

# A PRINCESS AND A WOMAN.\*

By Robert McDonald.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS I TO IV.

HOWLETT is a young American officer who has been appointed an attaché at the St. Petersburg legation. On his way to his post he rescues a lady from the insulting attentions of a fellow passenger, whom he recognizes as Von König, a former schoolmate of his in Dresden, who bears him an unforgotten grudge. In Russia he is amazed to learn that this same man has, by a strange whim of fortune, been named for the vacant throne of Carpathia, a little eastern state. Von König is equally surprised to find that the girl whom he has been following is the Princess Wasia of Hesse-Arnheim, the woman whom European diplomacy has destined for his bride.

These three meet again at St. Petersburg, where Howlett is strangely impressed by the youth and beauty of the princess, and the pathos of her position. He knows Von König, and knows him as a brutal fellow; and he longs to rescue Wasia from such a marriage. Meeting him at the American embassy, she gives him a hint of her own horror of the fate in store for her. Howlett seems utterly powerless to save her, though he has an ally in Count Curt, the morganatic nephew of the Grand Duke Serge, who has thought of the Carpathian throne as a possibility for himself. Finally matters are brought to a crisis with the young American at a state ball, where he meets the princess, avows his love for her, and is not repelled.

## V.

HOWLETT wanted to get away somewhere by himself and think over this wonderful and beautiful thing which had come to him. His head was in a whirl. His princess loved him. She had not put it into words, but he knew it. Every drop of blood in his veins felt that Wasia loved him.

She trusted him. She had taken her destiny out of the hands of the statesmen and rulers of Europe, and put it into his. The Howletts were not a race to shirk responsibilities, either in love or in war, but in all the line of men of blood and iron and nerve who had lived before him, none had had so sweet a charge, or so difficult a trust.

For an instant he stood where she had left him. Then he blindly started toward the anteroom where he had left his coat. He had barely escaped from the banqueting hall when the imperial procession started toward it, and he had to hasten to join the train of the American minister. He did not look toward the royal party. He could not endure to see Wasia near Von König. He

whispered a word to Mr. Folsom, asking to be excused, and went on towards the anteroom as soon as possible.

An officer in gorgeous uniform followed him, and put a hand on his arm. He turned to look into the excited face of Curt.

"Where are you going?"

"Home," Howlett answered. "I am tired. My head is in a whirl. I want to get away somewhere and think."

"Think about what? You would better be thinking about keeping up your reputation, and this isn't the way to do it. Nature cut you out to attract attention, and you are running away from it. Come back. There is an old princess here, from the Balkans, who says you are the handsomest man she has seen for fifty years. Come back."

"I cannot."

"What is wrong?"

"I cannot go in there and see that sacrifice."

"The betrothal of Wasia? It is a shame," Curt said, "but of course it has to be. I wish he were a little less of a brute. It appears that Johann went over and saw Ernst of Hesse-Arnheim, Wasia's brother, and they made it up between them. You know Johann has a fortune, and with his new little throne, and with nobody more eligible in sight, it was a good match for Wasia. There are no princes of great countries old enough to marry her. But she will not have to see much of him."

Howlett looked at the young man in amazement. Their points of view were so radically different, and yet on most subjects they had found themselves good and sympathetic friends.

"How can they let her do it? It must not be. You were indignant enough at the man following her."

"That was an entirely different thing," Curt said dryly.

At that instant a man stood at the young prince's elbow, with a little silver tray holding a glass of vodka. Without any change of expression, Curt picked it up, and let

\*This story began in the August number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE.

two of his fingers take a tiny slip of paper that lay under it, and crush the missive against his palm. There was a buffet in the room, where were set out the various liquors and "appetizers" dear to the Russian heart. Curt walked over here, took a bit of anchovy toast, and held the scrap of paper before his eyes. There was a gleam of excitement in his face as he turned again.

"I will go with you," he said. "We will go to the Yacht Club and hear the gossip of the hour."

Curt threw over his shoulder the sable dolman that was part of his uniform, and together the two young men went down the steps of the palace.

"But you will be missed," Howlett said. He felt like nothing less than going to the gay and brilliant Yacht Club. In an hour or two it would be filled with young noblemen from the ball.

"They never miss me anywhere," Curt replied, rather bitterly. "I am only a prince by courtesy. I am of no particular consequence. But I am not going to the Yacht Club at this instant. Look at this."

He put the scrap of paper in Howlett's hand. They were in a droshky now, dashing along over the frozen crust of the snow. Curt lighted a wax match that Howlett might read the scrawled words.

Come at once. Something of importance to communicate.

"Where are you going?"

"You know," Curt said irrelevantly, "that Lord Dalrymple will not allow me to see Lady Jane any more."

"So she told me."

"He gave a singular reason for it. He says that if the Czar takes me up and treats me as one of his family, I shall be too high in rank for Jane. If he does not, I am a nobody, and too low in the scale for her to honor with her hand. Either way, I am not eligible."

"What has that to do with your note?"

"It is from Jane. Pardon me for bringing you into it, but I must have a companion, and I can trust you. Jane was to see Lord Primrose, the English minister, this afternoon, and find out what she could. We have a scheme, as I believe you call it in America."

"Where are you going?"

For answer Curt leaned out of the window and called to the driver, "To the American minister's."

"They are not at home."

"The minister and his wife are not, but Jane is there with Miss Folsom."

"Oh!" Howlett laughed.

