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The Maverick Princess

BY RANDOLPH ELLIOTT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM A. ROGERS

BOYS," said my father, "how would you like a little sister?" "What's a little sister?" Pat, spokesman for the pair of us, made cautious rejoinder.

"A little sister is somebody like Bill here, only he's a boy, and she would be a little girl." My father's explanation, begun glibly, petered out beneath the quizzical gleam in my mother's eyes.

Pat still refused to commit himself. "What's a little girl?" he queried further.

"A little girl—" My father stopped abruptly. "Is the kid trying to be funny? Or doesn't he really know?"

"He's heard of girls, of course," said my mother laughing; "but I don't believe he's ever seen one. How should he! Sixty miles from the nearest town, and old Della and I the only things on the

ranch who wear skirts! Not that I wear them often," she added with a glance at her trim knickers and high boots.

"But, good Lord," exclaimed my father, appalled by a sudden realization of facts, "think of Bill here, eight years old and as ignorant of girls as the day was born! No wonder he's such a young roughneck. How do you suppose he'll have when he first sees one?"

"Probably like all the rest of his sex," he rejoined my mother. "He'll first scorn her, then pity, then embrace. But had you best finish your very lucid explanation?" She was clearly enjoying her husband's discomfiture.

So my father told us that a girl, somebody like mother, only little, that one of them, the daughter of an old friend, was coming from across the ocean to live on the ranch with us and be our sister.

Pat allowed himself a gleam of interest. "If she belongs across the ocean, t

he'll have to ride on a ship to get here, won't she?"

My father said yes, and Pat condescended to pleased approval. "I guess I'll like her all right if she'll tell me about the ship."

Strange that a child of the inland country, born and brought up on a huge ranch, should have developed a passion for the great unseen, unknown, mysterious sea. How it first began we never knew. But for Pat the wide stretches of his Wyoming home held no allure. The golden mesas, rising and falling in their sweep toward the distant mountains, the cow-punchers dashing across them in pursuit of stampeding cattle, the thrilling gray dawns of the round-ups, when, mounted on well-entled ponies, we were allowed to ride with the men—these things, which filled my childish soul with unrealized, inarticulate joy, were to Pat merely the humdrum events of every-day life. But the finding in an old magazine of the picture of a ship would set his eyes to sparkling. He would pore over it by the hour, studying every rope and sail, expounding the meaning of every part. And at night, when our tomboy mother returned from her varied outdoor activities and settled herself for the accustomed story-telling, at his unfailing demand would be: "Tell me about Columbus and those little boats that rode in!"

Looking back after the passage of years, I realize that part of Betty's good fortune was the fact that she had "ridden a ship" to get to us. Pat was a difficult boy, high-tempered, unruly, resentful of my encroaching on his privileges; and Betty, the outsider, would have been put to it to hold her own with him had there not lingered always about her childish head the halo of one who "had gone down the sea in ships."

But on the spring morning of our father's announcement, all this was hidden in the future. Pat, having given his different consent to the coming of the ranger, went about his business. I, however, was older, and the statement that the newcomer would be like mother, only little, intrigued me. I adored my mother. Slim, beautiful in her boyish ways, recklessly flinging herself on any half-broken horse that came to hand, and

dashing through the corral gates amidst the protesting admiration of the "wranglers"—it was a picture that always fired my imagination. Accordingly, I lingered to hear more of this promised small edition of her grace and daring.

My father looked worried. "I wonder if Adrian realizes what a rough life we live—sixty miles from nowhere and only men on the place! If you ask me, it's not the sort of thing for a little girl brought up in the conventional order of a European kingdom!"

But my mother was airily unconcerned. "Prince Adrian spent six weeks hunting big game with you in the Hole-in-the-Wall country. He must know that Wyoming has none of the luxury and formal régime of a palace. Probably it's to get her away from such things that he's sending the child here. Anyway it's too late for you to stop it. He counted on the friendship between you and started her off without waiting for your reply. She'll be here any day now."

It was a wild afternoon of scudding clouds and howling winds when the girl arrived. A buckboard with two rangy horses driven by a wide-hatted cowboy came to a spectacular halt in front of the corral, and from it alighted three persons. A square-bearded man with iron-gray hair descended first, followed by a stout woman arrayed in layer upon layer of gay shawls, her round, dark face blanched by terror of the unknown. Once safe on the ground, she turned and lifted down a child.

It was many years ago, but I can still see Betty as she appeared in that first glimpse. She wore a white fur coat and cap (for March in Wyoming holds the tang of winter), and between the two layers of snowy, luxurious fur there shone out her little face, richly colored as a September peach, all creamy-gold and vivid carmine, with brown eyes starlike in their shining excitement. Her hair, heavy and black and straight, hung to her waist, except when the riotous wind caught it and flung it, a rippling black banner, into her face, whence she brushed it impatiently with small, fur-gloved hands.

