of encouragement would mean so much to her." "Trust me. I will speak the kind word!

"She and I are friends in affliction; it would mean more to her if I spoke

"I do not doubt that," he said with a chuckle. "You attempted to deceive me when you said you, did not love.

"I reverence her." "Yet you say you do not love her?" "Have I actually said that? Come, Costa, grant me this favor, and you may demand of me anything it is in my power to give. You shall stand by me while I speak to her. In a few days I shall be lying leaden footed

to remember that you did a comrade a senvice." "I like you, Verrall, but I love myself better. I cannot do it. I will see what I can'do with the executioners."

Had I had only myself to think of I believe I should have made a dash for liberty during one of my daily constitutions and thrown myself from the ramparts. I had Daria to think of. What good was an easy death for me if she were left to suffer?

In these days, indeed, it would nave been difficult to accomplish such an escape. I was a show prisoner At the time of my constitutional a small crowd collected upon the campaits to watch me as I walked to and fro. There was, however, a very unpleas. ant side to being a show prisoner. At

different times my cell was visited by the aristocracy of the city, even women and children coming to look upon the man who had once escaped from Yadasara and was so mighty a warrior.

My fame had outstripped all reason. I remember a child who came one day. a dark haired little girl with thoughtful eyes. She stood before me, looking at me intently. Presently I smiled at her, to her great delight, for she turned to her mother and remarked:

"I don't believe he would hurt me." Poor little woman! I should think not. Evidently I was the fashionable bogy to frighten naughty children

O'Ryan constantly came with Costa, never alone. The Spaniard was afraid that his lieutenant might do me an injury. O'Ryan never spoke to me, and over and over again Costa railed at him for not making my last days as pleasant as possible.

"Surely it is revenge enough to see a former comrade in such a bad case,"

But the Irishman was obdurate. 1 wondered that he could have changed so completely.

One evening Costa came, accompanied by four men, as villainous look. ing a crew surely as could be imagined. They entered stealthily, as though they were on a secret mission, and I rose from my seat, while a strange thrill traveled up my spine, I thought my time had come.

"I dould not bring them before," said Costa. "You have been holding so many receptions." I was relieved.

"The executioners," I said, trying to appear as if their coming had not disconcerted me. "Gentlemen, I regret that the poorness of my dwelling does not allow me to offer you much hos pitality nor much comfort, I fear. Perhaps we may have some wine." "I ordered it as we came," said Costal 1

Two of my guests lounged against the wall, and two sat upon the edge of the table. O'Ryan brought the wine and retired into a corner. 1 could not see the expression of his

face as Costa talked on my behalf. "There are some men it is a pleasure to help slowly out of life," the Spanlard went on with diabolical carelessness. "The cries of a coward and a craven are good music, but there are others who, having faced death bravely every day, should not be allowed to die slowly even at the hands of their enemies. They have been real men all their lives, with a hand always ready to help a worthy friend or foe, and it is for worthy men to help them when the time comes. We all know that Sir Verrall is a man."

They nodded and drank their wine in silence. I thought it was time to speak for

myself. "We are all men here," I said.

looked toward O'Ryan's corner and hoped he understood that I excepted him. "Had we met outside these walls" we should have fought each other to the death. Whether I fell or my enemy fortune would decide, but whichever it was it would have been an honorable fall. I do not fear even such a death as you administer within these walls, but I should like to cheat those false friends of mine who would gloat over my lingering agonies."

"And one of them is a woman, eh?" said one man, who appeared to be the chief. "Yes."

ake of a froman," he returned, and is companions nodded approval of the

"Then, my friends, are you willing to ieln ide?"

that if and the spokesman et me look at you." did ns was requested. He was a ssed his hands over my arms and his and thichs. His touch was louth-

derence. The others gathered rounds the walch the operation. There are muscles here that will the some gracking." he said thought-

tully. Inlucing blow on the head might base that difficulty," I suggested.

and stretch our limbs instead of rours." he laughed. "My willinghely you does not extend to

wick jerk should suffice." said

Fed that muscle, captain," was the

put his hand under my shoul der and whistled. "It is harter than the king's," said

ecutioner. "1 llow hat," Costa answered, recombering my trial of strength with is majesty ."but that sweet machine

yours should be equal to it." You think it has had practice

eb. aptain?" "I warrant it can be turned to crack ret he knight's muscles, mighty as bey held said one of the others. "It: on to gerile and powerful too. Do on denen ber when it embraced a than and a roman on the same day?" in the river below us. It will be good That experiment is likely to be reented said the chief executioner. The princes!" I exclaimed

