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The distant mellow ringing notes of a trumpet call floated to his ear from the town at his feet. It was sounding the return to camp. Old instinct, long habit, made him start and shake his harness together and listen. The trumpet blast winding cheerily from afar recalled him to the truth, summoned him sharply back from vain regrets to the facts of daily life. It awoke him as it wakes a sleeping charger. It roused him as it rouses a wounded trooper.

He stood harkening to the familiar music until it had died away, spirited, yet still lingering; full of fire, yet falling softly down the wind. He listened till the last echo ceased. Then he tore the paper that he held in strips and let it float away, drifting down the yellow current of the reedy river channel.

"So best after all perhaps," he said half aloud in the solitude of the ruined and abandoned mosque. "He cannot well come to shipwreck with such a fair wind and such a smooth sea. And I—I am just as well here. To ride with the chassours is more exciting than to ride with the Pycheley. And the rules of the chambree are scarce more tedious than the rules of a court. Nature turned me out for a soldier, though fashion spoiled me for one. I can make a good campaigner. I should never make anything else."

And he let his sword drop back again into the scabbard and quarreled no more with fate.

His hand touched the 30 goldpieces in his sash.

He started as the recollection of the forgotten insult came back on him. He stood awhile in thought; then he took his resolve.

A half hour of quick movement brought him before the entrance gates of the Villa Aloussa. A native of Sudan in a rich dress who had the office of porter asked him politely his errand.

"Ask if Corporal Victor of the chassours can be permitted a moment's interview with your mistress. I come by permission," he added as the native hesitated between his fear of a soldier and his sense of the appalling audacity of a Spanish princess. The message was passed about among several of the household. At last a servant of higher authority appeared.

"Madame permitted Corporal Victor to be taken to her presence. Would he follow?"

He uncovered his head and entered, passing through several passages and chambers richly hung and furnished. She moved forward as her servant announced him. She saw him pause there like one spellbound and thought it the hesitation of one who felt sensitively his own low grade in life. She came toward him with the silent, sweeping grace that gave her the carriage of an empress. Her voice fell on his ear with the accent of a woman immeasurably proud, but too proud not to bend softly and graciously to those who were so far beneath her that without such aid from her they could never have addressed or have approached her.

"You have come, I trust, to withdraw your prohibition? Nothing will give me greater pleasure than to bring his majesty's notice to one of the best soldiers his army holds."

"Pardon me, madame; I do not come to trespass so far upon your benignity," he answered as he bent before her. "I come to express rather my regret that you should have made one single error."

Error! A haughty surprise glanced from her eyes as they swept over him. Such a word had never been used to her in the whole course of her brilliant and pampered life of sovereignty and indulgence.

"One common enough, madame, in your order—the error to suppose that under the rough cloth of a private trooper's uniform there cannot possibly

be such aristocratic monopolies as nerves to wound."

"I do not comprehend you." She spoke very coldly. She repented profoundly her concession in admitting a Chasseur d'Afrique to her presence.

"Possibly not. Mine was the folly to dream that you would ever do so. I should not have intruded on you now but for this reason: The humiliation you were pleased to pass on me I could neither refuse nor resent to the dealer of it. Had I done so men who are only too loyal to me would have resented with me and been thrashed or been shot as payment. I was compelled to accept it and to wait until I could return your gift to you. I have no right to complain that you pained me with it since one who occupies my position ought, I presume, to consider remembrance, even by an outrage, an honor done to him by the Princess Corona."

As he said the last words he laid on the table that stood near him the gold of Chateauray's besuit. She had listened with a bewildered wonder, held in check by the laughter impulse of offense that a man in this grade should venture thus to address, thus to arraign her. As he laid the goldpieces down upon her table an idea of the truth came to her.

"I know nothing of what you complain of. I sent you no money. What is it you would imply?" she asked him, looking up from where she leaned back in the low couch into whose depth she had sunk as he had spoken.

"You did not send me these—not as payment for the chess service?"

"Assuredly not. After what you said the other day I should have scarcely been so ill bred as to be heedless of offending your lady. Who used my name thus?"

His face lightened with a pleasure and a relief that changed it wonderfully—that brighter look of gladness that had been a stranger to it for so many years.

"You give me infinite happiness, madame. You little dream how bitter such slights are when one has lost the power to resent them! It was Colonel Chateauray who this morning—"

"Dared to tell you I sent you these coins?"

The serenity of a calmly woman of the world was obliterated, but her blue and brilliant eyes darkened and gleamed beneath the sweep of their lashes.

"Perhaps I can scarcely say so much. He gave them from you. The words he spoke were those."

He told her then as they had been uttered, adding no more. She saw the construction they had been intended to bear and that which they had borne naturally to his ear. She listened earnestly to the end. Then she turned to him with the exquisite softness of grace which, when she was moved to it, contrasted so vividly with the haughty and almost chill languor of her habitual manner.

"Believe me, I regret deeply that you should have been wounded by this most coarse indignity. I grieve sincerely that through myself in any way it should have been brought upon you. As for the perpetrator of it, Colonel Chateauray will be received here no more, and it shall be my care that he learns not only how I resent this unpardonable use of my name, but how I esteem his cruel outrage to a defender of his own flag. You did exceedingly well and wisely to acquaint me; in your treatment of it as an affront that I was without warrant to offer you, you showed the just indignation of a soldier, and—of what I am very sure that you are—a gentleman."

He bowed low before her.

"Madame, you have made me the debtor of my enemy's outrage. Those words from you are more than sufficient compensation for it."

"A poor one, I fear. Your colonel is your enemy, then? And wherefore?"

He paused a moment.

"Why, at first I scarcely know. We are antagonistic, I suppose."

