

The Broken Coin

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you may be sailing. Ask me not too many questions, and I will not inquire of you, my dear captain, why you are now sailing with the king's yacht."

"This bold chance thrust went home, Roleau suspected now that the captain was sailing under orders of his own and for reasons of his own. The man hesitated now.

"Well, then," said he, at length, "we have room, that is true. But as to refugees—"

"Call me no refugee!" said Roleau firmly. "I tell you, I am on business of importance, and care little where you go, save only that you take me hence, I can pay."

By this time Roleau was aboard. The captain neither welcomed him nor repulsed him. He only shrugged his shoulders, and accepted some coins which Roleau placed in his hand.

CHAPTER LIV.

By Air and Water.

Roleau awakened at dawn. The ripple of water was in his ears. The yacht was under way. Soon it was out of earshot of all that went forward at the wharves. None aboard might know what meant the little group of men who hurried here and there along the water front, giving this order and that.

"In the king's name!" one man cried.

It was, indeed, in the king's name, for now, shallow though was his disguise, none less than Cortislaw had joined Sachio in this last pursuit of the evasive coin. Hurred inquiry had convinced Sachio that Roleau had made his escape in this direction.

As for Cortislaw, he raged.

"It is nothing, your majesty," rejoined the damsel Count Sachio. "All is not ended till all is done. We shall not let them evade us. Come, we have craft of our own. Here are some of our fast boats. Would your majesty dare the submarine?"

"I dare anything that another man dare," rejoined Cortislaw savagely. "Quick, then—order the first boat ready."

Now in truth the nobleman and his sovereign were to embark in a novel undertaking. The long, slim fish-nosed craft, with its upright periscope, received them. They heard the hatch closed firm above them, heard the singing of the air pumps and saw the gray opaque wall of the water, not below them, but around them, above them, as at length the craft, obedient to the command of its officer, slid out from its slip into the harbor and headed forward what had been pointed out to it as its prey.

Part of the time submerged, most of the time just breaking the surface with the deck, they sped on.

When at length, with hatches open and access given to the deck, they sped on, unburied, close upon their quarry, none of them at first heard the curious humming which came on from the rear, none for the moment saw the vast shape which approached from behind them and above, sailing like some monster bird.

It was Count Sachio at length who turned, his attention arrested by the familiar sound of an air craft motor.

"Look! your majesty," said he, turning and pointing.

A sudden exclamation came from the lips of Cortislaw.

"It is from Gretzhoffen!" he said. "Our own air craft are not mobilized. I wonder who planned that raid. You told me Count Frederick was killed—that you saw it with your own eyes. That cannot be. King Michael, weak as he is, never would be shot—never would he have had his air craft moving at this hour. They have been above our city—it is a mercy if they have not dropped bombs upon our ships."

"Look!" said Sachio. He indicated the course of the pursuing air craft which, far from following them directly, now swept aside in a great tangent.

"They are bound also for the yacht!" said Sachio. "It is not us but yonder boat they are pursuing. What does it mean? Surely they can have marked us under water or above—they see us now, if they have eyes. But now they evade us and pursue the boat which we pursue. What does it mean? And who is in command?"

Slow enough would even keen-witted Count Sachio have been to guess the real answer to his own question. It was his enemy who was in command of this pursuing air craft—Count Frederick, not killed, but in full possession of his powers once more.

It had been Frederick's plan to hasten across the neutral lands and over Gretzhoffen itself in a foray of scouting and discovery. He wished to see whether the forces of the enemy would rally or whether they were to lie utterly broken, accepting their defeat. And at the last instant, when he had stepped into the seat of the air craft, he had been followed by one who would not accept denial from him—the young American. Thus they had swept across the broad plain, across the city of Gretzhoffen itself, and along the water front—and now far down the great arm of the sea which thrust up from the south.

The aeroplane for a time fell off from the direct course held by the submarine. Ahead of the wind and driven at top speed by its own tremendous engines, it advanced in vast sweeps and swoops, at a speed incalculably fast.

"Your majesty," said Count Sachio at length, laying down the glasses with which he had been examining the ship of the air which passed above them, "I was wrong! At first I thought some leader of their aviation corps had developed this raid today, but it is not so. I told you that Count Frederick was dead. My eyes must have deceived me. It is he, yonder! He himself is guiding this pursuit. With him there is another—a woman, your majesty! It is none less than the young American, who has been the most dangerous enemy we yet have met. They two—for what reason I am not informed—are aloft together. Their purpose I can only guess."

The rage of Cortislaw now was such as left him silent.

"Your majesty," said Count Sachio

at last, "it must be as your majesty reasons. But it is by sinking yonder craft, not by saving it, that he can most hurt us. Yes, I am convinced, yonder is the coin. How they know it—how they guess it, I do not know. More than once it would seem to me that intuition rather than knowledge has guided them in their plans. I say that yonder coin is bewitched and always fights for Gretzhoffen and not for us."

