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Princess Flavia's Betrothal

By E. W. SARGENT Copyright, 1904, by E. W. Sargent

"The royal house of Rurutanian demands your aid and protection. I must speak to you at once. Be cautious!" Malcolm Morgan read the note a second time, then glanced curiously at the little woman across the aisle. There was nothing about her to suggest the fantastic. She was just a dainty little old lady, scarcely five feet tall, with whom Father Time had dealt gently. Now she was watching him in a flutter of expectation. Surely there was something odd, but—Morgan crossed the aisle. "How can I serve you?" he asked as he dropped into the seat beside her. She gave a tiny cry of delight. "I knew I could not be wrong," she said, glancing apprehensively about the car. "I knew you were from Rurutanian. I am—ah—she lowered her voice—"Ethel, princess of the royal house." Morgan gave a start. Here was a little woman who claimed connection with a royal family of fiction, yet gave no indication of the insanity proved by her words. She accepted the start as a tribute to her revelation. "I do not wonder that you start," she said complacently. "You must be a



HE TOOK HER IN TO DINNER, PAYING PROPER DEFERENCE.

miliar with Rurutanian news and know that I am pursued. Still it is strange to find me here in America. I am going to my niece, the Princess Flavia, who is now in Chicago."

There was something grotesque in this odd jumble of the Hope story and the American towns. Morgan glanced apprehensively about the car. There was no woman to whom he could make appeal. There were three in the sleeper, but Morgan knew the type only too well. One was evidently a traveling saleswoman, since she fraternized with the other commercial travelers in the car and made notes of the points they offered for her instruction. One was evidently a soubrette who vied with the woman drummer for the attention of the men. The third was a young woman whose very face betokened her incapacity.

He leaned over to the little princess. "It would be better," he suggested, "that no one else should know that you are a princess. I, too, am going to Chicago and will wait upon your commands. The others in the car are not to be trusted, believe me."

"Bless your heart," she fairly beamed upon him—it is not always that her Rurutanian subjects yielded this ready acquiescence—"I don't dare reveal myself to any but a Rurutanian. Don't you see?"—her voice grew confidential—"that there is Black Michael in the smoker? It would never do for him to realize that I was in this very car when he came to America on purpose to destroy me. He thinks that with me out of the way it would be easy to marry Flavia. That will never be. I am determined that she shall marry Rudolph. That is why I am forced to see my own country."

All that long afternoon Morgan humored her whim. It would never do to let her proclaim her royalty to the others. There was not a single soul in the crowded Chicago sleeper who would see the pathos of her condition. Instead she would be made the object of their jeers. She was such a dainty little old lady that he could not bear the thought of her being subjected to ridicule.

He took her in to dinner, paying proper deference to royalty and showing that he appreciated the honor of dining with one of a race of kings. After that he played piquet with her until she became sleepy, and it was he who gave the porter an extra tip to make her berth down first.

Early the next morning she was in her seat, smiling and happy, when Morgan emerged from his berth. She beckoned to him. "I slept soundly," she said blithely. "From time to time I awakened to hear the tramp of my knight's footsteps in the aisle, and I knew that the Princess of Rurutanian was safely guarded." Morgan divined that the awakenings were due to the steps and that her knight's footsteps were those of the

porter as he conducted weary travelers to their berths, but he smiled and said nothing. All the morning he played her fa-

vorite piquet with her, and in a way it was a help to him, for it made him forget that he was on his way to seek the girl he loved. A few months before it had been his duty as district attorney in a town near New York to obtain the conviction of a murderer. It was clear that the man had committed the crime, but a clever lawyer had created a feeling of sympathy for the criminal, and Irene Osterman had coldly told him that she could never accept the love of a man who had sent an innocent fellow being to the gallows.

She had left for Omaha the following morning and had not even given him a chance to plead his cause. He was on his way there now in the hope that a change of scene would enable him to make a more successful appeal to her reason.

The breaking of the engagement had been a terrible shock to him, and her highness from Rurutanian at last enabled him to partially forget the pain that was gnawing at his heart.

Shortly before 3 the train pulled into the yards at Chicago, and presently they were in the station after a tedious journey between lanes of freight and passenger cars on side tracks. Just before they arrived the princess insisted upon having his card and his Chicago address. "We Rurutanians are so few," she protested, "that I am unwilling to lose sight of such a faithful subject." And unwillingly he had given her his card with the Bismarck hastily penciled in the corner. She would forget before she had reached her home, he argued.

There was a young man at the train to meet her, and he was warm in his thanks to Morgan. The young district attorney hurried to the hotel that was to break his travel. Three hours later a bell boy knocked upon his door and handed in a dainty note.

