

TRUXTON KING

By GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON.

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She had been seized, on the night of the ball as she started across her father's garden, and escape had become possible only through the aid of Joseph and the girl's father. Farmers' wives told them of the newly formed army and of its leaders. She determined to make her way to the camp of those who would destroy her husband, eager to give them any assistance that her own knowledge of Merlanx's plans might provide.

One bit of information she gave created no end of consternation among the would be deliverers of the city. It had the effect of making them all the more resolute; the absolute necessity for immediately regaining control in the city was forced upon them. She told them that Count Merlanx had lately received word that the Grand Duke Paulus was likely to intervene before many days, acting on his own initiative, in the belief that he could force the government of Graustark to grant the railway privileges so much desired by his country. Merlanx realized that he would have to forestall the wily grand duke. If he were in absolute control of the Graustark government when the Russian appeared, he, and he alone, would be in a position to deal with the situation.

"The grand duke may send a large force of men across the border at any time," said the countess in conclusion. "Count Merlanx is sure to make a decisive assault as soon as he hears that the movement has begun. He had hopes of starving them out, thus saving the castle from destruction, but as that seems unlikely his shells will soon begin to rain in earnest upon the dear old pile."

Truxton King was listening with wide open ears. As she finished this dreary prediction he silently arose to his feet and, without a word to any one, stalked off in the darkness. Tullis looked after him and shook his head sadly.

"I'll be happy on that fellow's account when daybreak comes and we are really at it," he said to Prince Danton, who knew something of King's affliction.

But Truxton King was not there at daybreak. When he strode out of the camp that night he left it behind forever. The unfortunate lack of means to communicate with the occupants of the castle had been the source of great distress to Captain Haas. If the defenders could be informed as to the exact hour of the assault from the outside they could do much toward its speedy success by making a fierce sortie from behind their own walls. A quick dash from the castle grounds would serve to draw Merlanx's attention in that direction, diminishing the force that he would send to check the onslaught at the gates.

Truxton King had all this in mind as he swung off down the mountain road, having stolen past the sentries with comparative ease. The danger from Merlanx's scouts outside the city was not great; they had been scattered and beaten by Haas' recruiting parties. He stood in more danger from the men he would help, who were the watchful defenders of the castle.

It must have been 2 o'clock when he crossed the king's highway, a mile or more above the northern gates, and struck down into the same thick undergrowth that had protected him and Hobbs on a memorable night not long before.

At 3 o'clock a dripping figure threw up his hands obligingly and laughed with exultation when confronted by a startled guardsman inside the castle walls and not more than fifty yards from the water gate. He shouted a friendly cry as he advanced toward the man, calling out his own name.

Ten minutes later he was standing in the presence of the haggard, nerve-racked Quinnox, pouring into his astonished ears the news of the coming attack. The colonel lost no time in routing out the sleeping guardsmen and reserves and in sending commands to those already on duty at the gates.

When the sun peeped over the lofty hills he saw inside the gates a restless, waiting company of dragoons ready for the command to ride forth.

Meantime King had crossed the grounds with Colonel Quinnox on the way to the castle. He was amazed, almost stupefied, by the devastation that already had been wrought. A dozen or more balls had crashed into the facade. Yawning fissures, gigantic holes, marked the path of the ugly messengers from Merlanx. Nearly all of the windows had been wrecked by riflemen who shot from the roofs of palaces in and about the avenue. Two of the smaller minarets were in ruins. A huge pillar in the lower balcony was gone. The terrace had been plowed up by a single ricocheting shell.

"Great God!" gasped King. "It is frightful!"

"They began bombarding yesterday afternoon. We were asked to surren-

After the first two or three shells we found places of shelter for the prince and his friends. They are in the stone tower beyond the castle. The most glorious courage is shown. Count Vos Engo guards the prince and the ladies of the household. Alas, it was hunger that we feared the most. Today we should have resorted to horse's flesh. There was no other way. We knew that relief would come some day. John Tullis was there. And now it is today! This shall be our day, thank God!"