Miss Folsom was the sister of the minister. She was at the romantic age of forty-seven, and spent her days reading Swinburne and Scott. It was an easy task to get her to arrange a lover's meeting.

"I asked you to come because they all know you at the embassy, and it cannot be unusual for you to call there at any hour."

"I am at the disposal of my friends," Howlett said dryly.

It was a very proper meeting, in the library. Miss Folsom was present as well as Howlett. The two conspirators withdrew into the shadow of the red curtains, and talked for half an hour; and then the two young men sat before the great fire of logs and sipped little cups of tea. Howlett was bored. Curt and Lady Jane were excited, and Miss Folsom, thin and pale and romantic, was full of fluster.

When they departed at last, Curt grasped Howlett's arm.

"You Americans have some common sense. I believe that the day will come when you will be arbiters in questions of state over here. You can take some impersonal interest in an affair. Lady Jane tells me that Lord Primrose has told her mother (the old fellow has been hanging about Lady Dalrymple for thirty years, they say) that the Czar is furious over the trick Bismarck has played him in this marriage. It caught him napping. He wants Carpathia, and at one time he designed putting me on the throne." Curt instinctively pushed his fur clad chest forward.

"But if you were put on the throne—"

"All would be up between Jane and me! Well, I believe I would give up a throne for Jane, but there will be no question of that. Nobody keeps the throne of Carpathia. It is going to be a thing of the past, presently. There isn't going to be any throne, only a governorship—at least, if Russia has it all her own way, which would certainly be the case if they put insignificant me there. I am one of the paper men with whom royal families are generally provided. But you see, if I am once ruler of Carpathia, and then it is absorbed into Russia, I must be paid something. Then Jane and I can afford to marry and live in Paris, and be somebody."

"It seems to me you ought to be clever enough to be somebody any way."

"Oh, bless me, I didn't think that all out. It was old Lord Primrose. He was rambling to Lady Dalrymple, showing her what a great man he is, and Jane picked it up."

"It sounds like a comic opera."

"Yes, it does," Curt said; "but the whole scheme of royalty is a good deal like a comic opera, if you will just think of it a minute. My mother was an American—didn't you know that? She came from Nevada. She was very rich when my father married her in Paris, and then something went wrong with the money. It was mines or something. She was half Mexican. Uncle Serge was very fond of my mother, and so was the Czar. They used to come to her house when they were young men. They say she is the only human being that ever made Serge laugh. When she died, she asked Serge to look after me, and he has done it. So we may be kinsmen, for aught I know. You know, of course, that my mother was only my father's morganatic wife; and when he died without a will, his property all went to his family—to Serge."

"But he was your father——"

"Oh, they give me a fair allowance, and I am one of the family," Curt said. "It's all part of the comic opera. I cannot complain. If they put me over there in Carpathia, it will be a public acknowledgment."

They had taken to the *droshky* again, and had turned into the Grand Morskaja, which led them up to the doors of the Yacht Club. Already the place was full of men. The ceiling of the smoking room was dim, and the card rooms were brilliant and gay with uniforms which had come from the Winter Palace.

The two young men were not old enough for the scene to be a stale one to them. It had only been within the year that Curt had come from his university, and the homage which he received here as one almost in the family of the Czar was pleasant to his youthful heart. To Howlett, it was all like a gorgeous pageant.

They went into the smoking room, and Curt insisted upon ordering and drinking a bottle of champagne, making Howlett share it. The American wanted to get away somewhere and think, as Wasia had bidden him, but he could not gather his thoughts. It appeared to him that Curt held the key to the trouble somehow, that in Lord Primrose's exposition of the political situation of Carpathia was to be found Wasia's rescue.

Howlett would rescue his princess, even though she could never be for him. He would fight for her, as knights of old fought for the honor of their queen, or for the noble ladies whose favors were tied in their helmets. He would love her like a goddess set aloft—and then he thought that she was

a young and beautiful girl, as well as a princess, and his heart spoke to his brain.

"Come and show us how to play your American poker," Curt said to him; and before he could refuse, a dozen young men were about him begging for an initiation into the mysteries of the great game. Howlett went good naturedly and sat down at one of the green covered card tables, just vacated by a *baccarat* party. Curt, a young Englishman who had played the game before, and two Russians, sat down, while a large group drew up around them. Howlett dealt the hands and explained the mysteries of flushes and straights and calls and jackpots. In a moment the ready Tartars, born gamblers, every one of them, caught the spirit of the game, and were making gold pieces into counters.

As play went on, the crowd behind Howlett moved like the waves of the sea, but he did not notice. He was partly absorbed in the game, as he was always absorbed in everything he tried to do, and he was keeping up an undercurrent of plans. Suddenly there was a change in the occupant of the chair opposite. One of the Russians had arisen and given his seat to another. When Howlett looked up he met the evil, scarred face of Von König.

The new prince had come to the club as any other member might come, and there was no formality of introduction. He was simply a gentleman amusing himself. Evidently he had played the game before, or his observation had served him, for he asked for no instruction. He "discarded," and "drew," and "came in" with the air of a veteran.

Howlett had let his hand lie idle almost every round since the new addition. He was only waiting for a chance to go without appearing abrupt. When he looked across at Von König, the prince's eyes seemed fairly to burn with a cruel triumph. Howlett felt his cheeks growing hot, and his hands trembling as he lifted the cards.