Pat and I, before their arrival, had been practising with our miniature ropes tricks learned from the ranch hands—spinning

them in wide circles; jumping into the centre of the revolving coils and out again without touching the strands; lassoing fence posts; tripping each other with deft twists of writhing loops. The child, on approaching, had witnessed one of Pat's

grasped the other. Between them the boy was like to be torn in half. Meanwhile I, outraged by Pat's daring to lay impious hands on this newly visioned angel, broke into a bellow of noisy weeping, and my mother leaned against the



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most spectacular feats, and now, freeing herself from her nurse, she fell upon him, clutching the rope with both hands, jabbering an unintelligible jargon.

Pat's response was immediate. "Leggo! Leggo, I say!" he yelled, and on her failure to obey, he proceeded to pummel her with small, bony fists.

The resulting uproar was deafening. The fat nurse sprang forward with unbelievable swiftness and a torrent of vituperation in an unknown language. She seized Pat by one arm just as my father, shouting "Stop that, you little devil!"

bars of the corral, adding her pretty, gay laughter to the variegated din.

The square-bearded man quieted the tumult. A command to the nurse made her release Pat's shoulder, and, gathering up the child in her arms, she marched off in wrathful silence. In like silence my father shoved Pat ahead of him down the trail to the wood-shed and the bunch of switches which always awaited us there. My mother, trying in vain to repress her little ripples of amusement, greeted the guest in formal fashion, and the two walked up to the house together. I was

eff alone to mop my eyes with the back of my hand, and gazed malevolently at Pat's rope lying abandoned on the ground.

If any man thinks that children do not all in love, just refer him to me! Only a few minutes had passed since the arrival of the dilapidated buckboard, but in that brief time into my eight-year-old heart had slipped a fairy-tale princess, snow-white, rose-red, raven-black!

Later, sitting unobtrusively in the living-room, I listened to the conversation of my elders. The Count, as my father and mother called him, was allaying some of my father's fears.

"On the contrary, Mr. Farrell," he said. "Prince Adrian knows perfectly the manner of life you lead here, and it is because that life offers exactly what he wants that he has ventured to ask this boon of you, trusting to that friendship formed so many years ago during your Austrian student days. He foresees bad times for our unfortunate little country. His mother, the Grand Duchess, has had a happy and peaceful reign, but his, he thinks, will be stormy. The world is changing, and he wishes this child, his princess, to be trained in the most ultra-modern fashion so that she may be able to meet the new conditions. She is to be reared in every respect as are your sons, with body and character and self-reliance strengthened by a vigorous, simple, outdoor life. She is no longer to be Elisabetha Maria Vittoria Yolanda, with a ring of half a dozen titles after her names. You are to call her what you like—"

"I think Betty is an awful nice name!" I broke in suddenly, forgetting my caution and stepping forward eagerly.

The Count adjusted his glasses and looked at me keenly. His eyes were very black and piercing, and seemed to take in the role of me, from my flaming red head to my shuffling embarrassed feet.

"Betty it is!" he said finally. "And since you have acted as godfather to her American christening, let me ask you one question, young man. Do you like this child of yours?"

"I—I think she's great!" I stammered in an agony of confusion.

The Count smiled with satisfaction.

"That is good!" he remarked. "I hereby appoint you her unofficial guardian with orders to teach her everything you know, from riding wild horses to twisting the rope which was the cause of our somewhat turbulent entrance."

A week later no one in the country of her birth would have recognized the Princess Elisabetha Maria Vittoria Yolanda. Under the supervision of the Count her hair had been clipped; and, clad in what he called "all overs" (the blue overalls which form the uniform of the Western ranch child), "Betty" had emerged and was turned loose with Pat and me. I welcomed her joyfully, but in secret I suffered over the loss of her floating black banner of hair, for with it went some part of the fairy-princess guise. Unknown to any one I stole a long, glossy, fragrant lock, and hid it away for private gloating. Parents seldom know what fool romantic notions their little boys often cherish!

The Count stayed a month and a portion of each day he spent with me, telling me of Betty's home; of the old grandmother who lived in a castle and ruled over her people with kindly severity; of Betty's father—"once the bosom friend of your own father, my lad"—so handsome and dashing, like an old-time knight; of how he, too, would reign some day; and how, after him, the power would pass into Betty's little hands. Of why, loving her dearly, he yet had decided to send her away, in order that she might never know the littleness and meanness of court life, never be the centre of intrigue and false flattery.

"By the time she is called upon to reign," said the Count, "her father thinks the people, the common people, will be in control all over the world. Therefore, he wants her to grow up with them, be one of them. Then, at the appointed hour, she will be able to rule as one of them, and they will accept her and love her as such."

Wily old Count, always building for the future! He had sensed my instant surrender to his little charge, and since Betty was to be trained in accordance with a unique plan, he was deliberately fitting me, her adoring boy companion, into the pattern of that plan.