Attendants sped to the tower, shouting the battle tidings.

The prince came tumbling down the narrow iron stairs from his room above, shouting joyously to Truxton King. No man was ever so welcome. He was besieged with questions, handshakings and praises. Even the Duke of Perse, hobbling on crutches, had a kindly greeting for him. Tears streamed down the old man's cheeks when King told him of his daughter's safe arrival in the friendly camp.

But just now Truxton was staring at the narrow staircase. Vos Engo and Loraine were descending slowly. The former was white and evidently very weak. He leaned on the girl for support.

Count Halfont offered the explanation. "Vos Engo was shot last week through the shoulder. He is too brave to give up, as you may see. It happened on the terrace. There was an unexpected fusillade from the house-tops. Eric placed himself between the marksmen and Miss Tullis. A bullet that might have killed her instantly struck him in the shoulder."

King never forgot the look in Loraine's eyes as she came down the steps. Joy and anguish seemed to combine themselves in that long, intense look.

She gave him her hands. The look in her tired eyes went straight to his heart. Vos Engo drew back, his face set in a frown of displeasure.

"My brother?" she asked, without taking her gaze from his eyes.

"He is well. He will see you today."

"And you, Truxton?" was her next question, low and quavering.

"Unharmed and unchanged, Loraine," he said softly. "Tell me, did Vos Engo stand between you and the fire from the—"

"Yes, Truxton," she said, dropping her eyes as if in deep pain.

"And you have not—broken your promise to him?"

"No; nor have I broken my promises to you."

"He is a brave man. I can't help saying it," said the American, deep lines suddenly appearing in his face. Swiftly he turned to Vos Engo, extending his hand. "My hand, sir, to a brave man!"

Vos Engo stared at him for a moment and then turned away, ignoring the friendly hand. A hot flush mounted to Loraine's brow.

Vos Engo's response was a short, bitter laugh.

(To Be Continued.)

THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL HORSES' TAILS

LOS ANGELES, Cal., April 5.—Eighteen horses belonging to stablemen in the southeastern part of the city are without tails today and the police are searching for the perpetrators of one of the strangest robberies that has ever been reported at headquarters. The manager of the Hanna horse market reported to the officers today that five of his most valuable animals had been bottailed during the night. Within an hour the proprietors of three other markets and livery stables made similar reports. The missing tails totalled 18.

Chief of Police Galloway detailed four detectives upon the case. The officers have no actual clues upon which to base their search for the culprits.

SEATTLE COUNCILMEN TO REGULATE HAT PINS

SEATTLE, Wash., April 5.—An ordinance regulating the size of hatpins barring those which protrude more than two inches beyond the crown, and providing fine and imprisonment for violation, will be introduced in the city council tonight by Councilman Revelle.

MUCH-TALKED-OF AGREEMENT AMOUNTED TO NOTHING

VIENNA, April 5.—That the much talked of Austro-Russian-Balkan agreement really amounted to absolutely nothing, so far as the Balkans are concerned, was definitely confirmed on the highest authority today.

It was advertised as an agreement to maintain existing conditions in the Balkans. Diplomats doubted this from the first for the reason that Russia and Austria's interests clash at every point in regard to their Balkan policies.

From official sources it was learned that the "agreement" amounted to a patching up of a personal quarrel between Foreign Minister Baron von Aernthal of Austria and Foreign Minister Isvolsky of Russia.

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given, that the undersigned has, by the county court of the state of Oregon for the county of Jackson, been appointed administrator with the will annexed of the estate of Sylvestre Scudder, deceased.

All persons owning or holding claims against said estate are hereby notified and required to present the same, duly verified, as required by law, to me in Medford, Oregon, within six months after the date of this notice; and all persons owing said estate are notified to make immediate payment.

Dated March the 8th, 1910; date of first publication March 8, 1910.

W. E. PHIPPS, Administrator, with will annexed, of the estate of Sylvestre Scudder, deceased.

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