"That devil!" he felt himself saying.

"The Americans are a great people to invent so crafty a game," Von König said in Russian to the man beside him. He spoke with the air of taking it for granted that Howlett did not understand him, although he knew—and Howlett knew that he knew—that the American spoke the Russian language. "It's like their character—all 'bluff.' They play the boldest when they have nothing in their hands."

Howlett was not a wise and elderly statesman; he was a young soldier with blood and temper.

"When we Americans play, we play games of skill and finesse," he said in German, Von König's own language. "It is only when we are at serious work that we fill our hands—sometimes with swords."

The scar on the prince's forehead grew livid, and in an instant Howlett regretted the *gaucherie* of having referred to that schoolboy quarrel, although he still believed that the man who had grown from the boy he had known in Von König must be a bully and a brute.

"Sometimes when you are at play, too, you fill your hands," Von König said, as Howlett laid down his cards on the table. "I discarded that king;" and he put his finger on a king of diamonds that had fallen from Howlett's hand.

For answer, the young American leaned across the table and slapped the Prince of Carpathia smartly on the cheek. In an instant there was a confused crowd. The Carpathian prince was surrounded, and Howlett, with Curt's arm about his shoulder, was hurried away.

"Good heavens!" the boy said, "what is going to become of you? You have struck the guest of the Czar."

"Appearing simply as a gentleman, and insulting—insulting by a lie—a representative of the American government."

Howlett spoke proudly, but in his heart he knew that his life in Russia was over. He knew that he would be recalled at once. And before his career, before everything, came the thought of leaving Wasia in the hands of that brute. He groaned.

"Oh, don't take it so hard. The brute deserved a sword thrust. The governors will know that Johann was lying. He is that sort," Curt said. He knew that the affair was serious, but there was no necessity of making it too bad.

"I am only thinking," Howlett said, "that I have allowed him to put me out of his way. I feel that I must go to the Czar and tell him that brute's character. I will say that he must not marry the Princess Wasia."

Curt broke into incredulous laughter. "You Yankees *are* funny! Why, look here, what could you tell Iskander that he doesn't know?—even if you could get near enough to tell him anything. Well, if I ever!" and he laughed again.

"I could tell him, for one thing, what I am surprised that the princess has not told—that this man is the fellow who insulted her, and followed her to the borders of Russia."

"Whew!" Curt whistled. "Is that so?

But you said that man was a common low fellow from Dresden."

"He went to school with me there. He was the lowest brute in the school. I gave him the scar he wears. He sat at that table to insult me."

"Oh! Ah!" Curt said. "The plot thickens! This is a very pretty story. Now I suppose some people would call it romantic that Johann fell in love with Wasia before he knew who she was. And he *was* a poor beggar once. Say, do you mind my telling Jane?"

But Howlett did not answer. The droshky had reached the door of his apartment, and he alighted. It seemed to him that in this accursed country they could see nothing in its true light. By his folly he had assured his own recall, and he would have to go and leave Wasia to her fate.

"No, I never will!" he almost shouted to himself as he stood in his own room. Then he put his head down on his arms and a dry sob came out of his throat.

## VI.

WHEN Howlett awakened the next morning he lay for several minutes trying to account for the sense of dull misery that brooded over his brain. He was too young and healthy not to sleep soundly, and he had to push aside his drowsiness before he could summon his consciousness and fix it upon his trouble.

He had taken such pride in his profession. It had been such a triumph when he had become the youngest attaché in the diplomatic corps. Now his career in that direction was finished. There had been tangle enough in the affairs of Carpathia before he put his hand to Johann's cheek. There was nothing for him now but recall. He thought, with a blush of shame, that even then the whole story was being read at American breakfast tables. He had made himself as miserable as he could before he thought of the difference in time, and realized that he still had a few hours of blessed oblivion.

As it happened the story never was known in America, except as a vague and nameless rumor. The Imperial Yacht Club can keep its own secrets, and it was only in whispers that the news crept out.

Howlett was usually out very early, but the tasks of the morning were so disagreeable today that he allowed himself the luxury of shirking them for a few moments. A noiseless turning of his door upon its hinges brought into view the Swiss who

cared for his apartment, holding a coffee tray.

"Sir," he said, "there is a person outside—a woman—who wishes to sell you Russian laces and embroideries."

At once Howlett remembered that he would be going home presently, and that it was trash like this that his womankind always expected from a returning traveler. There could be no trouble great enough to cause him to forget the little kindnesses of life.

"Say that I will be there in a moment," he called as he disappeared through the portières into his bath.

It was by no means the typical Russian merchant's wife or daughter who rose as Howlett entered, although there was a suggestion of the Jewess in her features. She was very pretty, after a soft and kittenish type. Her black dress and modest hat could not make her inconspicuous. When she put her veil back, and Howlett saw her face, he thought she looked like a woman who was in the habit of facing crowds. She gazed squarely and frankly into his blue eyes, and then let her lashes fall, as she picked up her basket of lace and embroidery and began turning the contents over.

"What have you?" Howlett asked.

"I have everything," she answered in French. "Here is embroidery from the steppes, and the coarse lace of the peasantry, which is the most decorative."

The Swiss, who still hovered about, went through the door, and closed it after him. The woman held up a strip of embroidery of many colors.

"This," she said, looking squarely into Howlett's face, "is handsomer than anything you can buy, unless—you are going to Carpathia."