"The 'Princess Flavia,'" it read in unfamiliar hand, "would be glad to welcome to Chicago the traveler from 'Rurutanian,' who by his courtesy has done so much to help the 'Princess Ethel,'" and there followed an address of Michigan avenue.

From curiosity Morgan determined to follow the odd experience to the end, and as soon as he could unpack his dress suit he called a cab and gave the address.

Arriving, he was promptly shown into the parlor, and in a moment there entered a woman whose presence caused Morgan's heart to thrill. With a cry of "Irene!" he sprang forward, and in another moment she was folded within his arms.

Ten minutes later, when speech was possible, she explained that the Princess Ethel was her maiden aunt, whose dementia took the form of the belief that she was one of the omitted characters in the Hope novel.

"When I heard from Cousin Jack," she said gently, "of the man who had been so kind, I realized that you had done it to keep her misfortune from the rest of the car, and a man who can take all those pains to spare poor Aunt Ethel cannot be as heartless as I supposed you were. I realize my mistake, Morgan. Can you forgive me?"

A kiss was his only answer, but an eloquent one. So engrossed were they that they failed to hear footsteps until a thin tremble was heard announcing, "Well, I never suspected that you were the real Rudolph, but I am glad that my niece came from Omaha to meet me."

"Then the Princess Ethel approves?" asked Morgan.

"Yes," declared the Princess Ethel, and a whispered echo, "Yes," from the Princess Flavia sealed the understanding.

He Stayed Away.

A story illustrating the anxiety of applicants for public office and the small figure that some of them cut in their appointments is told regarding the late Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania.

While he was a power in the state a man who had been useful to him politically desired to obtain the postmastership in one of the leading cities of the Keystone State. The man was small of stature and insignificant looking. After his case had been pending for ten days he became a little agitated and sent a telegram to Senator Cameron, which read in substance as follows:

"What causes delay in my appointment? Shall I come to Washington?"

In the course of an hour or so he received the following characteristic reply:

"No. Stay away from Washington at all hazards. The president has promised to appoint you, but if he sees you he may change his mind."

The applicant wisely remained away and in course of the next fortnight was appointed and received his commission as postmaster.—New York Tribune.

When the inexperienced go traveling they take along a guide book, the experienced a check book.—New York Press.

Didn't Know It All. "Oh," sneered the self important lawyer who was cross examining, "you think you know it all, don't you?" "Not quite," replied the witness. "For instance, I don't know how you manage to secure an occasional client."—Chicago News.

The Drawback. Old Gentleman—Since your uncle left you that legacy, Mrs. Casey, you must find your path in life much smoother. Mrs. Casey—Shure O! dunno, sor. O! foin'd the more ye hov to ate the more dishes there is to wash.—Brooklyn Life.

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Wanted—A girl for general housework. Apply at 738 Exchange. Mrs. Stinfield.

THE ORIGINAL JOHN A. MOLER has opened one of the famous barber colleges at 644 Clay st., San Francisco; special inducements this month; positions granted; tuition earned while learning. Write correct number, 644 Clay st., San Francisco.

LOST.

LOST—A SET OF FALSE TEETH between the Parker house and Duane street. Will the finder please leave at the Astorian office?

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TWO UNFURNISHED ROOMS TO rent over Star theater. Inquire at theater.

For Rent—Furnished or unfurnished housekeeping rooms, 127 Seventh st.

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OLD PAPERS FOR SALE AT THIS Office: 25c per hundred.

For sale—At Gaston's feed stable, No. 105 Fourteenth street; one Landie's harness machine; one Smith-Premier typewriter; one 20 hp motor and belt-ling; 1000 good sacks.

SPECIAL NOTICES.

Notice for Bids. Bids will be received until Saturday, December 24, 1904, at 11 o'clock a. m. for building 42 net racks at the Occident and Columbia canneries. Plans and specifications can be seen at the office of the Columbia River Packers' Association. The right is reserved to reject any and all bids. Columbia Packers' Association.

FOR RENT—HOUSES.

For Rent—Six-room house, corner 47th and Cedar streets, Alderbrook, two blocks from car line. Inquire of Mrs. K. Johnson, over Fisher Bros' store.

"MISCELLANEOUS."

Notice. All persons having bonds of the La Imperial and La Veras cigars must turn them over to the members of the committee not later than Saturday, December 24, at 1 o'clock p. m. sharp. For further particulars see committee. By order, Committee CIGARMAKERS' UNION.

Hansen & McCanna, who occupy the shop formerly used by T. S. Simpson, adjoining the city water office, are prepared to do all kinds of sign and carriage painting. They will make a specialty of work of this class and guarantee satisfaction.

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