It was heady stuff for a youngster—all

this vaguely comprehended talk of kingdoms and dynasties and of reins of government to be held by small, dimpled, baby hands. The one thing I clearly realized was that this child, gobbling down her oatmeal beside me, was a real, live princess, and that I had been appointed her unofficial guardian. I swaggered and strutted abominably, until Pat, least patient of youths, flew into sudden rage, and there followed a battle of such gigantic proportions that the bunk house was emptied of men and the corral bars were festooned with delighted spectators.

Pat was no mean fighter, but I was a year older and correspondingly heavier. I downed him finally and was pounding his nose in the dirt when Betty swooped unexpectedly upon us, like an avenging fury, clawing me away and shrieking in her funny baby English (learned from a governess in her far-distant home) "Beel, Beel, you wicked boy! I hate you, oh, how I hate you!"

My strength turned to water beneath her touch. I slunk aside and watched her cuddling and comforting Pat, my soul bitter at the sound of her soft pitying crooning.

The ring of interested cow-punchers had fallen silent in face of her onslaught, but when Pat, flinging off his ministering angel, had staggered groggily to his feet, the men let out a yell of approval and bore them away to the crude consolations of the mess house.

I stood alone on the field of battle, winner of a hard-fought fight, yet conscious that, after all, it had been an empty victory.

That episode marked the beginning of changed relations between Pat and me. Heretofore, though of naturally unsympathetic temperaments and given to violent personal altercations, we had yet managed to present an unbroken front to a common foe. Now, however, we quarrelled incessantly, with insolent openness. At last my father rose in his wrath and swept us both off to the wood-house and a rendezvous with the switches, declaring as he strode along:

"I thought the presence of a lovely little girl would teach you young rough-necks some manners, but you seem to grow more outrageous every day!"

Poor father, serenely unaware that our new unruliness was directly due to that same lovely little girl!

I worshipped her, and, being fool enough to show it openly, was rewarded by an attitude of careless unconcern, interspersed with brief, sweetly torturing tyrannies. But on Pat, who was just as openly indifferent to her, she lavished all the wiles of a born coquette, fighting his battles even as I fought hers.

At first he had been disgusted at her ignorance of the ship in which she had crossed, regarding her as a very religious person might regard an angel who professed forgetfulness of the ground plan of heaven. However, she soon divined the intensity of his sea love and thenceforth used it as a leash to bring him to heel. When he was being particularly obnoxious to her, so that my very fingers itched to fly at his throat, the little witch would remark dreamily: "When I rode on the ship"—following it by some childish anecdote. It never failed to work. Though her ignorance of technical details was abysmal, for Pat she would be again imbued with the glory of one who had seen and known the thing for which his soul longed.

In spite of minor frictions, that first year of her stay was a time of rare delight. Betty, it seemed, had but exchanged one kingdom for another, for she became a once the pet of the whole ranch. The cow-punchers adored her, and if her father had wished to keep her from flattery he had chosen the wrong place. The men struggled barefacedly for the favor of her bewitching baby smiles, and my father took her at once into his heart in place of the little daughter he had always desired.

That she was not egregiously spoiled was doubtless due to the healthy outdoor life she lived. She took to it like the proverbial duck, and being absolutely without fear, was soon almost as skilled with ponies and rope and small rifle as were Pat and

Bela, her fat nurse, proved infinitely adaptable. From the very first she had been in a state of revolt. To my father and mother, it is true, she rendered a kind of sullen homage, but with Della, our old Irish cook, it was war to the knife, and the fact that neither could understand a word the other was saying

in no wise mitigated the fury of their conflicts. Pat and I, with the facility of childhood, soon picked up a fair amount of her (and Betty's) native tongue, but we had not needed this knowledge of her language to comprehend her scorn of our small, turbulent, democratic world.

Betty soon outgrew the woman's would-be tender ministrations, and, aping Pat and me, the child learned to hustle into her somewhat scant apparel with record speed, and would race us to the swimming hole for our morning dip, returning thence with her short black hair plastered to the small beautiful head and an appetite for breakfast which caused Bela to register unmitigated horror. Evidently, in all her long years of service in the reigning house, no princess had ever eaten in so gross a manner.

Those same short locks were another source of anguish to the devoted nurse, and with every fresh cropping there was an emotional storm which ended only when my mother uttered a few curt words of command. These, delightedly translated by malicious Pat, would send Bela muttering to her sanctuary, the little room next Betty's in the eastern wing of the ranch-house.

When Pat and Betty were eight years old and I nine, regular lessons began under the guidance of a young man imported for the purpose. My mother, a man's woman with small liking for her own sex, vetoed the suggestion of a governess put forward by my father, who had begun to wonder whether Betty might not be the better for a little strictly feminine influence.