There was in her tone a question that made Howlett look at her intently for an instant.

"I am not going to Carpathia," he said.

"Why not?" the woman whispered.

"Why not? I heard last night of the blow you gave to Johann. I know who you are. You are the American boy who gave him that scar. He has never forgiven you. He hates you."

"What is that to you? And why should I go to Carpathia?"

He began to think that he had a mad woman in his sitting room. The questions were out before he stopped to consider.

"I know I can trust you, because you are an American gentleman. That is why I come to you. Johann Von König is my

husband." She exploded the words with passion, standing up, her hands over her heaving bosom.

"Your husband!" There was wonder and joy in Howlett's voice. He might have known, he thought to himself, that Von König would be exactly that sort of a scoundrel. "Your husband? Why he is trying to marry—" Howlett could not speak the name.

"And he will do it, unless something prevents."

"But you said—"

The woman made a gesture of despair.

"Do you not know that he is a prince? That his marriage to me is not binding? I am his wife, I have been his wife for three years. Before this great change came in his fortunes, I supported him by dancing. After it came he still allowed me to dance." With nervous fingers she took a chain from under her collar, and showed Howlett the face of a child, with curling black hair. "My boy ought to be heir to Carpathia by all the rights of an eldest son, lawfully born, but he is a nameless nobody." There was more passion than sorrow in her voice. "But if Carpathia were taken away from Johann, he would come back to me."

"This marriage shall be stopped," Howlett said. "The friends, the guardians of the young lady whom Von König would marry shall hear your story. They will put a stop to it. There is no princess in Europe who would be allowed to marry him. It is an outrage!"

The woman laughed. It sounded like Curt's laugh of the night before.

"Do you suppose they do not know it? If you read the Paris journals, you would have had it over and over. When has there been a prince married, for years, of whom the same story was not told? Sometimes it is true and sometimes it is not. The Queen of England is the only sovereign who ever made an objection to a morganatic wife. The Czar's father had one, as everybody knows. It is nothing. I should be laughed at for offering a claim. I could never come near enough to the highest in power to present a complaint. Were I to do so, I should be escorted over the frontier, at the very least."

"Why do you come to me?" Howlett asked the question in agony. It seemed to him that no man had ever been so helpless.

"Because you are going to lose your position here through him; because you are the friend of the young Prince Curt, who would go to Carpathia as its ruler were Johann turned aside; and because"—she



looked him fully and boldly in the face—"you would serve the Princess Wasia. Johann has laughed at your foolish passion for her. I have dear friends in his suite. I know all that passes. I also know," she went on passionately, "that they hate him in that country. There is not a Carpathian that would not prefer the yoke of Russia, rather than be governed by him. There is a seething tempest there, only waiting to break forth. The students in the university of Carapeth are almost in a state of revolt. They want to get rid of Johann, believing that the hour will come when they may be a free state. They are opposed to this marriage, as it will inevitably fix Johann on the throne, even if Wasia's Russian sympathies bring the principality under Russian influences. Now is the time to make a strike to dethrone him. You must leave Russia in any case. Take Curt and go to Carpathia."

She arose with a dramatic gesture, and walked toward the door. She turned back with the curtain which covered it grasped in her hand. "Save Wasia!" she said, and she was gone.

She had forgotten her embroideries, and Howlett gathered them all carefully together. Then he ordered his sleigh and dressed himself to go to the minister's.

## VII.

HOWLETT'S interview at the legation was anything but pleasant. Mr. Folsom had asked that this particular young man should be sent to St. Petersburg; and now that he had caused this trouble so early in the story, the minister was inclined to be rather severe. He could not blame Howlett for slapping any man who had accused him of cheating at cards. The fact that the accusation was a falsehood was questioned by nobody. Johann was considered a semi barbarian, and somehow the rumor crept out that the two men had met before.

The minister had confined his reproof to the gambling. "The game of poker has worked enough havoc in America without introducing it to these hot headed savages," he said severely.

"What am I to do?" Howlett asked meekly.

"I am extremely sorry," the minister said, "but I am afraid you will have to go home. In fact," he added, clearing his throat, "I have already cabled for advice."

Howlett knew exactly what that meant. His recall had been cabled for. He would go back and join his regiment somewhere

on the desert. He would lead a quiet life, with his studies, his books, and his gun, while Wasia, his princess, his darling, was dying a death by torture as the wife of a brute, a bigamist. The thought of resigning came to him. Suppose he did? He would be only the simplest American citizen. He could never by any chance come near the princess again.

As he went out after the interview, he met Mrs. Folsom. She stopped him and put her motherly arm through his.

"I think you did exactly right," she said, and *so does John*" (John being the United States minister). "They will make a hero of you when you get to America. I wish you were going to make the fight for Congress in Kentucky. You would carry your district at a walk, if the newspapers and your party speakers once heard that you had slapped the face of a king for accusing you of having another one up your sleeve! Gracious! But it would be a good campaign story. I never heard a better. Slapped a king!" And Mrs. Folsom, with long years behind her of political canvassing and wire pulling for husband and father, sighed for a great opportunity lost.

Howlett walked down through the Nevsky, letting the sleigh drive back home. He did not know where to go. Half a dozen acquaintances met him and bowed in a perfunctory fashion. Suddenly he determined to go to the Yacht Club and insist upon an investigation of Von König's charges. He felt that he had a perfect right to ask for it.

