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THE BROKEN COIN A Story of Mystery and Adventure By EMERSON HOUGH From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

SYNOPSIS. Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the other half of which she had seen in the possession of a man who had been arrested for the murder of Count Sackho.

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT CHAPTER XXV. Divided.

As Kitty approached the little room of the count's palace—which before now had proved to be something of a storm center in the affairs of the Gretzhoffen coin—there came to her the conviction that there might be others beside herself who would have some inkling as to the whereabouts of the missing portion of the coin, and who might therefore arrive upon the scene at much the same time as that of her own visit.

As she saw herself the object of a poised weapon, she swerved aside instinctively—called out instinctively for help. "Roulez!" she exclaimed, for, womanlike, she had learned the value of a strong man's arm, and her first thought was of the faithful servant who so strangely had attached himself to her own varying fortunes.

He saw the little room occupied by a man—who now suddenly had entered—and who she supposed, she was on the point of surrendering to him both pieces of the coin. The sight of his mistress in danger was enough for Roulez. With his customary battle cry he plunged immediately into the conflict, careless of the threatening weapon. In the melee the two half coins both were dropped upon the floor.

Even now the ruling impulse of Kitty did not quite forsake her. She stooped and regained one of the half coins, but the struggling men, shifting here and there in the room, kept her from securing the other. In the blind instinct for escape she fled now to the open hall, taking that direction which led back from the front of the building.

Roulez heard her pass, and could not join her in flight—but he heard her give a cry of alarm whose cause he could only guess. His energies were fully occupied by the combat with this stranger—whom now he saw to be one of Count Sackho's men.

CHAPTER XXVI. Solitary Confinement. When Kitty in her blind impulse of self-preservation sprang out of Count Frederick's room, she did not at first contemplate continued flight. Once out of reach of immediate danger, she paused, loath to leave what she had come there to obtain, and with also to abandon her stout-hearted ally in his time of stress.

CHAPTER XXVII. The Counterfeit Coin. Count Frederick finally aroused himself from the apathy of inaction in which Kitty's sudden disappearance had left him. Now he learned that the message from the king asked his attendance at the palace as soon as might be.

CHAPTER XXVIII. Means to an End. Kitty, left alone once more, found herself in better heart than she had been but now. At least, she had seen Roulez—had found once more proof of his faithfulness and his efficiency.

CHAPTER XXIX. The Counterfeit Coin. Count Frederick finally aroused himself from the apathy of inaction in which Kitty's sudden disappearance had left him. Now he learned that the message from the king asked his attendance at the palace as soon as might be.

CHAPTER XXX. The Counterfeit Coin. Count Frederick finally aroused himself from the apathy of inaction in which Kitty's sudden disappearance had left him. Now he learned that the message from the king asked his attendance at the palace as soon as might be.

who waited for him impatiently enough at the rendezvous which had been established. "Well, well, then, Bartel," exclaimed the count, "why the delay? What's wrong? You are not going to tell me the same story that Rudolph brought you have not failed?"

The shamed look of the other gave him his own answer. Count Sackho himself gave way to hoarse curses of all incompetence. "The count retained one-half the coin," went on the unfortunate messenger. "I don't know which it was. The girl—the young American—not the other piece. I saw her pick it up. But she did not get both! I don't know which one she did get, but I know that each has one-half—the count and the girl. She must have been carried away by some other man. I heard her scream, then all was silent."

"So all escaped you? It is another matter what I myself may have done as to the girl and the coin—they escaped you?" "Yes, excellency, naturally I could not prevent the man from escaping, and the count himself allowed the other man to do so."

"What other man?" "Roulez, your majesty—the girl's servant—follows her like a dog—and fights like one."

"So, there were two others present beside yourself?" "Yes, it seemed as though everyone interested in the coin came all at once."

"Naturally, the competition asks quick work of all of us. And we will reach for the time Kitty was of the belief that her senses must leave her forever. The sense of solitude was a poignant torture."

