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To Meet You

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PLEASED TO MEET YOU



By

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY



“What country, friends, is this?”

“This is Illyria, lady.”

—TWELFTH NIGHT

Garden City · New York
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
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TO
WILLIAM McFEE

PLEASED TO MEET YOU

PLEASED TO MEET YOU



I

“I NEVER supposed it would come to this,” said Frau Innsbruck. Her vigorous torso, tightly compressed in black, creaked a little with indignation.

The small sunny chamber where they lunched together showed nothing to suggest what deplorable condition “this” was. But it seemed to be something she saw through the window. From that outlying wing of the old building they could look across a well-trimmed lawn to the façade of the château. Over the roof of mossed crumbling tiles and conical towers floated a green and white banner which had just been raised.

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“How are we to behave when he arrives,” she continued, “and what are we to call him? Why, the man started life as a fishmonger. I never thought we’d see such doings in the Farniente Palace.”

Her companion breathed heavily over the last of his roll and honey. Herr Romsteck was elderly, portly, and austere; his manner showed that he knew any attempt to express his feelings would be inadequate. A blob of honey had fallen on the lapel of his worn but immaculate tail coat. He removed it halfheartedly, as though such trifles hardly mattered now.

“It isn’t a palace any longer,” he said. “I had orders this morning from the Commissioner of Public Buildings—think of that, Public Buildings—that from now on this is officially known as the Executive Mansion. The Council of the League of Nations does not desire that any ‘reactionary’ sentiment be retained in our government names.”

“What *right*, I should like to know, has the League of Nations to interfere” exclaimed the

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housekeeper. "League of Nations, indeed! League of Barbarians. Do you know that when all those foreigners were here, English prime ministers and people like that, one of them actually smoked a pipe in his bedroom—the very room that was Duchess Liesel's boudoir. Oh, I know it is even harder for you, whose family have served here with honour for generations. But I thought that when the horrible war was over things would be better; and we've come to this. We might as well be a soviet."

"We shall have to be on our dignity," said Romsteck. "The future of Illyria is in our hands. It is the grand dukes and generals and statesmen, perhaps even the fishmongers, who get into the history books; but *we* are the real power behind the throne. It is we who see that their meals are suitably planned, their beds aired, their trousers ironed, their social precedences arranged. By sheer excellence of example we shall have to lift this unfortunate proletarian above his natural depravity. Let me point out to you also, it is dangerous to

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“speak lightly of the League of Nations. They might have wiped us off the map altogether.”

“Ah, the good old days,” sighed Innsbruck. “The Grand Duke with his Rolls Royce and his beautiful ladies and the laughter on the terrace. There was some satisfaction in serving in an elegant and vicious household like that. There was no talk then of economies and republics and debts. The bourgeois virtues are so dull.”

There was a tap at the door and Karl the wine-steward came in. He was a grizzled little fellow in a green felt apron stained by years of grubbing among cobwebs and mildew.

“Your pardon, Herr Romsteck,” he said, “but here is the cellar inventory you wanted. We are a bit short in the Burgundies; when the envoys from Geneva were here they absolutely demolished the 1911 Chambertin and Hospice de Beaune. The Musigny also is very low.”

“The gentlemen from the League,” observed Romsteck, “have a very genteel taste in wine.”

“Except the Americans. When the American

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commissioner was here to arrange our finances he would have nothing but champagne. However I worked off a cheap sparkling Chablis on him and he did not know the difference."

"Considering the habits of our late lamented Grand Duke," said the major domo, looking over the list, "your bins seem to be very fairly stocked."

"Plenty good enough, anyhow, for a republican administration. What a calamity!"

"It is a time of crisis," said Romsteck gravely. "There must be no nonsense about retrenchment or we shall all find ourselves retrenched out of existence. We are lucky to be here at all."

"Yes," cried Karl, "and what did it? If I had not had presence of mind to serve the 1865 cognac the evening the protocol was signed, we should have been annexed to Italy. I saw the hard hearts of those premiers begin to soften after the third glass."

"I hope you have plenty of it left," said Frau Innsbruck bitterly. "There may be need of it."

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“But do you suppose there will be anyone in this new government who will appreciate the finer things?” There was the wistfulness of the connoisseur in the cellarer’s voice. “These proletarians, will they have a taste for anything beyond beer?”

“We shall educate them,” said Romsteck. “The tradition of our vanished aristocracy rests with *us*.”

The door opened, admitting Pigalle, the chef, the only member of the staff who considered himself privileged to enter the major domo’s sitting room without knocking. His tall white cap was furiously awry, his face engraved with irony.

“I see the flag of the republic has been raised,” he said grimly. “Our chief magistrate arrives to-day. Pigs’ trotters and sour kraut, I conceive, will be delicacies adequate to this evening’s repast.”

“Pigalle,” said Romsteck, “my heart bleeds for you. I know the suffering of the great creator confronted by patrons unworthy of his art.

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But a word with you in all gravity. We face a situation unparalleled. It is not with pigs' trotters and sour kraut that we can raise this new ministry to a sense of national dignity. None knows better than you the elevating influence of cultivated fare. It is with truffled quails or a turbot boiled in wine that we will strike the proper note."

"On this new budget you allow me!" exclaimed the chef. "Absurd! Besides I thought it best to refrain from fish. It might be considered an allusion."

"You, who are master of your art, will know best how to proceed," said Romsteck tactfully. "Strike terror into their hearts with the delicacy of your cuisine. It is the subtlest form of revenge."

"It is true," said the chef, "that my truffled quails *au basilic*, and a Strasbourg pâté in the shape of a prostrate nymph, did much to mollify the tyrants from Geneva. I attribute it to that pâté that we were not annexed to Jugoslavia."

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“It may well be,” said Romsteck. “And now, since the Herr President will soon be here, I think we should call the staff together and say a few words in regard to the etiquette we will pursue. Frau Innsbruck, if you will have the household assembled in the great hall I shall address them briefly.”

II

THE traveller in Illyria, whether a casual sightseer or one of the various commissioners, diplomats, and errants of fortune who found themselves there during the complications of After-War, has gazed through the high iron gates on the Pannonia Platz and admired the Farniente Palace at the end of its avenue of linden trees. Built long ago by a French architect for an Adriatic millionaire and occupied for generations by Austrian minor princes, it stands islanded in the loop of a little river and looks over the old city toward the opal horizon of the Carinthian alps. The town has the polyglot and cosmopolitan flavour appropriate to a region that has been a debatable ground among rival powers since the time of the Ostrogoths. The prime ministers and economic experts of the great powers carved out the republic of

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Illyria from the relics of a fallen empire and encouraged the newly risen Labour Party to put one of its leaders in the chair as first President. They came from Geneva to Farniente, spread maps and agenda papers over the departed Grand Duke's vast dining table, and (as we have heard) polished off what was left of the Grand Duke's pre-War Burgundies. They allotted the infant republic a generous quota of war debts to pay, arranged for a bond issue and a loan from an American banker, and impressed upon the anxious parliament the necessity of a convincing show of republican enthusiasm. They spoke sternly of order, productivity, and a prompt stabilization of the florin. Then they departed, without having given much thought to the possible social embarrassments of the new President. They had more urgent matters to wrestle with, and all they wanted for the time being was to hear as little of Illyria as possible.

But these problems were sharply present to Herr Guadeloupe as he and his daughter Nyla drove in a rickety taxi to take up official resi-

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dence in the palace he had never entered and which had been, only a few months before, so far beyond the horizon of his most fantastic dreams. The fishmongering that Frau Innsbruck resented was long in the past, but he remained what he had always been, a simple sturdy little man with the conscientious bonhomie of his peasant stock. He was quite aware that only the comedy of circumstance had thrust him into this position, and that both extremes of Illyrian politics would rejoice at his humiliation and downfall. He was correspondingly eager to tread softly and not make mistakes. There had been a great meeting of his supporters the night before, at which glowing forecasts were made of what the new republic would mean for the labouring classes. The *New Freedom* and the *Folkvoice*, very ill-printed proletarian journals, had come out with predictions which he knew were fallacious. A demonstration had been planned to celebrate his move to the palace. To avoid this uncomfortable publicity he sent out Nyla, two hours before

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the time advertised, to call a cab. They slipped away from the modest home where Nyla had kept house for her widowed father. Now, in an elderly vehicle of Detroit lineage, they came clanking solemnly down the famous alley of lime trees.

Nyla, a handsome spirited girl of nineteen, was naturally elated.

“Now, Father,” she said gaily, “you mustn’t be nervous. Everything will be all right. Don’t push your hat over one eye like that.”

Guadeloupe fidgeted unhappily in the new outfit of cutaway coat and wing collar which she had insisted on his buying. Nyla had carefully observed the British foreign minister when that handsome creature was in Farniente, and had planned the President’s attire on the same lines. It was less successful on his short thick figure. His hands flitted instinctively in search of his pipe, but the arrangement of pockets in a cutaway coat was unfamiliar.

“I *am* nervous,” he said, and began to pull off his gloves.

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“Nonsense! Anyone who can talk to political meetings as you can needn't be afraid. You mustn't forget that you're a great man. Don't you dare take off those gloves until I tell you. How all this would have surprised Mother.”

He relapsed into dogged and wary silence. Political meetings are easy, he reflected, but this social racket is something quite different. If we're our natural selves, the aristocrats will sneer; if we put on airs, the populace will resent it. He thought wistfully of the little home where he and Nyla had been so comfortable.

The taxi-driver, a fiercely moustached and emotional mountaineer, was enormously excited at having been chosen to drive Illyria's first President to the palace. This would be something to talk about for the rest of his life. His sense of the dignity of the occasion suggested a slow and stately progress with much unnecessary tooting on an old rubber bulb horn. This attracted a dog of no importance who was sunning in the broad Pannonia Platz. With a quick instinct for the unusual he accom-

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panied the car down the sacred allée, bounding and yapping just under the fender.

“Tell the driver not to go so slow,” Nyla said as they approached. “It looks more like a funeral than a President arriving. Oh see, Daddy, there’s the new flag, the flag of the Republic. I’m so thrilled!”

“It *will* be a funeral, if that dog doesn’t look out,” said Herr Guadeloupe.

The driver, adjured to move faster, rather overdid it. He shot across the stone bridge, spun round the curved driveway, pulled up at the broad front steps with a squeal of brakes and sliding of tires on the gravel. Behind them, the dog, one of whose feet had been caught by surprise, yelled insult and reproach.

“Sit still,” said Nyla hastily. “Probably there’ll be a footman or somebody to open the door.”

But the Executive Mansion seemed strangely deserted. The big doorway stood closed. The agitated taxi-man also remained nervously in his seat, afraid of doing something wrong.

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“What do we do next?” said Herr Guadeloupe.

After a brief hesitation they got out, the taximan seized the Presidential portfolio, and they stood anxiously on the steps.

“Good God, I don’t see any door-bell.”

“Now, Father, don’t get rattled. We’ve got a right to be here.”