As he walked along the ringing stones, it seemed to him that there was a footfall echoing to his. There were hundreds of people on the streets, and he tried to reason with himself that it was nonsense. He turned, and could see no one whom he might suspect. A rather dandyish Frenchman was looking at the photographs of actresses in one of the frosty windows, but everybody else was hurrying through the biting air.

At the Yacht Club men looked at Howlett as though they wondered what he was doing there. He was not a regular member, but had been introduced. Doubtless, many of them were entirely in sympathy with him, but they could not say so. He had attacked a prince, the guest of the Czar. It was well to let such an incendiary go his own way.

Going his own way was rather a forlorn journey, and when he came across Curt at the door he would have manufactured a reason for taking him away and talking to

him if he had not had one. The plan the dancer had suggested all at once seemed feasible.

"Let us go away from here," Curt said, after they had made the tour of the rooms. "This atmosphere seems to have a chill upon it. I know a little café around the corner where we can be quite undisturbed. What is the row, any way?"

"What did Lady Jane mean by sending for you to come 'at once,' the other night? Did she only want to see you, or—pardon me, but did she think you could do anything about Carpathia?"

"Lady Jane is a woman, and an English-woman."

"But did she?"

"I had been drinking champagne last night, my dear semi countryman," Curt said, "and my ideas may have expanded. Lady Jane was anxious that I should go over to Carpathia while the throne stood cold and empty, and seat myself thereon. I believe she had an idea that I could put my tongue in my cheek and remind Johann, when he came home again, that possession was nine points of the law. She appeared to have an idea, which old Primrose had dropped from his diplomatic lips into her mother's teacup, that Russia would stand behind me if I were to act with decision."

"And wouldn't Russia?"

"If you know what Russia is going to do you have solved the problem of the mysterious east."

"Curt, are you an adventurer?"

"What else is there left for me to be?"

"You couldn't lose much if you tried for the throne of Carpathia and missed it."

"I should lose about everything I have, which I do not consider a large stake."

"And if you were to win it?"

"Johann would lose his bride, but"—Curt spoke earnestly—"you would not win her."

They had entered the café now, and were holding glasses of vodka on the table before them, but they were not drinking. With his black eyes and the heavy barbaric rings on his fingers shining in the light of the open fire, Curt was a picture of vivid earnestness. It was like a new layer upon the top of his usual picturesque recklessness.

"I have no such hope," Howlett said dully, but his heart sank as he spoke the words. He had the instinctive hope which nature has planted in every honest man's heart, that the woman he loves may be his own. "But I may perhaps do something toward saving her from the horror of this dreadful marriage, this marriage which can

be no real marriage, for the man already has a wife."

"Yes, I know he has—Stefanie the dancer. He has been married to her for years. It is not binding." Curt spoke with the utmost composure.

"You people are supposed to have the highest organizations in the world; you are the ruling class, and yet you have the theories of life that belong to the middle ages. You are callous to delicate feelings."

"Oh, nonsense—don't call names. Write all that in a liberal newspaper, for the censor to read. We are like everybody else. It only shows plainer with us. We can't disguise our motives any more than we can disguise our ages. It is all written down for us. They would want to marry Wasia to me, I suppose. They may not. I shall only be a sort of stop gap for a little while if I get into Carpathia. They will want to put her on a permanent throne. She is a lovely girl. She ought to marry an English king. She is more than half English. Only I seriously fear she would be arguing against the House of Lords before six months. Would you believe that she went to call on a prominent nihilist in Geneva, and argued the subject of Russia's future out with her? Wasia knows that Russia couldn't rule herself. She is befogged, numbed by cold. There is no reason for the nihilists."

"They ought to come to free the ruling classes, if anybody."

"Indeed, there is no such prisoner as the Czar Alexander," Curt said sadly, "and few as miserable men. But he does his duty as he understands it. The men who know the Czar love him."

"And yet he sacrifices this young girl?"

"That is his duty as he understands it. He married his brother's betrothed for reasons of state. He has been happy, and he made her happy. Why do you continually talk of this as something you must stop? Has Wasia given you any hint?"

"I have not talked with her long."

"If I believed that it would ruin her life's happiness to marry Johann," Curt said, "I would make that adventure into Carpathia. It might make me a fugitive, an exile, an outcast. I suppose Serge and his wife would never forgive me, and I should be reduced, in case of failure, to earning my daily bread at a card table in a Paris club. Kings in exile have done it before me."

"I have a considerable fortune," Howlett said. "It is at your disposal."

"My dear fellow, I always supposed, until this moment, that you were a man of

common sense, Yankee shrewdness, and all that sort of a thing. Suppose, before you risk so much, you see Wasia and find out whether she wants to be left in maiden meditation, while Johann is kicked from the soil of Carpathia?"

"How am I to see her?" Howlett asked eagerly.

Curt spread out his jeweled fingers. "Do not ask me," he said. "She is too precious now to be let run about with Mme. Berg. She is at the country house of her sister. They drove there this morning. She will not appear again until all the details of her wedding are settled. No invitation has been extended to me to join them there."

Now there happens to be in the brains of most successful men a trait that is created for special occasions. When a thing has been called impossible, then this instinct drives them to make it possible. They are the men who break down fallacies of every sort, who dispel shadows and bugbears, who turn events. America is the country where brains of this sort come to maturity, and Howlett owned one of them. It was not that his caution was small, but his combativeness was large.

"Is there any way by which I can see the Princess Wasia?"

