Che Orisoner By... Of Zenda

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CHAPTER XVI.

S I had ridden publicly in Zenda and had talked with Ru pert Hentzau, of course ali pretense of Illness was at an end. I marked the effect on the garrison of Zenda. They ceased to be seen abroad, and any of my men who went near the castle reported that the utmost vigilance prevailed there. Touched as I was by Mme. de Mauban's appeal, I seemed as powerless to befriend her as I had proved to help the king Michael bade me defiance, and, although he, too, had been seen outside the walls, with more disregard for appearances than he had hitherto shown. he did not take the trouble to send any excuse for his failure to wait on the

Time ran on in laactivity when every moment was pressing, for not only was I faced with the new danger which the stir about my own disappearance brought on me, but great murmurs had arisen in Strelsau at my continued absence from the city. They had been greater but for the knowledge that Flavia was with me, and for this reason I suffered her to stay, though I hated to have her where danger was and though every day of our present sweet intercourse strained my endurance almost to breaking. As a final blow nothing would content my advisers, Strakencz and the chancellor. who came out from Strelsau to make an urgent representation to me, save that I should appoint a day for the public solemnization of my betrothal. a ceremony which in Ruritania is well nigh as binding and great a thing as

the marriage itself. And this, with Flavia sitting by me, I was forced to do, setting a date a fortnight ahead and appointing the cathedral in Strelsau as the place. And this formal act. being published far and wide, caused great joy throughout the kingdom and was the talk of all tongues, so that I reckoned there were but two men who chafed at it-I mean Black Michael and myself-and but one who did not know of it-that one the man whose name I bore, the king of Ruritania.

In truth, I heard something of the way the news was received in the cas-tle, for after an interval of three days the man Johann, greedy for more money, though fearful for his life, again found means to visit us. He had been waiting on the duke when the tidings came. Black Michael's face had grown blacker still, and he had sworn sav-Rupert took oath that I meant to do as I said and, turning to Mme, de Mau. by an instant." ban, wished her joy on a rival gone. Michael's hand stole toward his sword. said Johann, but not a bit did Rupert care, for he rallied the duke on having made a better king than had reigned for years past in Ruritania. "And," said he, with a meaning bow to his exasperated master, "the devil sends the princess a finer man than heaven had marked out for her. By my soul, he does!" Then Michael harshly bade him hold his tongue and leave them, but Rupert must needs first kiss madame's hand, which he did as though he loved her, while Michael glared at him.

This was the lighter side of the fellow's news, but more serious came behind, and it was plain that if time pressed at Tarlenheim it pressed none the less fiercely at Zenda. For the king was very sick. Johann had seen him, and he was wasted and hardly able to move. "There could be no thought of taking another for him now," So alarm-that," ed were they that they had sent for a physician from Strelsau, and the physician, having been introduced into the king's cell, had come forth pale and trembling and urgently prayed the duke to let him go back and meddle no more in the affair. But the duke would not, and held him there a prisoner, telling him his life was safe if the king lived while the duke desired and died when the duke desired-not otherwise. And, persuaded by the physician, they had allowed Mme. de Mauban to visit the king and give him such attendance as his state needed and as only a woman can give. Yet his life hung in the balance, and I was yet strong and whole and free, Wherefore great gloom reigned at Zenda, and, save when they quarreled, to which they were very prone, they hardly spoke. But the deeper the depression of the rest, young Rupert went about Satan's work with a smile in his eye and a song on his lip, and laughed "fit to burst" (said drollery that set Fritz and me laugh-Johann) because the duke always set Detchard to guard the king when Mme. de Mauban was in the cell-which precaution was, indeed, not unwise in my careful brother. Thus Johann told his are thinking about." tale and seized his crowns. Yet he besought us to allow him to stay with us and to carry tidings to Mme. de Mau may." ban that I was working for her and that, if she could, she should speak one word of comfort to the king, for, while strong party under Sapt's command suspense is bad for the sick, yet despair is worse still, and it might be chateau. If discovered prematurely, that the king lay dying of mere hopelessness, for I could learn of no definite disease that afflicted him.