“I knew something like this would happen. If it gets into the papers——”

The driver was peering through the pane of the door.

“Why, there’s the whole crowd of ’em inside there,” he said hoarsely. “Shall I bang on the glass?”

“For heaven’s sake don’t,” exclaimed Nyla.

But he was not going to miss his chance of a lifetime to create a sensation. Already he had opened the door and thrust his head in. Romsteck, not expecting the arrival so early, was just finishing his speech to the assembled household. They were all there, footmen, chambermaids, cooks, gardeners, sentries, the whole

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staff of the palace, receiving their instructions. They stood respectfully grouped while Romsteck, on the third tread of the grand staircase, was explaining the ethics of domestic service under a republic.

“Hey, wake up there!” shouted the taximan. “Here’s the President.”

III

TO Herr Guadeloupe, who was accustomed to the primitive ministrations of one peasant maid, it was hardly credible that these were all servants. For an instant, seeing so unexpectedly large a gathering, the notion occurred to him that this was a conspiracy of die-hard royalists, met for some final desperation in honour of the old régime. But Romsteck, advancing with episcopal mien, was a reassuring figure; so impressive indeed that the embarrassed President at first imagined him some dignitary of the League of Nations, left behind to supervise the installation. For the League he had a wholesome horror, having learned that all its dealings cost him toil and responsibility. There was no knowing when the Paris-Constantinople Express might not drop off, at the junction a few miles away, another committee of gentlemen with

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brief-cases empowered to look into Illyrian affairs.

“Welcome, Herr President,” said Romsteck solemnly. “You find the staff assembled to do you honour. I am the major domo.”

“How do you do, Major,” said Guadeloupe nervously. He removed his hat and bowed formally. Straightening again he found a tall figure in uniform holding out a hand, which he grasped with grateful cordiality.

“Your hat, Herr President,” Romsteck explained.

The President tried to catch Nyla’s eye, to know whether the time had come to remove his gloves.

“My gloves, Major. That is, I mean, my daughter.”

“The Fräulein is worthy of this ancient house’s tradition of beauty,” said Romsteck gallantly. “I present Frau Innsbruck, the housekeeper.”

“Also worthy of the ancient tradition,” said the flustered President. Then, noticing the

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lady's age, he attempted to improve on the remark. "We shall cohabit in friendly tranquillity, I'm sure."

"The Herr President does me too much honour," said Frau Innsbruck.

"Don't forget to pay the taxi," Nyla whispered in his ear.

A gloved hand is awkward in rummaging a trouser pocket. It came out with some bank notes but also with the toothbrush which he had remembered at the last moment.

"My luggage," he began.

"It shall be well cared for, Herr President. If you will entrust it——"

Another open palm was ready; this time he knew enough not to shake it, but gave it the toothbrush instead. It was borne ceremoniously away.

"I mean to say my luggage will be here presently."

"The Herr President's portfolio," said the taxi-man officiously, coming forward with the brief-case, to which he had obstinately clung.

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“Pardon, Major, but have you any change?” Herr Guadeloupe, thriftily examining his money, could find nothing less than a fifty florin note. It suddenly occurred to him to wonder whether Presidents have expense accounts. This was a point that had not been covered by the constitutionalists from Geneva.

“Health and happiness to the new Republic,” ejaculated the taxi-man, “and perhaps at such a moment the Herr President——”

“I will arrange the matter,” said Romsteck severely.

Frau Innsbruck was already escorting Nyla upstairs, and the anxious statesman felt free to discard his gloves. He was more terrified than cheered by the grave politeness of the unknown official. All his democratic instincts prompted him to suggest some little friendly celebration. He felt an immense eagerness to catch all these observant eyes with a cordial nod; he would have liked to make a short speech on the future of Illyria and follow it by treating to a drink all round. In the rustic meetings to which he was

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best accustomed this would have been enormously successful, but this company of maids in neat uniforms and footmen in white cotton stockings was an audience he did not understand. He was clearing his throat to make some general salutation when Romsteck advanced upon him sombrely with a whisk brush and dusted off his coat.

“The Herr President’s trousers,” he said sharply, and a footman knelt down to rearrange the drape of those garments.

“I’m afraid they’re too long,” said the President bashfully. “Please, Major, do not trouble yourself—I must shorten my suspenders.” He looked round unhappily, almost fearing they would insist on his doing so immediately.

“The Grand Duke always liked to have his trousers adjusted when he came in from outdoors,” said Romsteck.

“I believe I arrived sooner than you expected.”

“It is of no consequence,” said Romsteck. “Your apartments are in readiness. Now, Herr

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President, if you please I will conduct you through the mansion." He gave a sign of dismissal, and the attendants dispersed. The younger chambermaids, who had been on the verge of nervous titters, fled hurriedly to talk it over. Guadeloupe wiped his forehead.

"You are very kind," he said. "This, you will understand, is something of an ordeal."

They stood in the great paved hall, where the beautiful stone stair, with its wrought-iron balustrade, runs up to a gallery overhead. Along the wall hung portraits of old seventeenth century Dukes of Farniente. The President had hardly realized yet that he was actually going to live in this place. He felt more like a visitor in a museum.

"I always wondered what the palace was like inside," he said politely. "It must be difficult to keep warm in winter."

"This is the Red Room," announced Romsteck, leading the way to an adjoining chamber. "This escritoire of rosewood and mother-of-pearl was a masterpiece of the great Venetian

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cabinet-maker Belluno. The tapestry, with the monogram of the Hapsburgs, was given to the palace by the Emperor Maximilian. In this room the Grand Duke used to meet his ministers for business discussions, mainly to increase the taxes. Behind these curtains was where the anarchist concealed himself when he fired at the Grand Duke Moritz. You see, there is plenty of space for an assassin to hide." With a dramatic air he pulled the hangings aside. Guadeloupe was relieved to observe that the embrasure was empty. He wondered whether he and his cabinet could successfully discuss the rehabilitation of the florin—a subject involving much lively argument—sitting on those fragile gilt chairs.

"On this other side," continued the major domo, throwing open large glass doors, "is the grand salon. It overlooks the terrace and the rose garden. The stream, you notice, runs just beneath. We call it a moat, but of course it is really the river."

"There ought to be good fishing," said Guadeloupe cheerfully. "I dare say there are

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carp in that water. I could catch one for supper some day. A carp, stuffed with chestnuts, is very good eating."

Romsteck tactfully avoided the subject of fish. "The carved panels over the mantel," he pointed out, "have three bullet holes, which have been carefully retained as a souvenir of the revolution in '48. This is known as the Blue Room; here you will receive the representatives of foreign governments. The American commissioner, for instance, desiring to know when the next installment will be paid."

The President skidded a little on the polished floor, but followed his guide without comment.

"At the north end of the palace, adjoining the tower, is the ballroom. In the north tower is the Purple Room. There the Grand Duke used to entertain specially favoured ladies."

The President brightened a little.

"There was once an underground passage from the cellar of the tower, beneath the moat, to a summerhouse in the park. It was there that the Duke escaped during the Terror."

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“I hope it is still open,” said Guadeloupe.

“The Yellow Room, a small parlour painted with Cupids, is between the ballroom and the salon. The Duke used to play cards there after dinner. The American ambassador often came down from Vienna to play poker with him.”

“I think I have heard that the Duke was unlucky at cards,” said the President.

“To be in debt to America is quite in the Farniente tradition,” remarked the other. “The Dukes of Illyria always led lives full of romantic hazard. There is hardly a chamber in the palace that has not been the scene of some deed of violence. In the state dining room the crystal chandelier is chipped; that happened when His Grace was attacked by a demented footman who disliked his table manners. Beyond the dining room is the billiard room, and past that, in the south tower, the Dark Room.”

“The Dark Room? Was the Duke a photographer?”

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“He had a hobby that way. Not all his exposures were in the most delicate taste. It used to be His Grace’s boast that in a different walk of life he could have prospered as a merchant of Parisian postal cards. In fact, very likely that is what he is doing now. But this is called the Dark Room with a double significance. It was there that Prince Oscar was murdered. They laid out the body on this billiard table.”

The President was growing a little weary. He had had a difficult morning, and in the stress of packing and getting off he had gone without lunch.

“I suppose, Major,” he suggested politely, “there is a room where we might sit down with a glass of beer and a pipe?”

“The Grand Duke, at this hour of the afternoon, would sometimes take a cup of tea, in the English fashion,” said Romsteck firmly. “But he never smoked. His laxities, if I may be so candid, were quite of another sort. The British ambassador, who occasionally came here to

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play tennis, was encouraged to confine his pipe to the garden."

Herr Guadeloupe had less than no enthusiasm for tea, but he dared not demur.

"It is kind of you, Major, to put me wise to these matters. I trust you will sit down with us and enjoy a cup. When must you return to Geneva?"

"To Geneva?" exclaimed Romsteck. "I have never visited Geneva."

"Oh? Well, then, which of the Great Powers do you represent?"

"And still I can't make him out," Guadeloupe complained to his daughter when he finally escaped upstairs to wash and prepare himself for tea. "If he's a major why doesn't he wear uniform? And how was I to know who he was? I thought he must be at least another Lloyd George."

"Never you mind, Daddy," she consoled him. "Isn't it all *wonderful*? It's like living in a fairy tale."

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“Like living in a cemetery,” he said morosely. “I’ve seen the places where all the Dukes were murdered or shot at.”

“Wait till I get hold of that solemn old creature,” she cried gaily. “I’ll teach him not to bully you. And what do you think? I have a maid to look after me, a darling, called Lorli. And a bathroom all to myself—did you ever *hear* of such a thing?”

“Why, so have I,” exclaimed the President, exploring. “It must be mine, for they’ve put my toothbrush here. Private bathrooms. Good heavens, they always said the Duke was a libertine, it must have been true.”

IV

BUT Nyla's confidence abated when she found that she had to pour the tea—a beverage little drunk in Illyria—with two footmen standing attentively beside her. If they had not been there she could have studied and probably solved the complicated array of jugs, dishes, napkins, spirit lamps and other utensils; but those watchful figures frightened her. The obvious course was to use some of everything, and her father sat innocently drinking from a cup that contained both cream and lemon, unaware that this would have grieved the British foreign office. There was a generous assortment of rich but flimsy sandwiches and pastries, but the hungry President, conscious of scrutiny, was too uneasy to do them justice. He sat some distance from the source of supply, with an

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anxious feeling that it would be unseemly to shift his chair. Each tidbit was less than a square mouthful, so the alert flunkeys were busy offering him a constant succession of dishes. He sipped in silence until the lemon, gradually warring against the cream, became unbearable.

“George,” he said, “take this away and drink it for me. Don’t tell that Major or he’ll get me into trouble with the British government.”

It required both servants, apparently, to remove the offending cup. When they had left the room Guadeloupe hitched his chair nearer the table and seized several sandwiches at once.