"I'll have no old maid lolling about the place!" my mother declared, and the Count, who had come for a visit of inspection, seconded her ably.

"Prince Adrian, too, prefers a tutor," he said. "The child will have more need of the valor of a man than of the graces of a woman if her life develops as we foresee."

So the tutor came, the first of many as it turned out. For as Betty grew into her teens, passing, with no interlude of an awkward age, from the charm of childhood into the winsomeness of girlhood, each young tutor in turn fell victim of her budding loveliness, and sighed and suffered through many gloomy weeks until

he had to be dismissed and his successor installed.

But in spite of these interruptions, our education went on apace. A real education it was, too, I may say, and equally strict for the three of us. With this one exception—that, whereas Pat and I were held firmly to task in the matter of mathematics and sciences, Betty's strictest discipline came in the study of governments. All governments, I mean, ancient and modern, oligarchies, tyrannies, kingdoms, limited monarchies, republics, governments practical and theoretical, utopian and anarchical.

All this bored Pat inexpressibly. He had a good mind but was intellectually lazy, and this delving into matters which he felt would never concern him brought him often to the point of open rebellion. I, knowing why this particular study was being stressed for Betty, was intensely interested and would often gibe at him for his narrow-minded obtuseness.

Whenever I did so Betty would immediately fly to his defense.

"It is you, Beel, who show stupidity," she would declare. "These things are all very well for you and me. We are land people and they will be necessary for us. But Pat is different. He is of the sea. The quarter-deck will be his home. Why should he bother his brains about parliaments and the affairs of the laborer!"

She was still his ardent champion, you see. And, indeed, the relative positions assumed by us as children had been little modified with the passage of the years. I still worshipped Betty; Betty still sought out Pat, and Pat was still gaily indifferent to the two of us.

He was a handsome lad, with something of my mother's beauty of slender form. Like hers, too, his dark hair and gentian-blue eyes and wide, mocking smile. No one, I think, quite approved of Pat. He was too callous in his unconcealed selfishness, too brutally direct in gaining his own ends. But when he chose to exert himself, he had an all-conquering charm.

I was of the rugged type of my father—tall and big-boned with red hair and gray eyes. I looked at myself in the glass one day after Betty had chanced to flay me more mercilessly than usual, and grinned at the rough-hewn visage I saw there.

"You big boob!" I apostrophized myself. "She'll go on treating you like a yellow cur as long as you let her. Why don't you stop it? After all, even if she is a princess she's only a girl and almost two years younger than you."

There was no psychoanalysis about my sudden determination. I was too young for that—only seventeen. It was simply a matter of realizing that I was the under dog of our trio, when by right of seniority and size I should be on top. I resolved to make myself boss of my juniors. And I did it!

It was no easy job. Pat had grown so accustomed to my mooning around in a kind of fatuous princess-worship that he did not readily relinquish his cynical superiority. But there came a day when, holding him by both wrists in an unbreakable grip, I made him apologize for some particularly outrageous rudeness to Betty.

"Oh, I'll apologize, you big bully!" Pat yelled, white with fury.

Grinning happily, I released him. "Big bully," was not an especially desirable title, but at least it was better than "big boob."

Betty's surrender came more slowly. She was clearly surprised by my right-about-face attitude, from adoring adulation to a kind of jolly comradeship, but it was only little by little that she allowed a new respect to creep into her own manner. I think the happiest moment of my life up to that time was when she deliberately sought me out to ask for my help in one of her projects. It was a small matter, but when she stood before me, a little embarrassed, the long black lashes shading her shy eyes, I knew that, once for all, I was cock of the walk among the ranch's younger set.

The next autumn, when I was eighteen and the other two seventeen, was the time set for our separation—Betty and I to go to our respective colleges, Pat to the Naval Academy. But in August of that year the world flamed into war.

To all of us, in our remote, isolated life, it came as a crushing surprise. Pat was the first to react. He disappeared one day and when he turned up again, a week later, it was in the uniform of a "gob."

My father and mother were horror-

struck. "If you had only waited," they cried; "you could have gone as an officer."

But Pat was superlatively content. "This way I get to sea at once," he declared; "without having four more years of school."

Of course, I wanted to enlist, too, in the army, as did most of the younger cow-punchers; but my father held us in leash.

"America will be in soon," he said; "that will be your time. As for you, my boy (to me) a little taste of college will do you no harm."

So Betty and I stood with the others on the morning that Pat left us. It is curious to realize how little part the elders of the ranch played in our inner lives. For ten years we three had lived in a world of our own making—quarrelling, fighting, playing, loving. So it was to Betty and me that Pat said his real farewell.

When he took her hand and saw her before him, lovely, tremulous, eyes shining with unshed tears, I thought that even his armor of self-sufficiency was going to crack. He hesitated a second, made as though he would take her in his arms, then whirled about and jumped into the waiting automobile, and the gentian-blue eyes and wide, mocking smile vanished in a cloud of Wyoming dust. Pat, at seventeen, had known but one love, the sea, and he went off gaily to the tryst.