"And how do they guard the king now?" I asked, remembering that two from where he slept and seek to cross, of the Six were dead and Max Holf De Gautet might or might not come Decen't that content you?"

> "Detchard and Bersonin watch by chance night, Rupert Hentzau and Gautet by day, sir," he answere i.

"Only two at a time?" of a cry or a whistle."

"A room just above? I didn't know between it and the room where they watch?

"No, sir. You must go down a few stairs and through the door by the drawbridge, and so to where the king

"And that door is locked?" "Only the four lords have keys, sir."

I drew nearer to him.

"And have they keys of the grating?" I asked in a low whisper,

"I think, sir, only Detchard and Rupert.

"Where does the duke lodge?" "In the chateau on the first floor. His apartments are on the right as you go toward the drawbridge."

"And Mme, de Mauban?" "Just opposite on the left. But her door is locked after she has entered." "To keep her in?" "Doubtless, sir."

"And the duke, I suppose, has the

"Yes. And the drawbridge is drawn back at night, and of that, too, the duke holds the key, so that it cannot be run across the most without application to him."

"And where do you sleep?"

"In the entrance hall of the chateau, with five servants."

"Armed?"

"They have pikes, sir, but no firearms. The duke will not trust them with firearms.

Then at last I took the matter boldly in my hands. I had failed once at Jacob's ladder; I should fall again there. I must make the attack from the other side.

"I have promised you twenty thousand crowns," said I. "You shall have fifty thousand if you will do what I ask of you tomorrow night. But, first, do those servants know who your prisoner is?"

"No, sir. They believe him to be some private enemy of the duke's " "And they would not doubt that I am the king?"

"How should they?" he asked.

"Look to this, then. Tomorrow at 2 agely. Nor was he better pleased when in the morning exactly fling open the front door of the chateau. Don't fail "Shall you be there, sir?"

"Ask no questions. Do what I tell you. Say the hall is close or what you will. That is all I ask of you."

"And may I escape by the door, sir, when I have opened it?"

Yes, quick as your legs will carry you. One thing more. Carry this note to madame-oh, it's in French; vou can't read it-and charge her, for the sake of all our lives, not to fail in wha it orders."

The man was trembling, but I had to trust to what he had of courage and to what he had of honesty. I dared not wait, for I feared that the king would

When the fellow was gone, I called Sapt and Fritz to me and unfolded the plan that I had formed. Sapt shook his head over it.

"Why can't you wait?" he asked. "The king may die."

"Michael will be forced to act before

"Then," said I, "the king may live." "Well, and if he does?"

"For a forinight?" I asked simply.

And Sapt bit his mustache. Suddenly Fritz von Tarlenhelm laid

his hand on my shoulder. "Let us go and make the attempt,"

"I mean you to go-don't be afraid," said I.

"Aye, but do you stay here and take care of the princess?"

A gleam came into old Sapt's eye. "We should have Michael one way or the other then," he chuckled, "whereas if you go and are killed with the king what will become of those of us who are left?"

"They will serve Queen Flavia," said I, "and I would to God I could be one of them."

A pause followed. Old Sapt broke it by saying sadly, yet with an unmeant

"Why didn't old Rudolf III, marry your-great-grandmother, was it?"

"Come," said I; "it is the king we

"It is true," said Fritz.

"Moreover," I went on, "I have been in Tarlenheim, and not venture his an impostor for the profit of another, head again in the lion's den, but we but I will not be one for my own, and had need of him there, and, although I if the king is not alive and on his refused to constrain him, I prevailed on throne before the day of betrothal him by increased rewards to go back comes I will tell the truth, come what

"You shall go, lad," said Sapt.