“I’ll bet they’ve got some grand food in the pantry,” he said dismally, “if I could only get at it. You know, this won’t do. If any of the Labour members saw us in a lay-out like this, I’d be impeached.—What do you suppose we’ll get for supper?” He thought sadly of the old kitchen in their vacated home in the Hirschgasse, the shining copper pots ranged on the

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mantel above the tile stove, the larder that he always raided late at night.

“I wonder,” he added, “if there’s any chance of onion soup?”

For twenty years Herr Guadeloupe had had onion soup for supper almost every evening. In fact in his electoral campaign onion soup had become almost a political symbol. The cartoonists had seized upon it as an emblem of solid proletarian thrift and the traditional Illyrian simplicities. Drawings of Herr Guadeloupe dipping in his tureen and puffing his pipe, first intended for ridicule, had proved to be advantageous. The Labour Party had been borne to power, in a manner of speaking, on a tide of onion soup.

“We may as well find out,” said Nyla. “And Daddy, you must remember they probably call it *dinner*, and it won’t be until late, seven o’clock I dare say.”

Summoned by the footmen, Romsteck appeared. He looked specially austere as he had not expected to be interrupted just then. He

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and Frau Innsbruck had just sat down to compare notes over a private glass of beer. The President put away his unlit pipe, which he had been fingering hopefully, and rose politely from his chair.

“Pardon me, Major, for disturbing you. I just wished to know, so I can make my calculations, what time will supper be?”

“Dinner is served, Herr President, at eight o'clock. The Grand Duke preferred it at that hour, which gave him plenty of time to dress.”

The President was painfully startled. “Good God, did the man stay in bed all day long?”

Romsteck preserved an offended silence, which continued until Nyla came to the rescue.

“My father is accustomed to having onion soup for dinner. He counts on it very much. I suppose the chef—the chef would not mind, occasionally that is, preparing it for him?”

The butler seemed very much shocked.

“Onion soup, Fräulein?— Did I understand you to say onion soup?”

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“Yes,” said Guadeloupe. “You know, with toast in it, and plenty of cheese.”

“Why, Herr President, I do not believe an onion has been served in the palace since the Reign of Terror.”

Romsteck rang for the chef.

“Monsieur Pigalle,” he said, “will you rehearse for the Herr President what dishes have been arranged for dinner this evening.”

Pigalle, with a Frenchman’s eye for a pretty girl, was in his element.

“With the greatest pleasure. To welcome the President and his daughter I have planned as follows. The menu is plain, in deference to a republican simplicity of taste, but I hope not displeasing. *Hors d’œuvres variés*, served in the Adriatic fashion. To follow, *Homard Paprika*. I thought that then a *culotte de boeuf garnie, au vin de Madère*; or if that seems a trifle rich we could substitute *filets mignons piqués de truffes*. Not to overload the stomach, Mademoiselle, I thought that some pancakes burning in raspberry brandy would be amusing; followed by a

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soufflé, an ice, and some fruit. I feel sure that the Herr President and Mademoiselle will have no cause for complaint.”

Herr Guadeloupe, to whom French was not only unfamiliar but an uncongenial tongue for political reasons, had no very clear idea of just what these phrases represented in the way of actual victuals.

“Any soup?” he asked.

“If desired, I can add a nice *julienne aux pointes d’asperges*,” said Pigalle. “But I believe if the Herr President always knows in advance just what dishes are to be served, he deprives himself of much of the artistry of the table.”

I don’t want artistry of the table, I just want some onion soup, thought the President, but refrained from saying it. With an air of dignity that seemed to make further discussion impossible, Romsteck and the chef withdrew.

“Well, I don’t know any more than I did before,” said Guadeloupe. “I told you this was going to be terrible.” He began hunting about the room.

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“Marvellous old furniture,” said Nyla.

“I’m not looking at the furniture. I’m hunting for a box of matches. I think I’ll go out in the garden and have a smoke.”

A stir in the hall caught Nyla’s attention.

“Oh look, Daddy, our things have come.” Through the tall glass doors she could see a troop of servants lined up respectfully to receive their very modest and shabby luggage, the portmanteaux and the battered tin trunk. She caught a glimpse of a familiar old brown satchel.

“I wish we had bought some new bags, it looks too absurd to see them all making such to-do over our poor old things. Your old satchel looks too awful.”

“My satchel?” he said. “Is it there? Just what I need. There’s a——”

“Now Daddy, what are you going to do? You mustn’t——”

But he sped into the hall where he surprised the assembled flunkeys by seizing the bag. Muttering some unintelligible explanation, he

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rushed into the salon with it. Two agitated footmen attempted to help, but he clung to the thing with feverish earnestness, opened it, rummaged among some socks and collars, and finally produced a packet of tobacco, a box of matches, and a bottle of brandy.

“There,” he said. “By heaven, I’ve earned it.”

He uncorked the bottle and sniffed it affectionately. With difficulty Nyla restrained him until one of the footmen had brought a tray and glasses. “Well,” he said, pouring some out, “Now we can feel a little more at home.”

“Your pardon, Herr President,” objected Romsteck who had suddenly appeared, “but those are not brandy glasses. They are champagne goblets.”

“Major,” retorted the harassed man, “I drink to your Grand Duke. I am beginning to understand why he fled.” And he raised his glass. But before he could place it to his lips he was halted by a cry, courteous but peremptory.

P L E A S E D T O M E E T Y O U

“Just a moment, Herr President!” exclaimed a young man, striding into the room. “It is my duty.” He took the glass from the hand of the astonished President and drank off the contents himself.

THE unannounced visitor was a man of about thirty, tall and sinewy, with curly auburn hair and jocular blue eyes. He was smartly dressed in excellently fitted brown tweeds. There was something engagingly droll in his brisk assurance and the sharp contour of his clean-shaven face. He stood holding the empty glass and pursed his lips with the thoughtful air of one critically considering some mooted nicety of degustation. Then he nodded approvingly and his severity relaxed. He smiled, bowed to Guadeloupe and Nyla, and brought forward a chair with practised grace.

“Be seated, Fräulein, I implore you,” he said. “Young women have to be on their feet so much after they are married, I always urge them to take their ease while they can.”

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Nyla had a strong inclination to laugh, but conquered it. Romsteck, not less startled than the others, began to speak, but the stranger held up his hand with a commanding gesture.

“A thousand and one apologies, Herr President, for this lack of ceremony. Permit me.” He took the bottle, chose a fresh glass, filled it and offered it with a charming obeisance. “I should, of course, have been here before your arrival. You were earlier than I expected.”

Guadeloupe had a sagacious instinct of silence in perplexing situations. He contented himself by taking off the postponed dram.

“My name is Cointreau, from the Department of Public Safety. My credentials.”

He took a card from his pocket.

“I am authorized to ask a few moments’ private interview with you—and with the Fräulein, of course. Butler, remove this debris and the Herr President and I can talk without interruption.”

Romsteck, to his own surprise, found himself helping the footmen to clear away tea. He had

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not been spoken to in that voice of calm authority since the Grand Duke flitted.

“Heavenly old place, isn’t it,” said Cointreau to Nyla, in the casual tone of an old friend. “I hope you are going to be very happy here. I shall make it my business to see that you are. What a pretty frock. The printed chiffons are delightful, especially on the slender figures. Have a gasper?”

“Why—thank you,” said Nyla. “I’d love one, but I didn’t know whether—in the palace——”

“Bosh!” cried the surprising young man. “Palaces are made to do what you like in.” With skillful legerdemain he snapped a match into flame on his thumbnail, a trick new to her, and gave her a light.

“You have no objection to a pipe?” he asked, taking out a well-glossed briar. “Isn’t that a beauty,” he said, holding it out to the President. Guadeloupe, with the habit of the seasoned smoker, took it, sniffed the fragrant char in the bowl, and then produced his own.

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“Now to business,” proceeded the visitor. “Herr President, you’ll forgive my abrupt entrance when I explain. The Department of Public Safety realizes that hitherto insufficient precautions have been taken to safeguard the persons of high officials. Particularly at the present time, in this new phase of our political life, it is essential that no accident of any sort should mar the success of the Illyrian Republic. You know what unfortunate repercussion it would have among the Great Powers if any unpleasantness arose in our affairs. I am acting as a special agent for the Department of Public Safety, but I may as well add, entirely in confidence, that I have authority from certain people at Geneva—I feel sure I need not be uncomfortably explicit.”

Geneva never had to be mentioned more than once to secure Herr Guadeloupe’s anxious attention.

Cointreau resumed his winning gayety of manner.

“Please do not feel under any constraint,

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Herr President. My affair is to see that you—and Fräulein Nyla also—are completely comfortable and at home, free to give all your attention to those political problems that confront our country. You are aware that there are those—I need not specify—who would be happy to see the new republic embarrassed. You must have perfect confidence. Consider me, if you wish, not as a mere Secret Service officer, but as a kind of social secretary.”

“Why, Daddy,” cried Nyla. “How wonderful! Just what you wanted!”

“An imperfect instrument, Fräulein,” said the special agent modestly, “but at your service. I need hardly say, Herr President, that for the success of my mission it must be entirely confidential. Nothing further need be said than that I am here on private business from the League. For your own sake, and to guard against any possible emergencies, it will be advisable to institute certain unobtrusive inspections of minor routine. We cannot afford to run any risks. It was for that reason that—too

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unceremoniously, I fear—I felt it wise to make certain of the brandy. It was excellent,” he added.

“It was my own,” said Guadeloupe. “But indeed, dear sir, you lift an anxiety from my mind. This is a difficult position in which I find myself, and a little intimate assistance, properly authorized of course——”

“Be quite at your ease!” exclaimed the special agent. “The last thing Ramsay Macdonald said to me at Geneva—you know Mac, I dare say; charming fellow—was, Do everything you can for Guadeloupe. It’s very important he should make a go of it in Illyria, he and his lovely daughter.”

Herr Guadeloupe, who had had hitherto much sterner monitions from the high contracting parties of Europe, was greatly pleased.

“That’s very encouraging,” he said. “Come, Herr Cointreau, since you approve the brandy, drink to the success of our young Republic.”

They pledged it standing, with due formality.

“Herr President,” said Cointreau, “if we

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play our cards carefully, you shall go down in history as the man who put Illyria on the map."

"Oh, I know he will," cried Nyla, enchanted. "Daddy's wonderful, Herr Cointreau, and if only that awful American debt can be paid——"

"Don't you worry a bit about the debt. That'll work out all right. Perhaps I can help a bit there: I visited in America once, I know how to handle them. Now the first thing is to make sure that all the more intimate matters are comfortable. Everything quite O.K.?"

There was something infectiously reassuring in the special agent's clear jovial gaze, and Herr Guadeloupe, blowing a cloud of comforting tobacco smoke, began to feel that there might be some fun in being President after all.

"Well," he said cautiously, "do you suppose there would be unfortunate repercussions at Geneva if I did not dress for dinner every evening? As you know, I am a plain man, Herr Cointreau, and too much formality——"

"Quite right, quite right," said Cointreau.