A few weeks later Betty and I also travelled down the long road to the station and across the continent.

Her college was only a few miles distant from mine, and I went over often to offer her moral first aid in her new experiences. It's no use denying that she and the college were equal sufferers in the contact. No one knew who she was, not even the authorities. It had been her father's wish that she should slip into place there, inconspicuous, object of no favors. But it was utterly impossible for Betty to be inconspicuous. Her great beauty alone rendered that a vain hope. Then the manner of her upbringing made her impatient of rules, written or conventional. Her life on a big ranch among men, riding stirrup to stirrup with them on many a long day's jaunt; sharing the night watches of the round-up; eating the rough food; sleeping in a blanket beneath the stars; having for her only woman com-

panion my tomboy mother, who was as good a "cowman" as any of the punchers—from surroundings such as these imagine the untamed Betty flung into the activities of an Eastern woman's college!

"Oh, Beel, it is dreadful!" she would groan, waving a scornful hand at the

I was there when I heard of Pat's death. He had been assigned to a mine-sweeper, and was one of the first of that small company of American sailors who died in the Great War.

Pat, the sea-lover, drowned at twenty-one! His first sweetheart had been a



When he turned up again, a week later, it was in the uniform of a "gob."—Page 602.

sleek trimness of the campus. "Girls, hundreds and hundreds of them, living together in this stuffy place, doing the same things, thinking the same little thoughts, wearing the same stupid clothes! I don't belong here, Beel. I'm an outlaw, a maverick in this herd. I want to go back home."

But orders were orders and she had to stick. My own college career, scarcely less irksome than hers, was cut short by America's entrance into the war, and in due course I found myself in France, in the thick of the fighting.

jealous mistress, withholding from him even the chance of supplanting her by another.

I felt a strange new tenderness in the thought of my younger brother. Temperamentally we could never have been friends, and since Betty's coming there had always been bitterness between us, often barely concealed. But after all there was the tie of blood, and that tie grows stronger with death.

Also my heart ached for Betty. How she had loved him! It was an instinctive love, with no foundation of respect or

admiration. She saw him, I knew, as clearly as did the rest of us—was just as surely conscious of his iron-plate selfishness and self-centredness. But for her his careless, natural charm outweighed his equally natural defects. She never reasoned about her love for him, never followed it out to the logical conclusion, as I had done—that there could not possibly be any permanent relation between her life and ours. She had simply loved him!

“Betty is inconsolable,” my mother wrote. “I wish you were here to back up your father and the Count in their efforts at distraction. I was never any good at dealing with women in feminine fashion, and Pat’s death has turned me more strongly than ever to the panacea of hard work and hard riding—a cure which Betty refuses to share with me.”

Poor mother! Her self-imposed cure came to a sudden end. She rode one wild horse too many, and was brought home dead, with a blue-black mark on her temple as the only disfigurement of her strange, boyish beauty.

Betty wrote me the dreadful news in a letter so filled with sympathy and tenderness that I treasure it to this day. There had never been anything maternal or filial in their relations, but soon after Betty’s coming, when the child first began to show the self-reliance of a good sport, my mother had adopted her as a “pal,” and such they remained until the terrible day when the old “horse-wrangler’s” oft-repeated prophecy had been realized, and the punchers gathered to mourn the mistress they adored.

Thus it was that I returned home, after the armistice, to a sadly diminished family. Bela, the fat nurse, had died years before, and was buried on a wind-swept Wyoming hill, far from the beloved land of her birth; so my father, Betty, and raucous-voiced old Della were alone in the big sun-drenched ranch-house.

My father and Della received me with open arms. Betty was more restrained in her greeting, but there was a new light in her dark eyes, a new note in her lovely voice, which set my heart to beating wildly.

I can’t describe Betty—no one could, I think. There was something so young

about her vivid face and shining, starry eyes; something so gallant in her slim, graceful body; something so royal in the carriage of her white throat and beautiful small head, with the heavy black hair close coiled about it. And withal there was such sweetness and gay tenderness and impish charm. My father, saddened and aged, clung to her piteously; the men, drifting back in diminished numbers from their overseas service, came to her for orders; I, worn out with the agonies of war and personal sorrow, found in her my only solace.

We took up again some semblance of the old life. The ranch, long undermanned, was in bad shape; and we began to gather together the scattered cattle. Betty and I rode herd with the cow-punchers, slept once more beneath the stars.

One night, after a long day in the saddle, Betty and I sat by a small camp-fire and watched the moonlight lying in white sheets across the rolling Wyoming hills. My father and the men would join us later, but for the moment we were alone.