Here is the plan I had made: A was to steal up to the door of the they were to kill anyone who found them with their swords, for I wanted must fall, but I did not think they

name were not enough. At the same any more than from above. An asmoment-and on this hinged the plan- sault with explosives or a long battera woman's cry was to ring out loud ing with picks alone could displace it, and shrill from Autoinette de Mau- and the noise involved in either of help?" and then to otter the name of man do in the most? I trusted that at of his apartments opposite and he eries would go on. My men would thus taken in vain, did not descend I said to Sapt, was the real danger. with him. That must be left to

"Aye, sir, but the others rest in a moat; and, lest I should grow weary, when he ventured to hint once again room just above and are within sound I had resolved to take with me a small that my life was too valuable I, knowwooden ladder on which I could rest ing the secret thought he clung to, of that. Is there any communication when I left it. I would rear it against him that unless the king lived through the bridge was across I would stealthi- either. ly creep on to it-and then if Rupert or De Gautet crossed in safety it would chateau of Tarlenheim and struck off be my misfortune, not my fault. They to the right, riding by unfrequented dead, two men only would remain, and roads and avoiding the town of Zenfor them we must trust to the con- da. If all went well, they would be in fusion we had created and to a sudden rush. We should have the keys Leaving their horses half a mile off, of the door that led to the all important rooms. Perhaps they would rush and hold themselves in readiness for out. If they stood by their orders, the opening of the door. If the door then the king's life hung on the swiftness with which we could force the outer door, and I thanked God that not Rupert Hentzau watched, but Detchard. For though Detchard was a cool man, relentless and no coward, he had neither the dash nor the recklessness of Rupert. Moreover, he, if any one of them, really loved Black Michael. and it might be that he would leave Bersonin to guard the king and rush across the bridge to take part in the affray on the other side.

> So I planned-desperately. And that our enemy might be the better bulled to security I gave orders that our resiience, should be brilliantly lighted from top to bottom, as though we were kept all night, with music playing and people moving to and fro. Strakenez person of the king. If Black Michael ried a large flask of whisky. likely to happen.

For I had great doubts whether elther the king or Black Michael or I had more than a day to live. Well, if Black Michael died, and if I, the play actor, slew Rupert Hentzau with my own hand and then died myself, it might be that fate would deal as lightly with Ruritania as could be hoped, notwithstanding that it demanded the life of the king-and to her dealing thus with me I was in no temper to make objection.

It was late when we rose from conference, and I betook me to the princess' apartments. She was pensive that evening, yet when I left her she fung her arms about me and grew for a came to my old friend, Jacob's lad-an instant bashfully radiant as she der, and felt the ledge of masonry slipped a ring on my finger. I was wearing the king's ring, but I had also on my little finger a plain band of gold engraved with the motto of our family, "Nil Quae Feci." This I took off



Wear that ring even though you wear another when you are queen. and put on her finger and signed to her to let me go. And she, understanding,

stood away and watched me with dimmed eyes "Wear that ring even though you wear another when you are queen," I

sald. "Whatever else I wear, this I will wear till I die and after," said she as she kissed the ring.

CHAPTER XVII.

HE night came fine and clear. I had prayed for dirty weather, such as had favored my previous voyage in the moat, but fortune was this time against me. Still, I reckoned that by keeping close under the wall and in the shadow I equid escape detection from the windows of the chateau that looked out on the scene of my efforts. If they searched the moat, indeed, my scheme no noise of firing. If all went well, would. They had made Jacob's ladder

tney would be at the door when Jo- secure against attack. Johann had hann opened it. They were to rush in himself helped to fix it closely to the and secure the servants if their mere | masonry on the underside so that it presence and the use of the king's could not now be moved from below ban's chamber. Again and again she these operations put them out of the was to cry; "Help, help! Michael, question. What harm, then, could a young Rupert Hentzau. Then, as we Black Michael, putting this query to Michael, in fury, would rush himself, would maswer confidently. "None," while even if Johann meant il alive into the hands of Sapt. Still treschery he did not know my scheme and would doubtless expect to see me et down the drawbridge, and it would at the head of my friends before the e strange if Rupert, hearing his name front entrance to the chateau. There, "And there," I added, "you shall be,

But it did not. Dearly would he have liked to come with me had I not utter-And when Rupert set his foot on the ly refused to take him. One man drawbridge? There was my part, for might escape notice. To double the I was minded for another swim in the party more than doubled the risk, and my arms in the water-and my feet sternly bade him be silent, assuring the wail just by the bridge, and when the night I would not live through it

At 12 o'clock Sapt's command left the front of Zenda by about a quarter to 2. they were to steal up to the entrance were not opened by 2 they were to send Fritz von Tarlenheim round to the other side of the castle. I would meet him there if I were alive, and we would consult whether to storm the castle or not. If I were not there, they were to return with all speed to Tarlenheim, rouse the marshal and march in force on Zenda, for if not there I should be dead, and I knew that the king would not be alive five minutes after I had ceased to breathe.