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“When Herriot was premier in France the same problem arose. You remember what excellent political capital he made of his pipe and his shirtsleeves. Geneva will understand perfectly. In fact, Herr President, I was about to say, I think that if anything your present outfit is even a little unnecessarily conventional. Also, I was observing your trousers—perhaps you would do me the favour of standing a moment.”

The President rose, and Cointreau diligently examined the garments in various perspectives.

“They have their virtues, I can quite see,” he said judicially. “The cut is eminently republican. No one, I think, would suspect you of royalist ambitions so long as you wear them. Allow me, without being too intimate—the seat may be said to be roomy, meritorious in a sedentary garment.”

Nyla broke into a delightful gust of laughter.

“Daddy thought that by tightening his suspenders a bit he could buck them up. Let’s have a try.”

“I’m afraid it’s hopeless,” said Cointreau.

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“No, we’ll tackle the stabilization of the florin first. That presents fewer complexities. For the Herr President I suggest perfect informality—knickerbockers or whatever you please. You must not agitate yourself about niceties of deportment. I’ll take care of all that. Fräulein Nyla, I think, should dress for dinner, because youth and beauty are so well set off by décolleté.”

“I had not supposed,” said the President, “that the League would be so attentive to detail.”

“What the League desires is gaiety. After these painful years a little guileless merriment will be the best possible tonic for business. The last thing Ramsay Macdonald said to me was, ‘Tell them to be sprightly. It will reassure the foreign investors who are going to buy the Illyrian bonds.’”

“That must have been the next-to-the-last thing he said,” observed Nyla.

“They have said so many things at Geneva, possibly I get the exact order confused.—I think

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you remarked, Herr President, that that was your own brandy? In that case it would be wise, before we go any further, to be sure that the refreshment provided by the State is equally correct. You will understand that in the work of the Department we cannot afford to neglect any possibilities, however trifling.—Is there a bell? Oh, no matter——”

He tapped vigorously with his pipestem against his empty glass.

“If you will kindly explain to your butler, we can make a beginning in our necessary inspections.”

“This is Herr Cointreau, from Geneva,” said Guadeloupe when Romsteck had been summoned. “He is here on diplomatic business of a private nature.”

“I shall have to make a few precautionary examinations of the household routine,” said Cointreau. “We will begin by interviewing the cellar-man. Send him in, and tell him to bring his inventory.”

VI

THE special agent, after careful study of Karl's lists, thought that the 1865 cognac should be tested first. It proved to be of the finest possible bouquet, gentle, mellow, and volatile.

"I am greatly relieved," he said graciously. "To tell the truth, I had feared that during the confusions of reconstruction things might have been allowed to run down. I express my personal satisfaction that the wine-steward is worthy of Farniente traditions." He dismissed Karl, who departed beaming.

"It is unfortunate," he added, "that there does not seem to be a cocktail shaker anywhere in the palace. I shall have to give the butler a lesson in the mixing of cocktails. I know, from experience in Paris and Geneva, how useful they are in coming to an understanding with

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American diplomats. However, we can go into these matters more fully by and bye."

The President had by this time recovered some of his naturally sanguine spirits. He mentioned the onion soup problem to his advisor, who promised to arrange everything.

"Herr President," he said, "you can repose the most perfect confidence in me. Imagine me a kind of Colonel House, taciturn, farseeing and discreet. In fact you may call me Colonel, if you will. It adds to the dignity of the situation."

"My daughter and I shall be disappointed if you do not stay to dinner, Colonel."

"With pleasure. There is much to be attended to. To-morrow I will assure myself that the car is in proper order for your use and that the driver understands what routes are to be followed when you go through the city. The Department of Public Safety was often very anxious during the reign of the Grand Duke. He went about with such reckless freedom, drinking at cafés, meeting ladies for supper—you will not compel me to elaborate the theme. It

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would be undesirable for your chauffeur to drive across wide open spaces, where bullets—but let's not be alarmist. It is only that I am personally responsible to the Department.”

“Nonsense!” cried Nyla, giving her father a hug. “No one would want to hurt my adorable Daddy.”

“Alas, Fräulein, the payment of the war debts implies heavy taxation; and heavy taxation always means a certain amount of gunning for statesmen.”

“There's rather a nasty place in the Red Room,” said Guadeloupe nervously. “A window where people used to hide and shoot at the Duke. You might have a look at it.” He crossed to the mantel and studied the bullet holes in the panelling. He was relieved to see them well above the level of his head.

“These medieval houses are just full of hiding places,” remarked Cointreau.

Herr Guadeloupe excused himself to go and unpack his official papers. Nyla was a little uncertain whether she was in the position of the

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visitor's hostess or not, but his easy frankness made embarrassment impossible.

"Come," he suggested, "let's have a look round. What a stunning old place it is. This ballroom floor—perfect for dancing! We must have a little music presently. And the terrace—delightful place to cool off between dances. Something green, I was thinking——"

"Something green?" Nyla did not quite follow the quick transitions of the special agent's mind; but she understood, of course, that men accustomed to dispatch complicated international business would live at a speedier tempo than the simple libertads of a rustic republic.

"For your frock. Something green, of an airy floating nature, and the stockings that are so popular in Paris just now—the colour of Camembert cheese—would be the very thing for dancing. A few Chinese lanterns, not too many, strung here on the terrace. And by Jove, how well a canoe would go on the moat."

Nyla was wondering, a little uncomfortably, whether her quite modest wardrobe was chic

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enough to satisfy the exacting tastes of this connoisseur of modes. She was a charming figure as she sat on the old stone balustrade that bounded the terrace. The still water beneath reflected the pointed towers of Farniente and the great chestnut trees in the park.

“I’m so sorry,” she said. “I don’t think I have anything in green. You are a most versatile person. Do you undertake the millinery details for all the new republics?”

Her touch of irony, if it was irony, did not at all abash Cointreau. His enthusiasm was irresistible.

“Few of the republics, Fräulein, have such reasons for enlisting one’s coöperation.”

“I had no idea the League was so far-reaching in its organization.”

“We try to give Service. You see, we’ve learned a great deal from the American experts who come to Geneva, One of the things Illyria needs just now is Publicity. We’ll get some good photographs into the American Sunday papers, first thing you know the tourists will be coming

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here in crowds. That'll be good for trade. You see, your father will be busy with parliamentary affairs, he can't possibly think of all these other things. I want to help him all I can.—And help you too, Fräulein," he added. "Even in palaces young women may get bored. Sometimes you may feel like slipping away to the cinema. We can go to see Douglas Fairbanks together."

Nyla was enchanted. The arrival of this attractive, experienced and sophisticated gentleman, so eager to assume responsibilities, seemed to puff away the secret anxieties she had felt as to life at Farniente.

"I *do* want Daddy to be a successful President," she said with girlish earnestness. "It's a terribly hard job. Of course his opponents in parliament are frightfully jealous, they'd do anything to spoil his record. He's so wonderfully simple and honest, he only thinks of the good of the country."

"Now don't you worry a bit," he reassured her. "We're all going to have a gorgeous time. You know, that lawn in front of the house would

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be just the place for some of the old Illyrian folk dances. I dare say we could get the chambermaids to put on their peasant costume and hop about. It would be just the thing to amuse any busybodies that float in from the Great Powers. Take their minds off the poor old florin.”

A dim far-away pulsation had been softly discernible in the summer air; now, from the direction of the Pannonia Platz a burst of shrill music was unmistakable. It came nearer and resolved itself into the anthem of the Illyrian Republic. A young radical poet had sat up all night, during the recent Revolution, to put new ejaculations to an old national air. As a republican hymn it was completely successful, one verse extolled Democracy, one Freedom, and one the Proletariat (a difficult word to find rhymes for). A parliamentary committee had expunged the stanza levelled against Foreign Capital, which was considered tactless under the circumstances; otherwise the lyric had gone through with acclaim, and was now being sung on all possible occasions.

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“Oh,” exclaimed Nyla, “it must be the Demonstration. Daddy thought he’d escaped it by coming early, but they’ve followed him here. His supporters, and the interviewers from the Labour papers. He was hoping they wouldn’t come until he’d got a little bit settled. If those people from the *New Freedom* and the *Folkvoice* find him surrounded by uniformed flunkeys I’m sure it’ll be bad for politics.”

“Quick!” cried Cointreau, his eyes bright with excitement. “This is important. Hurry upstairs, tell your father to put on his old clothes. Get that housekeeper person, what’s her name, Innsbruck, to call the maids together and have them wear their native duds. I’ll tell Romsteck to roll out a barrel of beer on the lawn. I’ll keep the crowd amused at the front steps until your father’s ready. Tell him to bring his pipe. Hurry!”

With a flutter of skirts Nyla fled across the terrace.

Herr Romsteck, already sufficiently agitated by the events of the day, was in the hall won-

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dering if the parade now advancing down the avenue of limes presaged another *coup d'état*. In the days of the Grand Duke gatherings of the rabble never approached nearer than the tall iron grille on the Pannonia Platz. The music sounded louder and louder, green and white flags fluttered above the throng. He looked anxiously at the cheerful envoy from Geneva, who strolled in from the salon, smiling genially. Romsteck could not account for the presence of this unexplained visitor, but he recognized the manners of one accustomed to command.

“Romsteck,” said Cointreau, “this is a jocund moment.”

“Jocund, sir? It looks like another revolution.”

“A great proletarian celebration. The innocent high spirits for which Illyria was famous in the old days. Do you dance?”

“Dance?” ejaculated the major domo, horrified at such flippancy. “Not in public, sir; far from it, sir.”

“But you shall,” said Cointreau firmly.

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“We shall all dance. It is important to impress the populace with our democratic simplicity. Geneva and the Great Powers expect it of us. For the sake of European concord, old son, you must lay aside that priestly dignity. We will have folkdancing on the lawn, and you and Frau Innsbruck shall lead the revels.”

Romsteck's orderly little world seemed to be turning topsyturvy. He gazed inhospitably at the plebeian crowd already pressing into the sacred courtyard. They marched orderly and with respectful mien, an honest bourgeois procession, but now the band broke out again and the windows quivered.

“Get busy,” ordered Cointreau. “Hop to it, or you lose your job. Have the cellar-man broach a cask of beer by the front steps. Tell the footmen to take off their coats and appear in breeches, with coloured kerchiefs. Come and tell me when the President's ready, before he shows himself, so I can introduce him properly.”

Cointreau's first words, as he stood on the

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front steps and gestured for silence, were a masterpiece of demagogic skill.

“Citizens,” he said, “the President of the Republic——”

Cheers.

“Will greet you himself——”

Loud Cheers.

“As soon as he has finished his onion soup.”

Terrific enthusiasm. The crowd enjoyed the allusion, flags waved, the bass drum was pounded, men shouted, women huzzaed, children squeaked.

“It would not be like Herr Guadeloupe to alter the established simplicity of his life because his fellow-citizens have put him here at Farniente to represent the Republic. He asks me to tell you that he wants this little celebration to be in the true Illyrian style. There will be cookies for the young, beer for the thirsty, and our old Illyrian folkdances on the lawn.”