How long she had thus remained she could not tell, when at length the close-fitting door in one side of the four walls opened. An old woman came in, bringing some food for her. Kitty tried her in every language which she had ever known, but got no answer. The old woman shook her head, and after a time retreated silently as she had come.

Getting no answer to her appeal for help, Kitty sat down once more, fighting herself to retain her faculties, her calm, her hope. Escape? How could there be hope for that? For once she was at her wit's end as she looked about her. She sat moodily and silent, too dazed, suffering too much, too uncertain in her own mind to plan intelligently any course of action.

She opened the paper and smoothed it out. As she read it she wondered how many other persons there were in this strange country who could claim acquaintance with her own plans. "Better write an imaginary story for your paper and return to America. Give up the coins and you will gain your freedom. Refuse and you will fare badly."

The nobleman stood for a moment but half concealing his real feelings, gauging the man before him, this imitation of a king. "She was a most charming young person," began the king, trying to conceal his own thoughts. "Do you not think such hair as hers is rare?"

"Rare, indeed, your majesty—she is in all things rare," suddenly exclaimed the count. "And where is she gone?" "I do not know—I have no idea."

"But you can find her—you certainly can bring her back." "I hope it, your majesty—I hope it very much. But then, as to the coin?" he added, somewhat maliciously—for he knew well enough where sat the wind in royal quarters.

"Oh, yes, about the coin. Well, I was only going to ask you to find it for me." "That seems simple, your majesty! Even though I do not know where the young girl is."

"That is why I ask you, my dear count." "Agreed then, your majesty. Of what use is a servant of the king if he cannot do the king's will? I accept your errand. I will soon return to you the coin—at least, I hope so. After all, perhaps it has no such value as you seem to think—I am sure it has less value for you than other things that we might mention."

Count Frederick did not add aloud what was in his mind—the truth—that the coin had more value for him than he at any time before now had believed. Presently he excused himself from the royal presence and departed to put into effect a little plan of his own which he fancied might blunt both horns of this dilemma into which the naïveté of King Michael so suddenly had placed him.

As luck would have it, there had been thrown into his hands the king's half of the coin. Count Frederick thought for a moment before he made a plan. Then he made a hurried journey to a certain silversmith in whose skill he had much confidence.

"Make me," he said as he laid upon the counter his piece of the coin—"a replica of this—absolutely, line for line, so that I myself cannot tell the two apart. Do you hear me? Can it be done?"

"Yes, excellency," said the workman, "it can be done—so nicely that I myself scarcely could tell them apart."

"Then quick with it," said Count Frederick. "How soon?" "By tomorrow, excellency, I promise you a duplicate."

It was therefore on the morrow that Count Frederick was able once more to visit the royal palace with a mind more at peace with circumstances. With him he carried what was apparently the king's half of the coin which he had given to the young American so carelessly, and which now at once he coveted again—since the young American herself was gone.

"So soon!" exclaimed Michael. "You are the acme of punctiliousness and efficiency, my dear count. You are indeed a man of results. Go now to my cabinet again and help yourself to such jewels as you fancy."

"No more, your majesty, I thank you. If I have been of service I am pleased. Jewels are not for me. They are for women—and no woman has jewels from me now. I have reformed, your majesty. I shall be taking myself to a monastery next."

King Michael laughed loudly at this jest on the part of his former boon companion. "Not so far as that for me," he said. "I am not yet ready for any monastery. I swear I can remember a queen's face and a queen's figure when I see them, well as ever. And I saw them both here not so long ago. I thought I had secured the chance to see them yet again—when I gave her as our gift this which you have restored to me now. It seems I failed in that. But should the same case come up again for action—should she by intent or accident meet us again—I am in possession once more of what formerly was mine. Perhaps the af-

fair could be undertaken de novo, my dear count. She gave it to you to return to me? Well, no matter, only I hope that in some way, on some day, she will come back again."

"I trust it, your majesty," said Count Frederick fervently; and the deluded monarch, pleased at the quick execution of his wishes, knew nothing of the deeper machinations of the keen brain which he fancied still was in his service.

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