I must now leave Sapt and his friends and relate how I myself proceeded on this eventful night. I went out on the good horse which had carried me on the night of the coronation engaged in revery, and should so be back from the shooting lodge to Strelsau. I carried a revolver in the saddle and, my sword. I was covered with a would be there, and he was to conceal large cloak and under this I wore a our departure, if he could, from Fig. warm, tight fitting woolen jersey, a via. And if we came not again by the pair of knickerbockers, thick stockings morning he was to march, o enly and and light canvas shoes. I had rubbed in force, to the castle and demand the myself thoroughly with oil, and I carwere not there, as I did not think he night was warm, but I might probably would be, the marshal wo 11 take Fla- be immersed a long while, and it was via with him, as swiftly as he could, necessary to take every precaution to Strelsan and there proclaim Black against cold, for cold not only saps a Michael's treachery and the probable man's courage if he has to die, but death of the king and raily all that impairs his energy if others have to there was honest and true round the die and finally gives him rheumatics if banner of the princess. And, to say it be God's will that he lives. Also I truth, this was what I thought most tied round my body a length of thin but stout cord, and I did not forget my ladder. I, starting after Sapt, took a shorter route, skirting the town to the left, and found myself in the outskirts of the forest at about half past 12.

I tied my horse up in a thick clump of trees, leaving the revolver in its pocket in the saddle-it would be no use to me-and, ladder in hand, made my way to the edge of the moat. Here I unwound my rope from about my waist, bound it securely round the trunk of a tree on the bank and let myself down. The castle clock struck a quarter to 1 as I felt the water under me and began to swim round the keep, pushing the ladder before me and hugging the castle wall. Thus voyaging, under me. I crouched down in the shadow of the great pipe-I tried to stir it, but it was quite immovableand waited. I remember that my predominant feeling was neither anxiety for the king nor longing for Flavia, but an intense desire to smoke and this craving, of course, I could not gratify.

The drawbridge was still in its place. I saw its airy, light framework above me, some ten yards to my right, as I erouched with my back against the wall of the king's cell. I made out a window two yards my side of it and nearly on the same level. That, if Johann spoke true, must belong to the duke's apartments, and on the other side, in about the same relative position, must be Mme. de Mauban's window. Women are careless, forgetful creatures. I prayed that she might not forget that she was to be the victim of a brutal attempt at 2 o'clock precisely. I was rather amused at the part I had assigned to my young friend Rupert Hentzau, but I owed him a stroke, for, even as I sat, my shoulder ached where he had, with an audacity that seemed half to hide his treachery, struck at me in sight of all my friends on the terrace at Tarlenheim.

Suddenly the duke's window grew bright. The shutters were not closed, and the interior became partially visible to me as I cautiously raised myself till I stood on tiptoe. Thus placed, my range of sight embraced a yard or more inside the window, while the radius of light did not reach me. The window was flung open, and some one looked out. I marked Antoinette de Mauban's graceful figure, and, though her face was in shadow, the fine outline of her head was revealed against the light behind. I longed to cry softly. "Remember!" but I dared not, and happily, for a moment later a man came up and stood by her. He tried to put his arm round her waist, but with a swift motion she sprang away and leaned against the shutter, her profile toward me. I made out who the newcomer was. It was young Rupert. A low laugh from him made me sure, as he leaned forward, stretching out his hand toward her.

"Gently, gently!" I murmured. "You're too soon, my boy!"

rus nead was close to hers. I suppose he whispered to her, for I saw her point to the most, and I heard her say in slow and distinct tones:

"I had rather throw myself out of this window!"

looked out.