Betty gazed thoughtfully into the radiant night. “Beel,” she said; “it is all so lovely, so peaceful, and out yonder the world is still in tumult! I feel that this is too good to last.” She shivered suddenly and turned to me with something like fear in her wide eyes. “Oh, Beel, you are closer to me than any one else on earth. Tell me, what shall I do when I have to leave this, my real home?”

It was so unusual, this mood of weakness, that my heart jumped aching. I reached out and took both her hands in mine.

“Betty, darling!” I cried. But just then there came a clatter of horse’s feet and my father rode up, alone. When he flung himself out of the saddle I saw that his face was unwontedly grave. Shot through with fear, I sprang up and confronted him, a question in my eyes.

He nodded, strained with grief. “Yes, it has come! The Grand Duke Adrian is dead, shot down by the revolutionists. The Count is on his way and wants Betty to meet him in New York a week from to-day.”

The moon-drenched hills and plains danced giddily before me. Betty cried out sharply and clutched my shoulder.

"Oh, Beel, Beel! I can't go! Don't let them take me!"

I held her, sobbing, in my arms, and looked at my father over her bent head. His lips were twitching and his voice shaking, but he spoke with stern tenderness.

"Little dearest," he said; "you can't

Much moved, my father gave his consent. He had loved her as a daughter for the greater part of her life and to give her up broke his heart. With both of us gone his home would be left desolate, indeed.

Of that strange journey of ours I retain



"What shall I do when I have to leave this, my real home?"—Page 604.

fail your people now. It was for a time like this that you were trained. You must go and save them from their own madness."

Betty straightened, slim and gallant in her boyish riding clothes. As she stood in the mingled light of moon and campfire, her whole figure seemed to glow with an unreal radiance.

"I know it," she said simply. "It was for this my father sent me to you. I am ashamed of my weakness. I will go, but Beel must go with me. You will permit that, won't you? I can't be cut adrift from every one I love."

only a few vivid pictures: Betty sitting beside me in the pullman, white-faced, silent, watching the swift miles speed past; our meeting with the Count in New York, when he kissed her hand and greeted her as his sovereign; Betty standing by the ship's rail gazing into the blue depths of the ocean which had stolen the boy she loved.

"It was only a child's love I felt for him," she said. "He was charming and gay and ruthless, and a child instinctively wants the thing beyond its reach. He would never have cared for me, and I, as a woman, could never have loved him. I

am a woman now, and I know the difference."

Again that new note in her voice stirred my blood. Oh, Betty, my fairy-tale princess, why did the Lord make you so lovely and desirable, and then put you so far beyond my reach!

But perhaps the most vivid memory of all is of that gloomy winter afternoon when the Grand Duchess Elisabeta Maria Vittoria Yolanda drove in state through the rain-swept streets of her grim little capital.

The Count had managed the whole affair and, the revolutionists being in a blue funk over the unplanned-for death of the Grand Duke, there sounded only loyal huzzas of welcome as the young ruler passed through the crowds of her subjects.

I, watching from the curb, was not surprised that they cheered her. Seated in a shabby old gilt coach, wrapped in furs, a charming shy smile touching her lovely lips, she looked every inch a princess. But suddenly, for me, the grimy gray streets vanished and in their stead I saw a wind-tossed March day in Wyoming, a battered buckboard driven by a wide-hatted cowboy, and a small child descending in a fury of eagerness, her black banner of hair whipping against her vivid little face. That was *my* princess—snow-white, rose-red, raven-black!

There followed weeks of confusion, through which I moved in a daze, knowing nothing of the political intrigues, caring nothing for the gossip of the court. That there was abundance of both I did not doubt. My boyhood's knowledge of Betty's native tongue stood me in good stead for the picking up of chance remarks, and thus I learned that my relations to the Grand Duchess were the subject of much comment. "The American Adventurer," they dubbed me, and they wondered what post I was destined to occupy. Hearing this, I smiled grimly and strode on. I, occupy a post in this dinky little country, the whole of it smaller than the smallest of Wyoming's counties! I was homesick for my own land and the wide stretches of sunlit plain. Several times I tried to break loose, but Betty's pleas, her frantic clinging to the comfort of my presence, held me fast.

I saw her but seldom, however. The

court was in mourning and social functions there were none, but long, tedious ceremonies of state filled her days. The Grand Duchess opened her toy parliament. Robed in black, the Grand Duchess took part in gorgeous religious services, praying for the repose of the Grand Duke's soul. The Grand Duchess received delegations of her faithful subjects, and granted endless petitions.

Meanwhile, the political wheels revolved about us. I was utterly ignorant of the various machinations—Betty, I suspected, scarcely less so. But the Count, her prime minister, was always on the watch. He was an old man now; his hair and square-cut beard were snowy white. But the fierce black eyes were as piercingly alert as ever and little escaped them.