"None that I know of, short of bombarding the castle," said Curt. "There is a legend that a page of the time of the great Catherine enticed a maid of honor down a rope ladder, and was forgiven by his royal mistress on account of his valor. But the great Catherine's days are over."

"I do not wish to entice any one down a rope ladder, but— Will you go with me to that house?"

"Heigho!" Curt laughed. "They say the days of romance are over. I can see no harm in your having ten minutes' talk with Wasia. I suppose the common sense thing to do would be to try and get Serge to take me out there. He might do it, and I could ask Wasia what she wants. But it is altogether likely that my request would be refused, and then they would begin to watch around and wonder what I wanted. Taking it altogether I believe I should prefer the adventure of trying to see her."

"Will you go?"

"Yes, I will."

"Tonight?"

"Tonight."

### VIII.

"You may go out tonight. I shall not require your services," Howlett said to his

Swiss after the dinner had been served. He turned his reading lamp around on the table, and gave an extra screw to it that made the flame shoot up. He had been at his desk for hours, arranging papers and writing letters, and it looked as if he had found an all night occupation. The Swiss mentally thanked Heaven that his lines had been cast in such pleasant places, and took his departure.

He was hardly out of the house when Howlett's whole manner changed. He pulled off the easy old blouse that he had been wearing, and rapidly dressed himself in the warmest garments, covering himself finally with a heavy fur coat, and donning a fur cap which came down about his ears. He had a vestige of his uniform on, but at the last minute he buckled about his waist, inside his outer coat, a full belt of cartridges, and thrust two revolvers into it.

All the time he was watching a little clock on the mantelpiece. As the hour struck he started towards the door; then he hesitated and came back. Stuck into the wall, holding up a corner of a Navajo blanket, which had been woven by some squaw on the plains of New Mexico, and had come all the way to do duty as a tapestry, was a knife with a keen steel blade and a bone handle. Howlett had picked it up from a Pike County man who declared that it had once been the property of the redoubtable Colonel James Bowie. He took it down now, and ran his naked thumb along its edge. Evidently it was such good steel that it had not been injured by its late uses. It went into the belt with the two revolvers.

The incongruity of calling on a princess with a bowie knife in his belt aroused no sense of humor in Lieutenant Howlett. Life had become too serious for laughter. It was for the light minded Curt to enjoy the comedy of the situation.

He ran down the steps and out into the streets without seeing any one in the house. A beggar stood at the door in a dirty old sheepskin coat, and whined out an insistent appeal. Howlett started to pass him, but the man followed. With a gesture of impatience, and in the hope of ridding himself of an unpleasant follower, the American pushed aside his coat and took two or three copper pieces from his pocket. The light flashed for one second on the polish of the revolvers, and then the two parted. Howlett walked rapidly to the corner of the street, where an extra droshky stood in the line of waiting vehicles. He stopped, loudly bargained with the man to take him



to the American minister's, a few blocks away, and seated himself inside.

The beggar walked ten steps, said a few words to a man who had just left another droshky, and then disappeared around a corner.

Howlett went in the direction of the minister's, but drove on past the house, without stopping, and on out toward the open country. As they left the last of the houses behind, Howlett left the back seat, climbed over to the front, and seated himself beside the driver. The three horses were skimming along over the snow, their bells sending their peals far and wide.

"We will let the bells jangle for a few miles farther," Curt said, for it was that hothead who sat on the driver's seat, handling the reins as if he had driven a troika all his days. "How do you like my system of bargaining? I have been thinking as we came along that if the worst came to the worst, I might become a cab driver. There's money in it, as you Americans say."

"How long before we get there, and what are the plans?"

"Plans! Plans! My dear fellow, I gave you a plan of the castle when we parted. I marked in red ink the window from which the page of the time of Catherine enticed the maid of honor down the rope ladder. I can do no more. I am sure I cannot tell how you are going to see Wasia. I supposed you would have thought out some plan ere this. Ah! I am glad I did not take those bells off. Here is a troika behind us. I wonder if that can be Serge. There are few houses on this branch of the road. If he asks us where we are going, we are going after Father Gregory, who lives just beyond the country house. He has been sent for by an old friend, who is very ill. You are my friend."

Curt said all this hastily, for the troika was just behind them. With great deference Curt drew up to the side of the badly broken road, and let the other vehicle by. It went by, turned, and flew rapidly back toward the city.

"Now I wonder what in the devil's name that man could be doing?" Curt asked, drawing up his horses and looking back. At once the troika stopped and turned again. As it came alongside, the occupant leaned out.

"Can you tell me," he asked in broken Russian, "if this road leads to the estates of Prince Paulanoff? I have lost my way."

"The road you are seeking is in exactly the opposite direction. Leave Petersburg on the other side."

"Ah!" the man said in a disappointed tone. "I must hasten." He spoke sharply to his driver, and dashed rapidly back.

In an hour the two adventurers' horses toiled up a steep hill, on the top of which stood the country house of the Grand Duke Serge.

"I was brought up here," Curt said, as they drew near. "This house was refitted by my father for my mother's residence. The apartments of the grand duchess are those for which my father chose the furnishings. Doubtless Wasia has the rooms which were mine. They are there in that corner. Underneath is the library. What was afterward my sitting room was designed for my father's dressing room, and there is an inclosed staircase running up in the wall behind the bookcase. If Wasia is in my old rooms, and we could get into the library, all would be easy."