"But is it usual for officers of his high grade to show such malice to their soldiers?"

"Most unusual. In this service especially so, although officers rising from the ranks themselves are more apt to contract prejudices and ill feeling against as they are to feel favoritism to their men than when they enter the service in a superior grade at once. Since I am here, madame, let me thank you, in the army's name, for your infinite goodness in acting so munificently on my slight hint. Your generosity has made many happy hearts in the hospital."

"Generosity! Oh, do not call it by any such name! What did it cost me? We were terribly selfish here. I am indebted to you that for once you made me remember those who suffered."

She spoke with a certain impulse of candor and of self accusation that broke with great sweetness the somewhat careless coldness of her general manner. It was like a gleam of light that showed all the depth and the warmth that in truth lay beneath that imperious languor of habit. It broke further the ice of distance that severed the grande dame from the cavalry soldier. He wholly forgot their respective stations. He only remembered that for the first time for so many years he had the charm of converse with a woman of high breeding, of inexpressible beauty and of keen and delicate intuition. He wholly forgot how time passed, and she did not seek to remind him. Indeed she but little noted it herself.

At last the conversation turned back to his chief.

"You seem to be aware of some motive for your commandant's dislike?" she asked him. "Tell me to what you attribute it?"

He obeyed and told to her the story of the emir and of the Pearl of the Desert, and Venetia Corona listened, as she had listened to him throughout,

with an interest that she rarely vouchsafed to the recitals and the witticisms of her own circle.

"This barbarian is your chief?" she said as the tale closed. "His enmity is your honor. I can well credit that he will never pardon your having stood between him and his crime. But I have not heard one thing. What argument did you use to obtain her release?"

"No one has ever heard it," he answered her, while his voice sank low.

"I will trust you with it. It will not pass elsewhere. I told him enough of—of my own past life to show him that I knew what his had been and that I knew, moreover, though they were dead to me now, men in that greater world of Europe who would believe my statement if I wrote them this outrage on the emir and would avenge it for the reputation of the empire, and unless he released the emir's wife I swore to him that I would so write, though he had me shot on the morrow, and he knew I should keep my word."

She was silent some moments, looking on him with a musing gaze in which some pity and more honor for him were blended.

"You told him your past. Will you confess it to me?"

"I cannot, madame."

"And why?"

"Because I am dead, because in your presence it becomes more bitter to me to remember that I ever lived."

"You speak strangely. Cannot your life have a resurrection?"

"Never, madame. For a brief hour you have given it one—in dreams. It will have no other. As I am now so I desire to live and die."

"You voluntarily condemn yourself to this?"

"I have voluntarily chosen it. I am well sure that the silence I entreat will be kept by you?"

"Assuredly, unless by your wish it be broken. Yet—I await my brother's arrival here. He is a soldier himself. I shall hope that he will persuade you to think differently of your future. At any rate both his and my own influence will always be exerted for you, if you will avail yourself of it."

"You do me much honor, madame. All I will ever ask of you is to return these coins—my colonel and to forget that your gentleness has made me disregard for one moment half hour the influence on which alone a trooper can present himself here."

He swept the ground with his cap as though it were the plumed hat of a marshal and backed slowly from her presence, as he had many a time long before backed out of a througroom.

As he went his eyes caught the angles of the ivory chessmen. They stood under the glass and had not been broken by her lapid.

Aloud, left alone there in her luxurious morning room, sat awhile lost in thought. He attracted her; he interested her; he aroused her sympathy and her wonder as the men of her own world had failed to do—aroused them despite the pride which made her impatient of lending so much attention to a mere Chasseur d'Afrique. She discovered the ring of true gold in his words and the carriage of pure breeding in his actions. He interested her more than it pleased her that he should. A man so utterly beneath her, doubtless brought into the grade to which he had fallen by every kind of error, of improvidence, of folly, of probably worse than folly! She laughed a little at herself as she stretched out her hand for a new volume of French poems dedicated to her by their accomplished writer, who was a Parisian diplomatist.

"One would imagine I was just out of a convent and weaving a marvelous romance from a mystery because the first soldier I notice in Algeria has a gentleman's voice and is ill treated by his officers," she thought, with a smile.

"Such a man as that buried in the ranks of this brutalized army!" she mused. "What fatal chance could bring him here? Misfortune, not misconduct, surely. I wonder if Lyon could learn? He shall try."

"Your chasseur has the air of a prince, my love," said a voice behind her.

"Equivocal compliment! A much better air than most princes," said Mme. Corona, glancing up with a slight shrug of her shoulders, as her slight and traveling companion, the Marquise de Renardiere, entered.

"Indeed! I saw him as he passed out, and he saluted me as if he had been a marshal. Why did he come?"

Venetia Corona pointed to the napoleons and told the story rather listlessly and briefly.

"Ah! The man has been a gentleman, I dare say. So many of them come to our army. I remember General Villeneuve's telling me—he commanded here awhile—that the ranks of the Zephyrs and zouaves were full of well born men, utterly good for nothing, the handsomest scoundrels possible, who had every gift and every grace and yet come to no better end than a pistol shot in a ditch or a mortal thrust from Bedouin steel. I dare say your corporal is one of them."

"It may be so. But this person is certainly unlike a man to whom disgrace has ever attached. Through his skill at sculpture and my notice of it considerable indignity has been brought upon him, and a soldier can feel, it seems, though it is very absurd that he should. That is all my concern with the matter, except that I have to teach his commandant not to play with my name in his barrack yard."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A Secret Society. Mabel—A lot of us girls have established a secret society, Jack.

Jack—What are the objects of it? Mabel—Why, we meet together and tell secrets, of course.

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