

national anthem announced the arrival of the Emperor. With one rapid glance he singled out the Countess Damerou, who, somewhat pale and with a tremor, kept her eyes fixed upon the grand entrance, and obtained from his uncle the favour of presenting her to the Emperor.

As the last notes of the anthem died away the orchestra struck up a waltz by Strauss.

'Permit the General's nephew to claim the execution of your promise,' said the Prince, whisking the astonished Countess away.

'Bliss me, how odd you look in multi-tyed! said the young woman, with a burst of laughter, to her partner, though he felt her tremble as she recognized his voice.'

'Round the great salon they went, and at every turn Kamontine encountered the astonished eyes of an acquaintance who recognized her, and a perfectly audible smile and languid nod to run through the hall. As the Prince led his partner back to her seat he pressed lightly the tips of her fingers and whispered, 'I have won my wager and will claim the forfeit whenever the authorities permit me.'

The Countess blushed but made no answer.

'I risked my head, as you did me the honor to remark last night, of course you will pay it.'

'I will try, if it is anything in reason,' 'I will be generous,' he answered with a smile; 'good-by.'

He bowed and hurried away, but on his passage towards the door was seized by the General and hurried towards the Minister of Police.

'Permit me, Your Excellency,' said the General, 'to present my nephew to you, and to commend him to your good offices.'

'Daughter, I'm sure,' murmured the Minister, mechanically, but ere he glanced at the General's protegee Kamontine was lost in the crowd.

'Excuse his rudeness,' but he's a little country, said the General, apologetically.

At that instant a sacred looking A.D.C. hurried up to the Minister and stammered, 'Your Excellency, the Emperor wishes to see you. His Majesty is furious.'

'Kamontine is here!' said the Emperor in a tone the very reverse of amiable when the Minister reached his presence.

'Your Majesty, it is possible?' 'Kamontine is here, I tell you. Arrest him immediately and find out who presented him.'

The Minister hurried to the General. 'Kamontine is here—have him arrested.'

'Kamontine? Who is Kamontine?' 'The young man that was banished. Be quick about it. The Emperor is wild.'

'Great heavens! cried the host, lifting his hands in horror, 'and this my first ball! Kamontine is here!' he shouted to the first official he could find. 'Arrest him and find out who dared to bring him here.'

The official hurried away and gave the alarm. 'Kamontine! Where's Kamontine? Have you seen Kamontine?' he became the general cry.

'I saw him walking with the Countess Damerou,' said somebody.

They sought out the Countess. 'Madame, you were waiting with Kamontine. The Emperor is raging! Who brought him here?'

'I didn't,' cried the Emperor's heart, and as for dancing, the only living being I have danced with to-night was the Governor's nephew, a young gentleman from Odessa. Oh, here is the Governor's General, didn't you introduce your nephew to me?'

'Certainly, but it isn't my nephew we're talking about—it's Kamontine I want to find. The Emperor is fairly beside himself. Who brought him here?'

The Countess shrugged her white shoulders and turned away, tapping her forehead with her fan to intimate her doubts of the General's sanity. At the same instant the Minister of Police swooping down on the unhappy host.

'The Emperor is furious!' 'I know he is—I know he is.'

'And you are not ashamed of yourself to lend yourself to this abominable plot!'

'But, your Excellency, I don't understand!'

'I tell you the Emperor is wild about it!' cried the Minister with a withering look as he bowed away.

Finally a young A. D. C., taking pity on his chief, whispered to him: 'Your Excellency, it was you that brought that Kamontine.'

'If you impudent young jackanapes, who are not ashamed of yourself to lend yourself to this abominable plot!'

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