"We must leave the droshky here in the clump of trees," Howlett said, "and you may stay here. Why should you risk yourself in this? It can do you no good. Tell me where the rooms are, and let me trust to my own ingenuity."

"You will have me for a companion," Curt replied. "Am I one to lurk in a clump of trees? Of course there is only one thing to do. Wasia cannot be asked to come down and unlock a door like a lady's maid. I am going to awaken a servant, and take you into that house."

The horses were made fast with an easily slipped knot.

"If you are going to do that," Howlett asked, "why do you hide the horses?"

"This is a good place to keep the horses sheltered and easy of access," Curt said. "Come along."

There was no moon, but the broad expanse of snow served to throw up a light where the trees and the gloomy, square house did not shade it. Curt made his way toward the back. Going up to an iron wicket, which led into the offices, he whistled a peculiar call. Presently there was a sound of feet on a flagged passage, and an old man with a fur cap about his ears, and a lantern, came down toward the gate.

"Old Ivan has answered that whistle many a night," Curt laughed. "He knows my ways of old. Ivan," he went on, cautiously, with an air of great mystery, "are the ladies in their apartments?"

"Yes, your highness, hours ago."

"Very good. It is necessary that I should consult some of the records in the library—some of my father's old records."

It is about a matter of business. I have brought a lawyer with me. Can you let us in for a few minutes without disturbing anybody?"

"Is it another search for the will?" the old man whispered.

"Yes," Curt said.

"Please God you may get your rights, sir," the old man faltered. "Come in;" and he unlocked the gate.

"I had forgotten all about the old man's craze," Curt whispered as they followed the footsteps. "He thinks my father left a will which has been mislaid; that he intended to leave me all the unentailed property. I know he did nothing of the kind, but it will do as a door opener."

The library was a long, narrow apartment, surrounded with books. On one side a table stood, and just over it hung the portrait of a beautiful, smiling woman, so real that she was almost like a presence in the room. It was not necessary for Curt to say that it was his mother.

"Soft!" he whispered. "Are the apartments of the Princess Wasia directly over this?" he asked, turning to old Ivan. "She might be disturbed."

"Be quiet, I beg of you. The young princess has been in her rooms all day. Her dinner was served to her there. She is not happy with the grand duchess. Something is wrong between them," the old man said. "They do not talk together."

"It strikes me that if my sister wanted to palm me off on a brute like Johann, I'd speak to her. I should have several remarks to make," Curt said in English. "You may go now, Ivan," he added. "We shall not be long."

"And if you find it?"

"You shall hear of it on the instant."

The old man had hardly closed the door when Curt pulled down his mother's portrait and showed steps behind it. His father had had it painted as if his wife were standing at the foot of the stairway, which she had doubtless often used. Curt slipped out of sight in an instant, turning back to say:

"I hope she won't scream and arouse the house."

Howlett listened intently. There was a little knock, faint as possible, then a low cry, smothered in an instant. Two minutes later Curt appeared again.

"Wasia will see you," he said. "Take this candle, and stop at the turn in the stairs. I will wait here."

Howlett, his heart beating in great strokes, took the taper Curt handed him, and stepped up on the stair. The canvas

rolled over the opening behind him. He found himself in a very narrow way, which turned abruptly after two steps. There was a niche here, in which a saint had stood before the house was remodeled. Howlett leaned against it and waited.

The door at the top of the dark space opened, and a figure in a long white gown stood there in a half light. Howlett could feel little chills coursing over the backs of his hands. He could see the pinkiness of Wasia's fingers where the candle light she was shading shone through them, and it made her seem human and lovable. He wondered what he could say to her.

Step by step she came down. She could see his face, as he could see hers, and they gazed at each other with half embarrassed eyes. Howlett took a step to meet her, and as he did, a great wave of crimson went over her white cheeks. He could see that there were circles about her sweet eyes, and the lids were red.

As the blood went over her face she ceased to be a princess, in Howlett's mind; she became all at once the woman he must protect, the woman he loved, the woman who trusted him, who loved him. The appeal in her eyes overmastered him. He put the taper on the pedestal where the saint had stood, and held out his arms to her. She went into them like a child. The sob of joy and relief that broke from her throat brought tears into Howlett's eyes.

"My darling!" he said. "My darling!" There was no rank between them now; they were only two young lovers in the first ecstasy of their passion. "Come away with me now," he whispered.

"Must I?" she asked, like a child.

The demon of temptation shook Howlett. Why should she not come? One can be no more than happy. Surely she would be happy with him. There was the droshky outside. They could go—where could they go? How could he ever leave the frontier with the Princess Wasia without a passport? It was impossible, however much he might wish it.

"It is impossible!"

The girl put one hand up to his cheek, and then put the other under his chin.

"Look at me," she said.

Their faces were almost together. Her lips parted over the pretty teeth, and her eyes looked into his. Howlett could not realize that she was a princess, that he was committing a crime in being where he was. She seemed like some sweet American girl. There was nothing foreign, nothing alien about her.

"Do you know," she said, "I do not even know your name?"

"Howlett."

"Do not be stupid. *Your* name. Not your family name."

"Robert."

"Do they call you Bob?"

She was laughing. Their eyes met for an instant, and then he kissed her again and again. Why should they be severe and wise? They had a right to be silly. They were young.