After a while I began to realize that affairs were not progressing as he liked. He grew restless, and I occasionally came upon him in remote corners of the bleak old castle, in conversation with strange-appearing men. The coronation of the Grand Duchess would not take place until after the prescribed period of mourning, but in the meantime something was evidently stirring. Now and then, in passing groups of people on the street, disjointed bits of conversation floated back to me, and more and more often did the word "republic" figure in those fragments. Once I encountered the Grand Duchess at the door of her audience hall, and as I bowed and stepped aside she shot a glance at me from beneath her long black lashes. I puzzled over that glance. It was a regular, old-time, "Betty" look, filled with delight and malice and (yes, I was sure) with triumph. What was she up to, I wondered!

Oh, but I was bored! If I seem to give only a vague account of my brief experience of court life, it is because the whole thing seemed to me so unspeakably uninteresting. They were all like children playing at a game, and I sickened of the silly pretense. I grew to loathe that battered old castle, in the rain-sodden little city, the centre of that make-believe duchy. I resolved that, in spite of Betty's pleas, the coming of spring should find me at home again, astride of my horse, leading the March round-up.

The slow weeks dragged past. Christmas came and went, unutterably gloomy. This country of Betty's, I decided, must hold the world's record for annual rainfall. I marvelled that all the inhabitants had not metamorphosed into ducks. There was nothing left in me of the ardent, romantic knight. I was edgy with nerves and in my isolated position had no one on whom I could vent my bad temper. If this state of affairs continued, I would soon be starting a revolution on my own initiative in order to get some action.

Then, late one evening, a footman appeared before me with a summons from the Grand Duchess.

I was surprised. I had not seen her for days and, before that, our infrequent meetings had taken place always in the afternoon in the company of the old Count.

I followed the servant in silence, heard him announce my name, and passed before him into Betty's private sitting-room. It was empty, but her voice called to me from the balcony outside.

"See, Beel, it is going to be fine weather," she said when I joined her.

There was, perhaps, an unconvincing thinning of the ever-present clouds, but I scoffed at her unwarranted optimism.

She laughed. "Poor Beel, he is homesick for his own sunny country! Couldn't you be happy here, Beel, as captain of my armies?"

"Not on your life!" I growled.

The laughter died out of her voice as she turned to the little city stretching dimly below us. An occasional light shone on moisture-soaked walls, an occasional tower lifted toward the black sky.

"Look at it, Beel," she said softly. "The city of my ancestors! Down there are my people, and they want me as little as I want them. Life is strange, isn't it, Beel! My father was hated by his brother rulers because he granted too much power to his subjects. His subjects hated and killed him because he granted too little. He was an outlaw from both camps. He had me educated as a commoner so that I could come back here and rule in peace over the common people. Poor father, he didn't know the

thing he was fashioning! For I have gone him one better and have grown to feel that this whole business of kings and rulers is absurd. What do those people down there want with a Grand Duchess! I could do nothing for them that they couldn't do better for themselves. I know and they know that I, too, am an outlaw, a maverick from the herd."

I stared at her in amazement.

"Do you realize what you are saying!" I exclaimed.

"Of course I do!" she asserted calmly. "The day of sovereigns is ended. This is the era of the people, just as my father long ago foresaw it would be. But it is more so than he ever dreamed of. The world has swept past the need of even limited monarchies. This is the age of democracies, when the people will govern themselves."

She flung wide her arms, a glorious, free gesture. "And I am glad that it is so!" she exclaimed and turned and looked at me, her eyes shining in the dim light.

"I have not told you before, Beel, lest something should happen. But now the wheels within wheels have stopped revolving and everything is arranged. In three days there will be another revolution, a bloodless one this time." She caught her breath in sudden memory of her father, dying so gallantly. Then she went on again steadily.

"As a result of this prearranged revolution, I shall abdicate. Then there will be a plebiscite, and the people will declare themselves a republic. Thus it has been arranged."

She laughed softly. "And every one will be happy except the Count! Poor old Count, he has spent his life propping up a dynasty which, in the person of its last representative, is so glad to fall. Beel, do you realize that I shall be free?"

I stared at her dumbly. Deep inside me something was thumping, thumping. My brain whirled at the undreamed-of possibilities suddenly opening before me. I wanted to speak, but my lips were stiff and dry.

At last I managed to stammer: "But what about you, Betty? What will you do when you are free?"

The look Betty gave me was a mixture of scorn and mischief. "Beel, you stu-

pid!" she cried, and the next moment I had her in my arms.

"I can't believe it! I can't believe it!" I whispered. Her head lay against my heart. I kissed her again and again, on her lips, her lovely, long-lashed eyes.

The white lids fluttered, then opened to a mocking gleam of laughter.

"Shall I propose to you, Beel? Or would you rather wait till I am no longer a princess and do it yourself?"

Later, in reply to my half-fearful question, she said simply: "It was Pat's death made me know that you were the one I really loved. I grieved for him, truly, but I realized then that if it had been you—oh, Beel, if it had been you, I think I too would have died!"