"It looks cold," said he. "Come, Antoinette, are you serious?"

heard, and he, smiting his hand petu- watched him with the intensest eagerlantly on the window sill, went on in ness, the voice of some spoifed child:

"Hang Black Michael! Isn't the There were more footsteps up on the princess enough for him? Is he to other side, and he climbed them, When have everything? What the devil do he set foot in the guteway, standing on you see in Black Michael?"

"If I told him what you say"- she

"Well, tell him," said Rupert carelessly. And, catching her off her guard, he sprang forward and kissed

If I had kept my revolver with me I should have been very sorely tempt-Being spared the temptation, I merely added this new score to his ac-

"Though, faith," said Rupert, "it's ing but cutting the play actor's throat." Didn't he, indeed?

"And if I do it for him, what do you think he's promised me?"

The unhappy woman raised her hands above her head, in prayer or in despair.

"But I detest waiting." said Rupert, and I saw that he was about to lay his hand on her again when there was and a harsh voice cried:

"What are you doing here, sir?" Rupert turned his back to the window, bowed low and said in his loud, merry tones:

"Apologizing for your absence, Could I leave the lady alone?"

The newcomer must be Black Mi-I saw him directly as he advanced toward the window. He caught young Rupert by the arm.

"The most would hold more than the king," said he, with a significant gesture. "Doc" your highness threaten me?"

asked Rupert.

men get from me.

"Yet," observed Rupert, "Rudolf Rassendyll has been much threatened and

"Am I in fault because my servants bungle?" asked M chael scornfully. bungling," sneered Rupert.

ed danger as plain as ever I have were followed by the brides-maids fleard a man told. Black M chael had up the left aisle in couples and self control. I dare say he scowled-it by the grooms-men up the right was a great regret to me that I could not see their faces batter-but his voice was even and calm as he answerel:

rel, Rupert. Are Detchard and Berso- small flower girls dressed in nin at their posts?"

"They are, sir."

"I need you no more." "Nay, I'm not oppressed with fatigue," said Rupert.

"Pray, sir, leave us," said Michael more impatiently. "In ten minutes the drawbridge will be drawn back, and I presume you have no wish to swim to

your bed." Rupert's figure disappeared. I heard the door open and shut again. Mi- being performed the organist chael and Antoinette de Mauban were softly played Lang's "Flower left together. To my chagrin, the duke Song." After the ceremony the laid his hand on the window and closed | bridal party went out the middle it. He stood talking to Antoinette for aisle. The groomsmen and a moment or two. She shook her head, bridesmaids forming couples in and he turned impatiently away. She the following order: again, and Black Michael closed the shutters.

"De Gautet, De Gautet, man!" sounded from the drawbridge. "Unless you want a bath before your bed, come

along!"

It was Rupert's voice, coming from later he and De Gautet stepped out on the bridge. Rupert's arm was through De Gautet's, and in the middle of the bridge he detained his companion and leaned over. I dropped beside the shelter of Jacob's ladder.

Then Master Rupert had a little sport. He took from De Gautet a bot- ful and impressive, the color tle which he carried and put it to his scheme being carried out in every

"Hardly a drop!" he cried discontent-

edly and flung it in the mont. It fell, as I judged from the sound and the circles on the water, within a yard of the pipe. And Rupert, taking out his revolver, began to shoot at it. The first two shots missed the bottle, but hit the pipe. The third shattered the bottle. I hoped that the young fully gowned in a traveling suit ruffian would be content, but he emp- of grey, with hat gloves and tied the other barrels at the pipe, and one, skimming over the pipe, whistled through my hair as I crouched on the

"Ware bridge," a voice cried, to my relief.