Suddenly Curt cleared his throat loudly. In another moment they could hear voices in the room below. Wasia put her hand over Howlett's mouth. They could hear every word. A high, cold woman's voice was speaking. "How came you here?" it said.

"It is Marie," Wasia whispered.

"I came to see Serge," Curt replied solemnly. "They told me that he was here. There was an important message brought to me."

"Not about—nihilists?" Marie's voice went to a whisper.

Curt was silent. There was a little giggle in Wasia's throat.

"What is that noise?" Marie asked fearfully.

"It was I, rustling this book leaf," Curt said. "You are in no possible danger from nihilists now. You owe that much to Wasia. I am afraid you are going to have a hard time of it when she has gone," he went on airily. "I think the fact that it pleased her to visit you has been all that has kept you—pardon me—in one piece, for some time."

"How can you say such dreadful things? What was your message, then, and why was it not delivered?"

"Serge is not here. Ivan let me in to reach the fire for an instant."

"And the message?"

"Related to the Czar. I must go back. But first, my dear princess, let me see you to the door of your own apartment. It is not wise for you to be running about, even in your own house, unattended, in times like these."

"Like these? It is nihilists!"

"The nihilist is always with us."

"I will go to Wasia's rooms. Let me around the table. I will go up the staircase."

"And frighten her to death? No." Curt was evidently holding her arm and trying to lead her toward the door. "And then, besides that, I will not leave you until I see you inside Wasia's door. I fear your sister

would hardly understand my walking with you up that narrow way."

There was a suggestion in Curt's last sentence which froze Marie's tones. "You may go," she said, and swept out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Curt rushed to the picture and rolled it back. "Come!" he said.

Wasia tore herself away and flew up the stairs, while Howlett joined Curt. Together they hurried out through the corridor, and, unlocking the wicket, started toward their droshky. They ran toward the trees at the edge of the wood. As they passed the first one, a bullet flew before Curt's face, so close that he felt the wind of its passage.

Howlett slipped one of his own pistols into his hand. He had left his furs in the droshky, and wore a short coat under which his belt was buckled. As another shot flew by them he whispered to Curt, "Run on and get the horses. I will hold them at bay."

He could see a man's arm moving in the open space where the light came through. It was almost pitchy dark here in the thick trees. Howlett fired and the arm dropped. But at the same instant he felt himself seized in a powerful grasp and pushed back. His pistol was knocked from his hand, and his right arm held. With his left hand he grasped the bone handle of his knife, and, wrenching his shoulder free, struck backward with all his might. He felt the knife strike and cut. The grasp on his arm relaxed, and with another effort he was free.

He could see nothing. Only a sense of locality that was one of his strongest instincts led him to the droshky. Curt whistled the lash about the horses' ears and they dashed away over the plain.

"I have killed a man, I think," Howlett said. "Who were they?"

"Heaven only knows. It may be anybody, from Serge's own men to Johann's. It is probably Johann's, guarding the princess. He is barbarian enough to expect somebody to carry her off; and circumstances are almost bearing him out. What did Wasia say? Does she want to marry the brute?"

"She does not," Howlett replied emphatically.

"I thought she didn't," Curt said, and then he laughed. He had heard every word through the picture, but there was no necessity for telling that. The sacredness of royalty had not been sufficiently ground into the morganatic nephew of the Grand Duke Serge. Lawlessness was in his blood,

He knew that the conventionalities must be observed on the crust, but what went on underneath was a matter of one's individual concern.

"Am I to make that throw for Carpathia?"

"I have a fortune," Howlett said. "My fortune and my life are with you."

"I wouldn't throw them away," Curt said seriously. "If by chance I succeed, Wasia will be taken from Johann, but she

will not be for you. It will only be to marry some one else."

"I will risk it," Howlett replied. He was ready to fight the world now.

He ran up the steps of his apartment. By his door stood a man, who pushed a note into his hand and slipped away. Howlett read it by his expiring lamp.

Johann has spies following you. Be careful, and leave Russia at once. Buy some embroideries in Carpathia.

STEFANIE.

(*To be continued.*)

## IN TWO CITIES.

### PARIS.

HER eyes are full of laughter and of light ;  
 She twines her flowers, all dew wet in her hair,  
 Until their fragrance, as they wither there,  
 Makes all the sunshine magically bright.  
 She wears her beauty with a sweet delight,  
 And smiles—as innocence alone should dare.

Yet those who in the gray night follow, where  
 Sleeps high Notre Dame in massiveness and might,  
 Have seen her bow her proud, glad head, and weep,  
 With all the burden of the mystery  
 Of woe—dead tragedies, and living cries,  
 And sickening secrets her great heart must keep  
 Of sin and sorrow—that no one may see  
 Her solemn memories in her laughing eyes.

### COLOGNE CATHEDRAL.

HERE stand, and while that holy, well known strain  
 Fills all the vaulted arching, lift your eyes.  
 Ah, you will tremble, yes, and tears will rise  
 With the oppressive awe of it, and pain  
 Born of excess of beauty. But remain  
 Quite motionless, until its beauty lies  
 Like music in your heart, or like the skies'  
 Own spotless noon, that waters clear retain.

Then, weep. For here is carved the soul's one prayer,  
 Silent, unuttered principle of life  
 Ineffably divine, that all things teach—  
 The aspiration, and the yearning, there  
 In secret, and the soul's unfruitful strife  
 To touch pure, snow clad heights she cannot reach.

*Edith Neil.*