In all its long history Farniente had never witnessed a more cordial scene. Slopes of wester-

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ing sunshine poured across the mossy roof of the palace, gilding the increasing crowd that came curiously hurrying down the avenue. Dogs barked and frolicked on the outskirts. Sentries laid down their arms and fraternized with the mob. Romsteck, in the worried conviction that all this meant insurrection unless the throng was pacified, hurried out the beer and produced baskets of pretzels and cakes from his secret stores. The Illyrian instinct for popular merrymaking, long repressed during days of disastrous war and political uncertainty, now blossomed in bright flower.

Cointreau kept the crowd together by a few cheerful and patriotic remarks until, just at the psychological moment, Herr Guadeloupe appeared, wearing a knickerbocker suit and puffing his pipe. The people shouted applause. Cointreau, taking a mouth organ from his pocket, led the band in another explosion of the national hymn. Guadeloupe, flushed with emotion, made a brief speech which was exactly the right sort of thing. His old knickerbockers and

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the pipe warm in his hand lent him that ease of mind so necessary to the political orator. By the time he had finished, each of his hearers felt that it was by personal favour of the Deity that he had been born an Illyrian. The cheers were deafening and the barrel of beer was unbunged. The corps of maids, charming in short green kilts and red jackets, bare knees and white stockings, filed demurely from the service wing. The special agent, still playing the mouth-organ, seized Nyla as his partner and led off a foursome country dance with Romsteck and Frau Innsbruck. These worthies perspired with embarrassment and began the measure with stiff clumsiness, but Cointreau's mouth organ and his comic zeal warmed them somewhat. The spectators, at first respectfully puzzled, gradually began to applaud. Then Innsbruck, slipping on a juicy bit of turf, fell rump-flat. The populace yelled and the ice was broken. Chambermaids, footmen, and the citizens themselves, joined in. A dozen different groups of dancers were formed, the band struck up peasant airs and yodels

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familiar to all, and the President himself, seizing a stout matron, capered with gusto.

Colonel Cointreau circulated helpfully in the gay rout. The humorous cantata of his mouth-organ was heard wherever the mirth was thickest. Evidently his severe life as an international negotiator had not dimmed a simple human relish for comely females; he was seen footing an intricate morris with Lorli, Nyla's pretty tire-woman; he lined up the chambermaids to be photographed, amid much laughter and broad jest, himself slipping modestly away whenever a lens was pointed in his direction. When in the unusual exertion Frau Innsbruck burst some private reef-points and ruptured a garter, the Colonel was first to seize the tensile fragment and hail it as a tender trophy. It was so long since Frau Innsbruck's garter had had any publicity or been the object of competition or saltatorial strain that the housekeeper went moist and ruddy with pleased confusion.

"It's easy to see he's a real aristocrat," she confided to Romsteck as they withdrew from

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active participation. "He's as lively as the Grand Duke. I wish *he* were President." She had a vague feeling that with so sportive a person around there might, even in a Republic, be some chance for the winsome intrigue that makes life tolerable to females. Even the scandalized Romsteck, gazing where Geneva's expert was now astride the beer-keg, hastening the flow by mouth organ madrigals, had to admit that the Colonel had done much to enliven the party.

The President also was not far from the beer, cheerfully engrossed in talk with the reporters, who wore the specially professional look of those who approve what they have seen and are getting ready to write a favourable story for the papers. Nyla, seeing her father's air of satisfaction, was thoroughly happy. The Colonel insisted on dancing repeatedly; in these country measures he was agile rather than practiced, but there was a pleasant quaintness in his figures and he had a piquant habit of uttering enigmatic phrases.

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“Never go in for politics without a mouth organ and a pair of rubber heels,” was one of these.

“Rubber heels?” she inquired, the next time the pattern of the dance brought them together for a few moments.

“An American invention,” he replied. “Very useful for statesmen.”

Presently they retired to a corner of the lawn overlooking the water. From a distance they watched the crowd now beginning to disperse, Herr Guadeloupe gaily shaking hands, the enthusiastic citizens breaking out into little ripples of cheering.

“I don’t know how to thank you, Colonel.”

“*You* don’t need to call me Colonel,” he replied. “I just suggested that for your father.”

“What shall I call you, then?”

“Let’s wait and see. Something may suggest itself. You can begin with Gene, if you like. Short for Geneva.”

“You’ve given Daddy a wonderful send-off,”

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she said. "I don't know what he'll do when you go back to the League."

"Oh, I shan't go back. They expect me to stay here and keep an eye on things.—On people, too," he added, looking at her with cheerful admiration. "I have quite an eye for the picturesque."

"Are you really an Illyrian?" she asked. "You're so different. Your accent——"

"I've been a great deal abroad."

There was a brief silence.

"You know," he said, "I had intended simply to make a daily inspection, to make sure that everything was O. K. But I can see that the situation is unusual. I believe it would be wiser to take up quarters right here in the palace. Then I should be on hand in case—well, in case I could be useful. Suppose you fell into the moat, for instance. The Department of Public Safety has to guard against all sorts of possibilities."

"But I can swim. Besides, I don't believe it's deep."

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“We’ll go out one of these days and see. There’s an old punt down there that’d do for a canoe.”

He vaulted lightly to a seat on the licheny old bastion and played a gay little strain on his mouth organ.

“We might compose a moating song,” he reflected. “Something like this.”

He improvised a few insinuating bars.

“A new kind of sea chantey, the moating song. Sentimental ditty: *If you and I were moating, Beneath the old château—*” He paused, hunting a rhyme. “Let’s see, boating, coating, doting——”

“*And idling there and floating,*” she suggested.

“Good girl! Say, you’re a poet. *And idling there and floating In our petit bateau——*”

“*We’d drift about, not noting——*”

“*The taxes and the voting——*”

“*For pleasures beyond quoting——*”

“*Just you and I would know,*” he finished with delight. “Great stuff! We could write a new anthem for the Republic that’d beat that

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other one all hollow. Now let's get the music right."

"You said I ought to dress for dinner. I'd better go and see if I've got anything to wear that you'd approve of. And if you're going to stay, how about your luggage?"

"Bless you," he said calmly, "it's here. I brought it with me. Tell old Rumpsteak to pick me out a nice room without any eastern windows. I hate to be waked up by the sun in my eyes."

The small wheedle of the mouth organ sounded gaily behind her as she walked across the lawn. The Colonel was perfecting his Moating Song.

VII

NYLA, whose acquaintance with men was limited, had never seen so unusual and charming a person. Colonel Cointreau's immaculate evening dress and his gay affable talk eased the embarrassments of the elaborate dinner table; even Herr Guadeloupe forgot to miss the onion soup for one evening. The Colonel complimented Nyla on her frock, patted her arm encouragingly as he escorted her to the dining room, and tutored the President in the choice of forks and spoons with such unobtrusive grace that no one could have been offended. Indeed in another land one would have said that the Colonel had been raised from boyhood on the *Book of Etiquette and Twenty Minutes a Day with the Harvard Classics*. He restrained the President from tucking his napkin into his

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collar, deftly removed the bread-crust when Guadeloupe began using it to sponge up the last of a rich gravy, and his gentle "I think the other spoon, Herr President" was like a parenthetical refrain in his fluent conversation. Illyrian table manners, as travellers have noted, are often a form of rapid transit rather than a social ceremony, but the Colonel was very patient. "You must remember the effect on our American bondholders," was his persuasive reminder when the President seemed a little restless under discipline.

After dinner Herr Guadeloupe was allowed to compose himself with his favourite game of patience, and three aces in the first row of cards helped to solace him. The Colonel, sitting with Nyla by candle-light on an old brocade sofa, remarked that the romantic and sentimental associations of Farniente were stimulating to anyone sensitive to such influences.

"History keeps repeating itself," he said, alluding to the gallant career of the Grand Duke.

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“I don’t suppose that matters,” said Nyla, “as long as it repeats pleasant things.”

Somehow they had embarked upon palmistry, which the Colonel said was often a valuable aid to statesmanship.

“This is so much pleasanter than the League headquarters at Geneva,” he averred. “A dull place, full of card indexes and diplomatic dossiers. Now your hand, Fräulein, is obviously that of a loyal, frank and affectionate nature, full of generous impulses that should be encouraged. What a pity I could not have studied it long ago. I could have told that you were destined for high things. See how the life-line slants upward. I see a long life. There are at least sixty happy years before you, full of interest.”

“Just about long enough to pay off the American debt,” said the President. “You don’t see anything there about a rate of interest higher than one per cent., do you? Because if so, we’re done for.”

“I see surprises caused by strangers from

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abroad," said the Colonel, examining closely and tenderly. He was about to remark how beautiful the terrace would be in the moonlight when Romsteck brought in a telegram.

"Gott!" cried Guadeloupe as he read the message. "You're right. He's coming at once."

"Who?" exclaimed the palmists.

"The American. And not just a commissioner, a full-fledged ambassador. That means we'll have to put him up here, as a matter of courtesy, until he finds a house. Lord, I didn't suppose he'd come until we'd got straightened out. How can I explain that the new taxation isn't in effect yet."

"You'll have to keep his mind off financial matters until things are settled," said the Colonel. "We'll give him a big dinner and a ball. We'll take him moating. We'll sing him our moating song."

"Do you speak American?" asked Nyla. "Daddy and I know very little."

"Enough to get along with."

"Well, you'll have to interpret for me," said

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the worried President. "Good God, I must speak to the Finance Minister at once," and he fled to Farniente's one telephone.

Even the imperturbable Cointreau seemed a little troubled as he read the telegram that still lay on the card table. It said:—

Congratulations your inauguration united states congress voted full recognition illyrian republic hon ulysses quackenbush now in geneva accompanied frau quackenbush will proceed farniente discuss debt settlement quackenbush very influential united states probably eventual ambassador very important show all possible courtesies secretariat league of nations.

"Worse and worse," said the President returning a few minutes later. "He's coming to-morrow."

VIII

THE Cabinet, hastily summoned, met next morning in the Red Room with many controversial topics to discuss. As Herr Guadeloupe had feared, one of the puny gilt chairs proved unequal to the anxious shiftings of Herr Leutz, the obese Finance Minister. But even under Romsteck's censorious eye a broken chair was the least of the President's anxieties. Herr Leutz stayed to lunch, to discuss further details of the fiscal statements to be laid before the American ambassador, but Colonel Cointreau and Nyla were nowhere to be seen. The absence of his privy councillor, when events of such delicacy were toward, agitated Herr Guadeloupe.