> They say so." Why trouble Sir Verrall with that? hill Costa, hvidently angry that I had een tou.

it is of little consequence," anin death a man can only take care of inself. I will treat the lady quickly, on if the might wills it

With an wort I was caim "This is indeed being a comrade." I said. Holding out my hand "I have & weakings in my nature a foolish one. by I don't like women'to suf

equives strength to suffer muck. somen don't suffer as then do," he re-Diarated will brutal centainty. "And de what matter? They are

will women. taled not express my Borror. the this case, you will bring in h mickly?" I said.

may rely on us. atisfactory " and Costs. nimost forgotten O'Ryan. [

men bered him then han has heard our bargato." "He will not betray it

or swear not to lie so?" to the Trishman in got less merciful than the

Soon one's, be growled. stofok kach villain by the band see of me and asked Custa to distrit. s a hong them what few possess ns had ! I shook hands even with tya , and hen I was left alone.

Oftyan grasp my hand toore may than was necessiry? I might pent the night wondering, but ney had gone I broke down for time during my imprisonment thed tears of impotent rage, pacing Fantically, cursing and bear stone walls like a madman. It s to rible to know that baria would this of that bideous couch to have mbs broken; that her deerk. whice though it might be, as I or world would be should be witnessed sub toathsome wrotches as the who had just left me and perpall by them. Out when I was prombly exhausted did I throw n v. if of my rugs and fall asleer to

pleasa t fields and sunshing. Hawbke refreshed. Perhaps the very from a have railed at gave my slog power to retresh me. My 6cs; was of Daria, my second of Ryal. Had be pressed my hand ast night with some meaning? Surely I was impossible, seeing how he had pelped to ruin me, but a man in dire

theam what mockery it was!-o-

hecess ty sees hope in anything It wis not until the afternoon that : ball nell visitors that day. I had besup to hope that I was going to be fi algoe altogether when Costa camo r and wound me, as usual. Mor fools with too much leisure

isald yearily. "An old friend this time," said & perry poice in answer, and Lady A.:-Irida entered, followed by two or three nen. It was easy to see that they ware her captives as surely as I was prisoper in the fortress.

This was an old lover of mine. entier on," she said gayly. "He was fodlish enough not to value my friendhin hehold the result." as a pretty picture, much as F

aten Her; I could not deny that She ad evidently ridden to the fortress, or she carried her whip in her hand. "Do all men who displease you come to this asked another of her cava-

fit and not so unmerciful. Sir Verrall and I are old friends, or enemicsraich is it?" and she turned to me. "Energies," I answered shortly.

"True, and you are in my power." "That does not trouble me."

his fortress holds. You shall have the spectator, I warrant you, where & low turn of the lever draws that body of yours into agony. For all your bonsting, these walls, solid though, bey be will hardly drown your cries

and it for bave sense left to hear any. hing you shall hear my laugh." "I shall be glad of a spectator," Y hawer'd, "It gives a man courage"

(To be continued.)

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A Romance of Drussenland

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wielding a good sword again. "It is tomorrow." said Costa, fixing the torch in the ring in the wall.

"What is tomorrow?" Your trial. We are just in Yada gara. We give a man a trial-general ly. It seems to me a useless waste of time. It comes to the same thing in the end."

I thought this quite probable. asked

tain? Thus directly appealed to, O'Ryan.

"I might say too much to please that rascally companion of yours, is that it?" I asked Costa, nodding con



the fortress to the palace. The king was surrounded by his court and was talking and laughing with those about him. A callous assembly it was to try a man for his life! At a little distance from me stood Daria, very pale and very beautiful. Had my courage faltered for a moment the sight of her, firm, resolute and fearless, would have filled me with new strength. To her I bowed; to the king I made no obeisance. Near the king perhaps by reason of has recent wounds. Lady Aldrida looked as if the

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TAKE THEM TO THE FORTRESS. THEY SHALL BOTH DIE."

gerous to live in Drussenland." Daria made an effort to come to me.

desperate condition than 1. was. Except for Daria, who was powerless, I had no friend. I was to die-how soon I did not know. I was to be tortured, and since the king had such fiends as Vasca and Lady Aldrida beside him there

"How? I have nothing to give in

"A man should never suffer for the

ication.Standard.