She shivered, and, sobbing, crept closer into the shelter of my arms.

A sudden downpour of the unfailing

rain drove us indoors, and there we found the Count awaiting us.

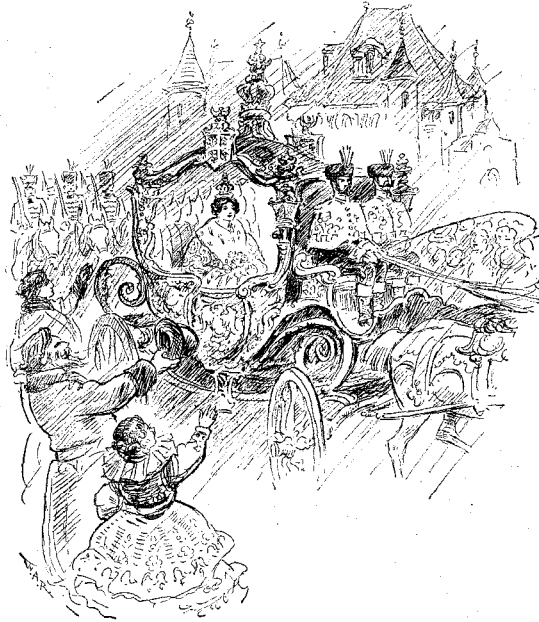
He glanced at our radiant faces and smiled. "So you have roped her at last, young man!"

In spite of the jesting words there was a look of utter weariness in his keen old eyes.

"Ah, well," he sighed; "you are young. Your lives have not been spent fighting for a lost cause!"

We moved impulsively toward him, but he drew himself up, a valiant old figure, rejecting our sympathy.

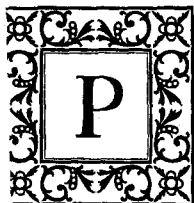
"Paris, at least, is left to me," he remarked dryly. "I will journey there with you and see you safely married. It is a city of lost causes and deposed prime ministers, a fitting place in which to relinquish my last vestige of control over your maverick princess."



Library Experiences Among the Children of the Russian Jews

BY MARGARET MUNGER STOKES

NOTE.—THIS ARTICLE IS BASED ON THE WRITER'S BRIEF EXPERIENCE AS A SUBSTITUTE ASSISTANT IN THE CHILDREN'S ROOM OF ONE OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE BRANCHES OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY



PLEASE, teacher, I want a operation."

"A what?"

"A operation. I want that I should give myself up."

It was my first day in the children's room

of a lower East Side branch of the New York Public Library, so one of the other librarians had to explain that the child was neither ill nor an outlaw. He merely wished to make application for membership in the library. Whether they express it as "giving themselves up," "putting themselves in," or merely laconically state that they "want the library," the coveted reader's card is an object very much desired by these youthful Russian Jews. To them the library is more than a mere "edifice" to which the local citizens point with pride. It is a real, integral part of their lives.

"Would you like to join the library too?" I asked the young lady who had requested application blanks for her two younger brothers, newly arrived from Russia.

"I? Oh, I have lived here a year already," she answered. "The library is my other home. Down-town, it is to work; at home, it is to eat and sleep; but the library, it is to live."

And the longer I was connected with the library, the more impressed I was with the feeling on the part of the people.

"It will really be a most interesting experience for you," the head librarian had told me when she gave me my appointment. At the close of that first day, however, I wondered if I could ever get used to it. The dirt, the noise, and the un-

familiar odors nauseated me. This was not the slums as I had imagined them. There were no pale, hungry children whose evident poverty tugged at one's heart-strings. These youngsters were rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed, evidently well nourished, and their parents had the same well-fed air. Yet they seemed quite content to live under the worst housing conditions in the city. In the streets swarms of children, playing with balls or marbles, scattered to let the mud-splashing trucks pass. Good housewives nonchalantly swept the trash from their houses out into the street. Beside each door-step stood an overflowing garbage can. Along the curb the omnipresent push-carts extended in an interminable line. Fish, fruit, shoe-strings, vegetables, ribbons, trinkets, furs, great wooden buckets of red and green peppers and pickles, dried herring, prickly-pears, and chewing-gum—everything, it seemed, could be bought from a push-cart. Grimy men noisily screamed their wares or haggled with equally grimy women over the price of the head or the tail of a fish. Young mothers tirelessly pushed baby-carriages up and down the sidewalk. Others sat nursing their latest offspring. Old women with wrinkled faces and stitched brown wigs sat gossiping on the door-steps, their knitting or crochet needles barely able to keep pace with their tongues.

These were the people I had come to serve. Not poverty-stricken people unable to live more decently, but prosperous folks who evidently enjoyed the noise and crowds and confusion. And, if they did not particularly relish the filth, they were at least quite oblivious to it. The thought of passing through these streets every day