The Colonel had risen that morning in the highest spirits and began his inspections with vigour. The President, who slept but ill that first

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night in such unaccustomed quarters, had not finished shaving when he heard cheery whistling outdoors, and observed the Genevan sculling round the moat in the old punt. The special agent appeared at the breakfast board with a somewhat miscellaneous bundle of flowers and cresses that he had picked on the grassy foreshore of the stream. These posies, apologizing for their Ophelia-like aspect, he presented to Nyla. After breakfast he made a careful tour of the house with Frau Innsbruck, inquiring into everything with the liveliest interest and humour. In the kitchen he ingratiated himself with Pigalle and made suggestions as to the menu in honour of Herr Quackenbush. Upstairs he praised the linen closets, complimented the housemaids on their thoroughness in airing the beds, and somewhat startled Nyla by the experienced domesticity of his comments. He wanted to be assured that she had enough hangers for her gowns and that her dressing table mirror was in a good light. Then, suddenly admiring the clarity and brilliance of the

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weather, he insisted that now was the time to make sure that the Presidential car was in good running order. He satisfied himself that the tank was filled with essence and dismissed the chauffeur. He and Nyla rolled gaily away down the avenue in the elderly but impressive limousine, on which the shield of Illyria was freshly enamelled over the erased coronet of the Grand Duke.

They had not returned by the time lunch was over, and the President was annoyed. Herr Leutz, moreover, had been a depressing companion. Like all conscientious treasures of an insolvent exchequer he had a hundred irrefutable reasons for the red ink in his ledgers: his remarks about the dangerous flatulence of the Illyrian currency were only too true. He obviously disapproved the luxury of the President's surroundings, and seemed with sombre eye to be mentally converting the Grand Ducal plate into new florins. Guadeloupe, sharpened by Colonel Cointreau into observation of such matters, noted that the Finance Minister was an

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untidy eater and resolved that he must not be placed too near Frau Quackenbush at the state dinner. They *might* have given me, he reflected bitterly, at least one Cabinet member who could be trusted to make a pleasing impression on our foreign creditors.

As he escorted Herr Leutz to the door, Guadeloupe was thinking secretly of a nap. He was weary, and would need all possible freshness for the evening. Romsteck was not visible, and the President had a mental picture of stealing upstairs, removing his boots, and stretching out for a recuperative hour. But at that moment Lorli appeared, and curtsied charmingly.

“I’m sorry, Herr President, but it’s time for you and the Herr Minister to take the dancing lesson.”

“Dancing lesson?” ejaculated the President. “What on earth do you mean?”

“Colonel Cointreau left positive orders that after lunch you and Herr Leutz were to practise in the ballroom.”

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“Impossible,” said Herr Leutz, making for the door. “I have sixteen different deficits to analyze.”

“Colonel Cointreau said, Herr President, that interests of state absolutely required that both you and Herr Leutz should dance with Frau Quackenbush this evening.”

“Old Pannonian deities!” exclaimed Guadeloupe. “What human being can practise dancing immediately after lunch?” But there was a look of such certainty in Lorli’s pretty face that he felt himself crumbling. He laid hold of Leutz’s coattails.

“Here,” he said sharply, “if I’ve got to go through with this, you must too.”

“The Colonel said, the League would expect it,” announced Lorli respectfully.

“Double damn the Colonel,” complained the resentful President. “Why isn’t he here himself to help me? He said that was what he came for. Now he’s off somewhere with Nyla in the only decent car. Leutz, if he doesn’t get back in time *you’ll* have to meet Herr Quackenbush at the

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station, in the flivver. At any rate that will impress him with the state of our finances.”

They followed Lorli like two guilty school-boys. In the ballroom they found a determined-looking trio: Pigalle to play the piano, Frau Innsbruck to represent the Quackenbush, Romsteck to supervise. The major domo had already removed all small gilded chairs from Herr Leutz's access.

“Dancing of the ballroom sort,” he said solemnly to his two pupils, “is very different from the rustic manoeuvres we executed yesterday. Owing to the greater intimacy of personal contact, all the more grace of deportment is necessary. It was the Grand Duke's custom, in these affairs, always to begin by inviting any lady he specially desired to honour to accompany him in a lively fox-trot. For example.”

He bowed magnificently to Frau Innsbruck, motioned to Pigalle who struck up some spirited and mischievous syncopations, and swam off with the housekeeper into a species of rotating pedestrianism with occasional sideways slidings.

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To the President, who was totally unfamiliar with modern dancing, it seemed completely absurd. Frau Innsbruck's solid figure, moulded on the Queen Victoria contour, floated with genteel gravity in this antic demonstration.

"So," said Romsteck, bringing the lady to port alongside the reluctant chief magistrate. "Now the Herr President and the Herr Minister are to imagine themselves entering the ballroom with their partners. The music begins, they are off."

Even in this emergency Herr Guadeloupe's presence of mind did not wholly desert him. He felt that he would learn better with Lorli, so he moved to grasp her, intending to leave the housekeeper to the embrace of Herr Leutz. But Romsteck intervened. "With Frau Innsbruck, if you please. It will be better practice. She has the mature configuration, such as we may assume Frau Quackenbush to possess."

The music seemed terribly rapid to the two pupils as they struggled to imitate what they had seen. "*One, two, three and four and one,*

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two, three and four and” counted Romsteck, pursuing them with advice. “The Herr President will control his impulse to leap and caper. Feet flat on the floor. A gliding walk, hollow back, stiff in the hips. If desired, just the least rearward oscillation of the pelvic region, to suggest enthusiasm. Not to excess however, Herr President, that would not be expected.”

Innsbruck, thrilled in spite of herself by the honour of dancing with the President, tried hard to help him. He struggled nobly, with his eyes on his feet, but when he happened to catch sight of Herr Leutz’s large boots shuffling miserably among Lorli’s twinkling members the spectacle unnerved him. He lost count, faltered and came to a stop.

“It’s too difficult,” he said hopelessly. “Better for the debt settlement if I don’t attempt it. I’ll get Colonel Cointreau to do it for me.”

“Once again, Herr President, by yourself, to get the rhythm,” insisted the major domo, and Guadeloupe performed a lugubrious *pas seul*.

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“The Herr President’s trousers handicap him,” commented Romsteck, walking beside him in his course and studying his morbid gyrations.

“Well I’m not going to dance without them, even for Frau Quackenbush,” he retorted.

“That was not my suggestion,” said Romsteck disapprovingly. “I mean that they impede by reason of their longitude. If the Herr President will permit——” He rolled up several inches of the drooping tubes, and sent for some of the 1865 cognac to hearten the sufferers.

With this refreshment things went a little better. Taking advantage of a pause by Herr Leutz to mop his broad brow, the President cut in on Lorli; he found her more stimulating as a partner. Both pupils were busily treading the measure when a cheerful hail surprised them. Cointreau and Nyla entered, radiant with health and enjoyment.

“Bravo, bravo!” cried the Colonel. “Herr President, you are the soul of legerity. And the Finance Minister, treading with a toe of

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swan's down: like a man walking on red-hot budgets."

"Your merriment is ill-timed, Colonel," said Guadeloupe peevishly. "I thought you came to Farniente to help me, and here you have been absent for hours when I needed you."

"You mustn't be angry, Daddy," said Nyla, looking so sunburned and pretty that no one could have been. "We got lost in the hills. The Colonel was trying to find some goldenrod, it's a favourite American flower and he thought it would be a delicate compliment to Frau Quackenbush."

"Certainly more delicate than my dancing with her would be," said the President.

"A good thing we *did* go," remarked Coin-treau. "The car was in terrific condition. The valves need grinding, the clutch is dicky, the steering wheel's loose, and she's simply crusty with carbon. We got the goldenrod though, a whole taxi full."

"Taxi full?" asked Guadeloupe.

"Yes," Nyla explained. "You see, the car

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went bad at Laibach and we had to hire a cab to come home.”

“From Laibach?” exclaimed the Finance Minister. “It’s fifty kilometers!”

“It’s quite all right, Herr Treasurer,” said Cointreau hastily. “I arranged to have him send the bill to Geneva. Come then, to our affair. Music, please!”

Pigalle rippled the keys, and while the two unpromising pupils slithered heavily at their task the Colonel and Nyla hovered blithely about them, twirling humorous patterns round the small area in which the others plodded conscientiously. The pair swooped and skimmed like gulls around a group of wounded porpoises, and the indignant President, amazed at his daughter’s grace, paused to watch. They danced almost as though they had been professional partners, and Cointreau, maliciously pretending himself to be Guadeloupe, called out suggestions as he and Nyla coasted to and fro. These suggestions he illustrated with appropriate action.

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“Observe, Herr President, you are now dancing with Frau Quackenbush. A few perfectly simple rhythms to begin with, until Frau Quackenbush begins to enter into the spirit of the occasion.—American women are cold, and require wooing.—Then, as she begins to respond, your confidence increases.—You murmur agreeable impromptus, complimentary and insinuating, into her ear—which will not be far away.—This is your first visit to Illyria, Frau Quackenbush? We must make it memorable.—Then, venturing upon more complex figures.—Now, perhaps, when she melts a little you steer toward a quiet corner.—Surely, Frau Quackenbush, a great opulent country like yours will not be too hard on us in the matter of the debt? You will say a word in our behalf to the Ambassador?”

They came to a halt, Nyla rather flushed by the ardour the Colonel had put into his demonstration. Guadeloupe was just a little scandalized, and for a moment was the parent rather than the President.

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“Here,” he said sharply, “where did you learn to dance like that?”

“We practised a bit in the hotel at Laibach,” she said. “While we were waiting for lunch.”

Cointreau, enthusiastic as ever, was for having all the chambermaids summoned, to provide a realistic rehearsal of the evening ceremony. He also was eager that the President and Frau Innsbruck should attempt a Charleston together. But Guadeloupe had had enough.

“If Frau Quackenbush is to be melted, I leave it to you,” he said.

“I should prefer to remain in the background. The League does not like its representatives to push themselves forward,” said the Colonel with unexpected modesty. “Besides, I have a headache. I believe I overexerted myself testing the car. I was thinking of remaining in my room this evening.”

“Heavens, No!” cried the President, aghast. “My dear Colonel, I can’t get on without you. I absolutely count on you as my interpreter.”

“If I appear,” said Cointreau, “I think it

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should be in uniform. A man looks much better dancing in some regalia.”

“The Grand Duke left a whole wardrobe of uniforms,” said Romsteck.

“Anything with a good splash of colour in it?”

“The dress uniform as honorary admiral in the Dalmatian Navy arrived just before the War. His Grace never had an opportunity to wear it.”

“True,” said the Colonel. “I remember that the Dalmatian Navy spent the War prudently in drydock. I should have preferred a uniform with a more glorious record. However—blue and gold, with a cocked hat, will do very well.”

“Choose whatever you like,” said the President. “But remember I rely on you. And you promised to teach me a few American phrases of courtesy, that I can use when I run short.”

IX

EVIDENTLY relations between Nyla and the Colonel had ripened prosperously during their outing. The President having gone off for his much-needed nap, these two explored the old north tower, and on the dark stairway the Colonel's arm stole protectively round her. The famous Purple Room, so-called from its rich wine-coloured hangings, was lighted only by a narrow casement in the six-foot stone fortification; it was a funereal place with a stale flavour of ancient orgy. The painted dado, perhaps fortunately, was scarcely visible in the dim light. The Colonel struck a match, but after one glimpse of Paphian distempers he extinguished it hastily. Always sensitive to psychic influences, he seemed a little depressed, and spoke gloomily of the difficulties of his career as an agent of international amenity.