The chase went on, and now under such curious relations as left the three vessels of the surface, of the submarine and of the air, drifting along, none taking the offensive.

But though the giant air craft followed close, seeming ever to hold the yacht at its mercy, it made no offensive movement; it seemed rather to shelter than to menace the fleeing vessel which steamed on so gallantly, and in the rear of both, helpless, impotent, with speed and naught but speed at its disposal, came the submarine of Cortislaw and his nobleman. Thus neither of the three could or would hurt another.

But Sachio's guess had been right. The governing influence in Gretzhoffen affairs scarce was so much reason as instinct, intuition—a woman's intuition. For he had been right—a woman was aloft, yonder with the pilot of the air craft.

"It is a curious chase, mademoiselle," said Count Frederick, turning to the companion at his side and speaking so that his voice could be heard above the loud drone of the engines.

"What have we gained? What do we know?"

"Look!" said she. "Look at them below us yonder. They want what we want. They pursue what we pursue. Why? Believe me, they know that the coin is on ahead. If they know it, why shouldn't we? Monsieur le comte, your ride this morning was an inspiration. The accident of following—what might have been the posse of a fish, but was the flash of a submarine—the accident of seeing yonder cloud of smoke ahead—that was fate fighting with us. Believe me, Roleau is yonder on that boat! Believe me, he has the coin. Fate is fighting with us at last, I say. The end of all our troubles is at hand."

As they swept forward, now near now dropping off from the course of the speeding yacht, always Kitty turned her glass upon the decks of the water craft. At length she exclaimed:

"It is he! I see him. He is there, standing looking back. He has no glass. He cannot recognize us now. But it is he. Ah! trust yonder faithful soul not to be traveling in vain. I am sure, as though I saw it, that he has the coin with him there. I am sure, as though I saw him, that it is Count Sachio himself in yonder submarine pursuing him. Come! Literally, we must fly."

And fly they did. Moment after moment, hour after hour, until at length the smoke above Gretzhoffen harbor thickened, until the towers of the cathedrals and the palace appeared until the shipping grew more distinct, until the long green slope of the coast fortifications showed to the eyes of Count Frederick, high above the level of the sea.

"We will make it safely, mademoiselle," said Count Frederick, at last. "For some reason the submarine does not attack. I do not know why. The three of us soon will be within reach of our own guns. I wonder—"

The wonder of Count Frederick was not ill placed. In a few moments they heard the dull report of a 30-centimeter piece of one of the coast batteries—saw the white cloud of smoke burst from the emplacement in front of the disappearing gun. On ahead they saw the white splash of the shell across the bows of the advancing yacht.

"What do they mean?" exclaimed Count Frederick. "Ah, I see. The yacht carries the ensign of the royal navy of Gretzhoffen! It is armed. Our gunners take it for an enemy. Now heaven send them bad aim for once!"

A shot, and yet another followed, bracketing the yacht between the ranges. Count Frederick held his breath for what the knew would come. The yacht, struck full by the impact of a heavy shell, reeled, careened, half broke apart and began to settle by the head.

"It is too bad!" exclaimed Count Frederick. "Thank by our own men! Yonder yacht was coming to our harbor for protection, carrying our own flag—carrying our own fortune—the Gretzhoffen coin! And now all is lost!"

He turned the prow of the air craft full toward the settling yacht. The wake of the submarine was no longer visible.

Then, what the men of the Gretzhoffen batteries saw—what the men of the submarine might have seen had their periscope then been above the surface—was the swift volplane of the air craft which they so long had followed. It swept down now like a giant bird, at a keen angle, as though itself would dip into the sea. Below it there swept the great anchor rope, its end whipping white here and there on the tops of the waves.

"Ahoy, Roleau!" cried the voice of Count Frederick.

Roleau looked up at this summons from the clouds, and saw above the rail of the air craft he so long had noted in wonder two faces that he knew and loved! A great sob shook his giant chest. Even his callous soul was affected. Out of the very deep they had come—his master and his mistress—to save him, when he thought all was lost! He lifted up his hands.

The whipping rope coiled and turned, twisted this way and that. But the steady hand at the rudder of the air craft guided it straight onward, downward.

Roleau reached out, made a swift grasp, felt himself swept free, off his feet. An instant later, hand over hand, he began his ascent from what had been the extremest peril of his life.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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IMP—"Vanity, Thy Name Is"

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WEDNESDAY, FEB. 9
VICTOR—"Her Better Self" with Grace Curnard
Animated Weekly No. 202
NESTOR—"Her Steady Lariat"

THURSDAY, FEB. 10
PARAMOUNT—"Kidding", presenting the Charlotte Walker
L-K-COMEDY—"Knocks and Opportunities" with Billie Ritchie.

FRIDAY, JAN. 11
LAMELLE—"The Red Lie", Rupert

John Astor—"Fanny and the Dance of the Shivers."

SATURDAY, FEB. 13
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BIG L—"Van Good For Nothing"
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