Rupert and De Gautet cried. "A moment!" and ran across. The bridge was drawn back, and all became still. Manager of the Clayton Lumber The clock struck a quarter past 1. I

rose and stretched myself and yawned, I think some ten minutes had passed when I heard a slight noise to my right. I peered over the pipe and saw a dark figure standing in the gateway that led to the bridge. It was a man, By the careless, graceful poise I guessed it to be Rupert again. He held a sword in his hand, and he stood motionless for a minute or two. Wild thoughts ran through me. On what mischief was the young fiend bent now? Then he laughed low to himself; then he turned his face to the wall, took a step in my direction and. to my surprise, began to climb down the wall. In an instant I saw that there must be steps in the wall; it was plain. They were cut into or affixed to the wall at intervals of about eight een inches. Rupert set his foot on the

lower one, then he placed his sword between his teeth, turned round and noiselessly let himself down into the water. Had it been a matter of my life only I would have swam to meet him. Dearly would I have loved to He came close up to the window and fight it out with him then and therewith steel-on a fine night and none to come between us. But there was the king. I restrained myself, but I could She made no answer, so far as I not bridle my swift breathing, and I

> He swam leisurely and quietly across. the drawn back bridge, he felt in his pocket and took something out. I heard him unlock the door. I could hear no noise of its closing behind him. He vanished from my sight.

Abandoning my ladder-I saw I did her, laughing, and crying, "There's not need it now-I swam to the side of the bridge and climbed halfway up the steps. There I hung, with my sword in my hand, listening eagerly. The duke's room was shuttered and dark. There was a light in the window on the opposite side of the bridge. little he cares. He's mad about the Not a sound broke the silence till half princets, you know. He talks of noth- past 1 chimed from the great clock in the tower of the chateau.

There were other plots than mine afoot in the castle that night.

[CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.]

Jones-Bagwell.

On Thursday, June the sixth, a noise of a door in the room opening, at Garner Baptist church, the marriage of Miss Eula May Bagwell and Mr. Malcom Hezzie Jones, was celebrated, the ceremony being performed by Rev. E. Pope, the pastor of the bride, in his usual impressive manner.

The church was beautifully decorated with cut flowers and potted plants, the color scheme being green and white. Just before the ceremony Miss Ruby Penry sang very sweetly "O, Promise Me."

As Mrs. Buffaloe began to "A threat is more warning than most play Mendelssohn's wedding march, the bridal party entered the church. First came the ushers, Mr. Walter Creech, of Clayton, and Mr. Louis Britt, of Garner; Mr. Jesse Ellis, of Clay-"Your highness has run no risk of ton and Mr. Allie Weathers, of Garner, two up the left aisle and It was telling the duke that he shirk- two up the right aisle. They aisle in couples. The maid-ofhonor, Miss Flossie Bagwell, a sister of the bride, came up the "Enough, enough! We mustn't quar- middle aisle followed by two white silk. The little ladies were Miss Rochelle Gulley, of Clayton and Miss Zenobia Bagwell, of Raleigh. Then came the bride leaning on the arm of her father. Mr. J. J. Bagwell, who gave her away. The bride was met at the altar by the groom and his best man, Mr. U. F. Wallace, of Benson. While the ceremony was

Miss Ella Reid Pope, of Raleigh, with Mr. Tom Cooke, of Clayton; Miss Mary Bryan, of Garner, with Dr. B. A. Hocutt, of Clayton, Miss Mattie Davis, of Winston-Salem, with Mr. David Barnes, of Raleigh; Miss Maye Glluey, of the end of the drawbridge. A moment Clayton, with Mr. John Talton, of Clayton; Miss Rosa Parker, of Garner, with Mr. Sam White, of Clayton and Miss Ione Gulley, of Clayton, with Mr. Paul Duncan, of Princeton.

The marriage was very beautidetail. The bridesmaids wore white organdie dresses with green ribbons and white bats, carrying ferns tied with white tulle. The maid-of-honor was gowned in net over green silk and carried a beautiful bouquet of sweet peas and ferns. The bride was beautiof grey, with hat, gloves and shoes to match, and carried a huge bouquet of brides roses

The bride is a beautiful blonde and is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Bagwell, of Garner, and is widely known throughout the State. The groom is Company and is to be congratulated upon winning such a lovely young lady for his bride.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones left immediately for Jamestown Exposition, and other points of interest. -News & Observer.

NOTICE!

The Pension Board of Johnston County will meet in Smithfield on Monday, June 24th 1907, for the purpose of hearing a pplications of old soldiers and widows who desire to be placed on the persion rolls.

June 3rd, 1907.

JOHN STEPHENSON. Chairman Pension Board.