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“The trouble with this League of Nations work is, it’s so uncertain. Here to-day and gone to-morrow.”

“Don’t say that,” replied Nyla gently. “Besides, this is to-day.”

“Geneva is so capricious. Sometimes I’ll barely get started on a job when orders will come to buzz off somewhere else. You never know when some delicate situation will arise that needs expert attention. They push you round so suddenly, sometimes you don’t even have time to say good-bye.”

There was just room for two to lean side by side, rather close, in the wedge-shaped recess of the window, looking out across the quiet water to the groves of the park. Nyla sympathetically returned the pressure of his hand, and looked admiringly at his handsome clear-cut features, now clouded with melancholy. This was a new phase of the volatile Colonel. Evidently beneath his frolic humour there was a deeper side.

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“One hardly has time to put down roots anywhere, really become attached to—to places or people—before he’s moved on. And I have great capacities for putting down roots,” he continued wistfully.

“But where there are roots there are flowers,” said Nyla, hardly knowing what she said. This softness in a strong character moved her strangely.

“Not always. Sometimes just weeds, or poison ivy.”

“But even if you had to go back to Geneva, that isn’t so terribly far. The League would let you run up and spend a week-end with us now and then.”

The Colonel shook his head hopelessly.

“They usually send me a long way off—Poland, Greece, Armenia where the massacres are. Even to North America.”

“There must be some mistake. They wouldn’t send you to places like that if they knew the sort of man you are,” said Nyla adoringly.

“Or perhaps they’re jealous of you at head-

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quarters. Probably some of the people there are afraid you'll get their jobs."

"Darling," replied the Colonel.

"It's surprising," he added presently, "how small-minded people can be. Some of those department heads at Geneva would deny my very existence if it suited them to do so. That's what bureaucracy leads to. But whatever happens, you must always think tenderly of—the League," he said generously. "It is a very noble and complicated organization."

Poor Nyla was almost in tears.

"Gene, don't talk like that about—the League. You *have* put down roots; I can feel them growing."

The Colonel was not anxious to linger unduly in the Purple Room, lest the Grand Duke's murals become too visible.

"Let's see if we can find that secret passage," he suggested when she was a little comforted.

The door to the cellar of the tower was locked, but only with a padlock on a rusty hasp.

"No need to bother Romsteck," he said. "He

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might not like our snooping about." He fetched a poker from the fireplace in the Purple Room and easily snapped the fixture.

The cellar, at the foot of a winding stair, had probably once been a guard room or storage place. The Colonel was amused to find carefully laid away several dozen of the old Burgundies which, according to Karl's manifests, had been exhausted by visiting plenipotentiaries.

"Ha," he said. "This entry can be regarded as legitimate inspection. I suppose I really should report it to the League; sequestration of supplies, contrary to the Treaty. However, we'll be lenient. You see, alas, why international agents grow cynical."

The safety valve, as the Grand Duke always called his secret passage, was so cunningly concealed that a less ingenious investigator might have missed it. They tapped and sounded the walls without success, but then the Colonel fell to studying the coat of arms, elaborately carved and painted, high over the huge fireplace. It was surmounted by a visored helmet.

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“There’s something queer about that visor,” he said. Climbing on a chair he reached up to it with the poker. The piece worked on a hinge, he pushed it upward, and with a soft rumble the iron fireback in the hearth slid aside. Behind was a tunnelled opening.

“Fine stuff!” he cried triumphantly. “Forward, adventurers! Look out for your dress, Nyla, it’s a bit sooty. Hang onto my coat-tail.” He pulled out his mouth-organ and gave a lively rendition of the moating song.

The passage, solidly lined with stone, was pitch dark, moist, and draughty, but there was an old candle on the mantelpiece which he managed to shield with his hands. They groped cautiously through with no more mishap than a few mudstains. Eventually they reached a flight of stone steps where a crack of brightness showed above. A little vigorous pushing and the Colonel burst through a trap door. They were in a small summerhouse, discreetly screened by rhododendrons. Two hundred feet

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away, beyond the moat, lifted the old silvery masonry of the north tower.

“Excellent,” he said, rubbing the earth from his palms. “A little grimy for ladies, I fear. Now we’ll go back and cover up our traces.”

Nyla was eager to tell her father of their discovery, but Cointreau suggested that the President already had too much on his mind. “Let’s keep this our secret, for the moment,” he said. “People who work for the League are always stuffed with secrets. Now I think I had better go and try on that uniform.”

X

HERR GUADELOUPE, refreshed by a good snooze, descended in a more hopeful mood. As he entered the salon, however, he halted in alarm, fearing another of those scenes of violence for which the palace was famous. Silhouetted against the tall windows was a menacing figure, with arms raised above its head and holding an object of dangerous shape. A bomb, thought the President, and dodged hastily behind the high-backed sofa. But Romsteck, standing by seemed calm even if disapproving. Looking again, the President saw that it was Cointreau, glittering in blue and gold, with a sword in a scarlet sash and a cocked hat with a plume. Apparently he was in a state of violent passion: his arms were lifted and quivering as if in imprecation; he was agitating a vase

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wrapped in a napkin, from which came a rattling sound.

“What ho!” said the Colonel. “How do you like the Dalmatian Admiral? Pretty nifty. I’m giving the Major his first lesson in cocktails. I got the shaker from the hotel at Laubach. They’ll send the bill for it to old Leutz. I thought the Republic ought to own one.”

He continued to brandish while the others watched in doubtful silence; then he poured three doses of pale yellowish fluid and held out two of them.

“Try that, boys,” he said familiarly. “Where I come from that’s supposed to be the River of Lethe at high tide.”

“In Geneva?” asked the President innocently.

“Geneva!” exclaimed the Colonel scornfully, but then checked himself.—“Yes, exactly. Indeed, Herr President, the word *gin* is merely an abbreviation of Geneva, as any dictionary will inform. Why the very last thing Ramsay Macdonald said to me was, Teach them to drink

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cocktails. It'll help them over many a rough place."

Guadeloupe and Romsteck drank, and were struck chiefly by the extreme icy chill of the draught. It tasted, they thought, rather like paregoric dimly flavoured with orange.

"It seems mild enough," said the President, holding out his glass.

"Only one to begin with," the Colonel advised. "I have seen European statesmen of the very highest rank, overconfident with this mixture, sign away whole provinces. No, Herr President, speaking as your adviser, if you desire to emerge from this negotiation with a whole skin, go easy on the cocktail. Myself, having less at stake, perhaps I may be permitted——"

He poured himself a second and handed the shaker to the butler.

"Remove it," he said. "Bring it in again after the Ambassador's arrival."

"Major, is everything in readiness?" asked Guadeloupe.

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Romsteck was well aware of the importance of the occasion.

“Yes, Herr President. The American shrub has been generously displayed in Frau Quackenbush’s bedroom, and also elsewhere about the house. The staff have their instructions.”

“It makes a pretty decoration,” said Coin-treau, admiring the sprays of goldenrod on the marble mantel. “Just matches my epaulettes. I also instructed Lorli to dress Fräulein Nyla in yellow, which will go well with these trousers. The sword must have been rather a nuisance to Dalmatian admirals. An awkward thing when you’re trotting round a dry-dock.” He removed the weapon and laid it on the table.

“And now, Herr President, suppose we run over our vocabulary while we can. Did you study the list of informal phrases I wrote down for you?”

Guadeloupe took out a sheet of paper and glanced over it anxiously.

“I tried. American seems an eccentric language.”

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“The Americans are an eccentric people. What would you say if you wanted to express to Herr Quackenbush that something had made a powerful impression on you?”

“Zat gived me a vhole of a kick,” replied the President, whose American had a rich guttural and laryngic timbre.

“Excellent,” commended the Colonel. “The very idiom. And a phrase of admiration in honour of a lady whom you desired to compliment?”

The President pondered.

“I say, she is hot dog.”

Cointreau shook his head.

“I tell ze world, she is hard-boiled.”

“That might be true,” said the tutor, “but not diplomatic.”

“I say she have four flushes.”

“Wrong again. We’d better go over this once more.”

They were interrupted in their studies by Romsteck, who announced that the Ambassador’s car was coming down the avenue. The President waited nervously, muttering phrases

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to himself. Through the doors, open to the warm summer afternoon, they could hear the approaching whirr, but above this there rose shrill yells of distress. They looked at each other doubtfully.

“Is it possible that Frau Quackenbush arrives in hysterics?” said the Colonel. “This is ominous for the debt.”

“I think it is a dog,” said the President. “That same dog that followed me down the avenue yesterday. I recognize his voice.” Troubled by this indignity he forgot his instructions, which were to remain in the Blue Room until the guests were ushered in. He seized the gilded sword of the Dalmatian Navy and ran briskly to the front door to drive off the intrusive animal.

But it wasn't the dog. Herr Leutz, pale with trouble, was climbing from the front seat of the government flivver, while inside the car Mr. and Mrs. Quackenbush strove to control a small girl of about nine years who was evidently in an advanced stage of weariness and bad temper.

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"I don't *want* to go to another hotel," she screamed. "I'm sickantired of hotels. Take me back to Geneva."

"Don't smack her again, Ulysses," said Mrs. Quackenbush. "It only makes her worse. Hush, Treasure. It isn't a hotel. This is where the President lives."

The screams were halted by the surprising sight of Herr Guadeloupe popping out among the assembled footmen with sword in hand. "It *is* a hotel," she whimpered. "I can see the elevator man," and she pointed to the Dalmatian Admiral who had appeared in the doorway. The yells began again when Herr Leutz, after a piteous glance at the horrified President, tried to lift the child out of the car. Mr. Quackenbush seized her savagely and handed her to Romsteck who carried her in and deposited her howling on the floor. A truck, containing at least three times as much baggage as the President and Nyla had brought, drove up behind the flivver. Among the general movement of servants Herr Leutz seized the opportunity to

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flee. He leaped into the car and was driven away.

With a series of sweeping bows and with gestures rather than articulate words the guests were cajoled into the drawing room. Mr. Quackenbush, a large handsome hearty gentleman impressively Senatorial in appearance, had not unnaturally assumed both the small man in the ill-fitting cutaway and the splendid figure in naval uniform to be attendants of some sort. Preceding weeks of this his first trip abroad had already been so full of surprises that now nothing could startle him. When Guadeloupe, in an accent enriched by embarrassment, introduced himself and presented Colonel Cointreau as his interpreter, the American envoy's manner was perfect.

"Some baby," said Guadeloupe soothingly, putting out a friendly hand toward the odious child, who gazed at him with concentrated hostility. "I am strong for vife und kiddies," he added with a polite obeisance.

Mrs. Quackenbush, holding the small girl

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firmly in leash, had the bearing of a resolute lady accustomed to preside over large Middle-Western women's clubs. The President, scanning her powerful bosomy figure, couldn't help morbidly thinking of her as a dancing partner. She looked prosperous and well-knit, the kind of person who would resent being trodden on.

"Oh Mr. President," she exclaimed, "do forgive our having brought the little girl without warning, but our Swiss nurse fell ill unexpectedly and we had no time to arrange to leave her in Geneva. I'm sorry she's so upset, but you know what children are, it's such a trying journey. Mildred, make your pretty curtsey to the President, that's a Treasure."

Mildred ducked sullenly.

"Please?" said Herr Guadeloupe inquiringly. He was ambitious to air his smattering of American, but his ear was not quick enough to follow rapid conversation.

"I think this is a bum hotel," said Mildred. "I bet there's no hot water."

"Pleasure to receive hard-boiled Americans

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to our tender republic," said Guadeloupe. "I tell de vorld." Here he broke down and gazed helplessly at the Colonel.

"My interpretation tell de vorld," he concluded.

"The President wants me to assure you of the warmth of his welcome," said Cointreau. "He apologizes for the meagerness of his English; I fear that I myself am not perfect."

"Why, you speak *elegantly!*" cried Mrs. Quackenbush. "Such a relief! You know we were *so* embarrassed when we got orders from Washington to come here, our French is bad enough but our German simply doesn't *exist.*"

"Why does the elevator man wear a sword?" said Mildred.

"Hush, Treasure. You mustn't be rude. I'm sorry Mildred is a little peevish. She can be so sweet when she's herself. She's not just an ordinary Mildred, are you Treasure? You know she was named for her grandfather, General Mildred of Cincinnati."

"Hot dog!" said the President cheerily, eager

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to propitiate Quackenbush. "Your maternal vife give me one vhole of a kick, Herr Ambassador. Pretty nifty! Now perhaps she please to undress herself."

"The Herr President overstates his intention," explained Cointreau tactfully. "He does not always mean all that he seems to say."

"He's funnier than Charlie Chaplin," said Mildred. "Come on, boy, take us up in the elevator. What's the number of our room? I want to write my name in the register myself."

Her exasperated parents, already goaded by a long journey cooped in a compartment with their difficult urchin, made a joint move toward her, but at that moment Romsteck piloted in two footmen with trays of cocktails and caviar sandwiches. Mildred eluded the punitive grasp, skipped briskly across the room and seized one of the glasses.

"Gee, I'm thirsty," she cried, and drained it. "Why do they wear short pants?"

"Mildred!" exclaimed her father furiously.

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“She’ll be ill,” said her mother. “Treasure, how *can* you behave so?”

In all his career as a diplomatist Colonel Cointreau never surpassed his conduct at that moment. He saw that the Quackenbushes were approaching the frontiers of endurance. With skillful suggestion he lured the excited child onto the terrace, promising to keep her amused while Frau Quackenbush could unpack in peace.

XI

“NOW you must have American cock’s tails,” said Guadeloupe, somewhat nervous to find himself left without his interpreter. He drank one hastily himself, hoping it might cause some sprouting in his small garden of American idiom. **“So much I hear about your great outlandish contry. Ve drink to dose Unitarian States, de whole tirteen of dem.”**

The envoy bowed graciously. **“You mustn’t feel offended,”** he said, **“if Mrs. Quackenbush doesn’t drink. She is a leading member of our W.C.T.U.”**

“Yes, yes,” said the President, puzzled, but desperately anxious to understand. **“Quite natural after a long journey.”**

But he could see from Herr Quackenbush’s startled face that he had erred in some mysterious way. He struggled bravely to improve.

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“Be qvite easy. Frau Quackenbush shall plenty to drink enjoy. Your liddle offsprings too. Ha ha, how it leap upon de cock’s tail! Ve onderstand, peoples from de League always some lushers. I tink you like our liddle contry, Herr Ambassador?”

“I think so indeed. Of course you have very different views from ourselves.”

“Views! Ah, for views, Herr Ambassador—when de sun sits down in de mountains, all rosy in de icebergs! Dose icebergs are like companions, as good for Frau Quackenbush as a second hosband.”

“I’m afraid, Herr President, you are premature in calling me Ambassador. My nomination hasn’t yet been ratified by the Senate.”

“It is de same ting,” said Guadeloupe, blissfully ignorant of American politics. “Ve so happy to be recognize by America, great contry, rich but honest. You tell your President perhaps, Illyria small contry very poor. Ve suffer pretty nifty in de Var, de Var got our goats good and plenty, I tell de world.”

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“Let us drink to a happier future,” said Herr Quackenbush kindly. “These cocktails are delicious.”

“Is it not so!” exclaimed the delighted host. “Colonel Cointreau tell me, dat is de drink you Americans use to put hair on de chest. To de generous great Republic of Unitarian States! Ich trink auf Ihr Wohl, Herr Ambassador. I spik Engleesch, a liddle, but American is hard-boiled, makes to me a little cuckoo.”

“I think you do very well, Herr President,” said Quackenbush politely, though inwardly a little staggered by the other’s figures of speech. “You have several phrases of quite lively American slang.”

“You think? Dat is my interpretations, Colonel Cointreau. A most singular man. It is de Colonel who introduce de cock’s tails, he visit America, he spik all de tongues of men und of angels, dance de folk dance, he is how you say my right hand, I tell de world. I vish you talk mid him, he put you vise to everything.”

“That is the gentleman in naval uniform?”

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“He looks like naval’s uniforms, Herr Ambassador, but dat is uniform of interpretations in Illyria. Colonel Cointreau say no officer so important as interpretation who make rich powerful contries understand troubles of poor little contries. Important officers must have important uniforms.”

“And the gentleman who met us at the station, that is your Finance Minister? I suppose he is the one with whom we shall discuss the matter of payments?”

The President, painfully aware that Illyria and the United States would be discussing payments for at least sixty years, was anxious to postpone the topic as long as possible.

“To-night I hope ve tink only of happiness. Anodder cock’s tail, Herr Ambassador? So ve have arrange for you and Frau Quackenbush a little dinner, mit dancings und lust. Colonel Cointreau he is de man, always lusting. So chential und so nifty mit his feets, he dance mit Frau Quackenbush, he give her a whale of a kick.”

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“It’s very kind of you, I’m sure. What a wonderful old house this is.”

“Ve hope you und Frau Quackenbush be careless here in Farniente just so careless as you were to your own house. Ve show you all our interests, yes, de pullet holes vere dey shoot at de Grand Dukes, de pilliard tables vere dey lay out de corpses. My interpretation he explain, he haf de gift of de gab. Like peoples in America he have how you call rubber heels. Always so comical, I tell de world. Such a charming, he can tread on people’s corns und dey thank him for it.”

“He’d make a good ambassador,” remarked Herr Quackenbush.

Meanwhile the highly-praised interpreter had found Mildred not bad company. She was a spoiled precocious child, and now tired and cross, but this was the first time she had gone walking with an elevator man and she was naturally flattered. The Colonel’s artful wiles completed the conquest his uniform had begun.

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He showed her the moat, held her hand while she walked on the balustrade, made tempting suggestions of future adventures with boats and fishing, and allowed her to carry the sword. Soon she was chattering away gaily. It had been her notion to insist, with screams if necessary, on staying up for dinner, but he tactfully persuaded her that an early supper and bed would put her in better condition for junkets in the morning.

“I guess there’s not many Americans comes here to Illyria,” she said. She was aware that she had not cut a good figure at her entrance, and with sound feminine instinct she was hunting about in her mind for reasons to re-establish her self-esteem. “I guess maybe I’m the first American child that’s ever been here. You know, my nurse, in Geneva, she wasn’t really sick, she just got nervous prostrations from taking care of me. I can give most any nurse nervous prostrations if I really try.”

“I’m sure you can,” said the Colonel. “It’s a gift.”

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“You ought to be running an elevator in a hotel in America,” she remarked. “You’ve got too much class for an old dump like this. Maybe I could get you a job at our hotel in Washington. I don’t suppose you ever get any decent tips here.”

“I manage to get along.”

“It’s nice to have someone to talk to,” she said graciously. “Daddy and Mother aren’t really congenial to me, and these people over here are such boobs about speaking English. Lots of times I have things on my mind and can’t say them.”

“Nothing is more painful, I quite agree.”

“There was another American on the train, but he didn’t amount to much.”

“How can you tell when they amount to much?”

“Well, you’re a foreigner, I guess you won’t understand. Daddy told me for God’s sake to take a walk in the corridor so’s he could get a nap. In one of the other cars I saw this man, and he was chewing gum. That’s how I knew he

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didn't amount to much. He was riding second class, too."

"It's useful to have a way you can tell, isn't it," said the Colonel amiably.

"He was some kind of policeman."

The Colonel seemed interested. "That was queer. What would an American policeman be doing, way over here?"

"He said he was looking for someone. He offered me a stick of gum, but when I told him who I was of course he knew I wouldn't take it."

"Where was he going?"

"He didn't say, but he was awful anxious to see Daddy. I fooled him, though. I wasn't going to have him wake up Daddy's nap, so I told him we'd see him after the train left Laibach. Then, you see, we got off at Laibach to change and I guess he went on with the express. I didn't see him on the other train."

"Well, you're a great kid," said the Colonel admiringly. "I guess you told your father about it afterward."

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“No, I forgot about it till this minute. I had one of my tantrums, and it escaped me.”

“I tell you what I’ll do,” said the Colonel in a burst of generosity. “If you slip up to bed right away, *right away* mind you, and don’t bother your father and mother, because they’ve got to dress for dinner, I’ll make you a present of that sword. You can take it to bed with you.”

“Honest?” she exclaimed.

“Sure’s you’re born. Come on now, I’ll get Frau Innsbruck to give you a glass of milk and a cooky and you beat it right to bed. Then we can pull some big stuff in the morning.”

IT WAS odd that so brief an interval should have had so marked an effect on the Colonel. When he rejoined the President and Herr Quackenbush, the interpreter's fluent American had suffered an obvious deterioration. He now spoke with an Illyrian accent hardly less strong than the President's own. Herr Guadeloupe, however, unconscious of any change, welcomed him joyfully and prepared to shift the difficult burden of small-talk to a more capable linguist.

“Ha, my interpretations!” he said jovially. “I schust tell de Herr Ambassador ve turn over new leafs in Illyria. He und Frau Quackenbush see how ve burn all our britches behind us.”

Herr Quackenbush, somewhat puzzled, turned to the Colonel, who was deftly abstracting for his own use the cocktail that he could see the President did not really need.

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“Not britches, britches,” explained the Colonel. “Not britches in de sense of pantaloons, britches in de sense of Brooklyn Britches. Ve burn our britches in de behind, dat is to say ve begin a new era.”

“The President tells me you have been in the States,” said Quackenbush.

“Ach, soch happy memory of your great contry,” cried the Colonel blithely. “I drink to it, so. Zose beautiful Statue of Libertine, zose tall Voolvort Building, zose companionable sobvay, ve haf noddings in Illyria to comparison.”

“Your ideas of life are different over here,” said the envoy generously. “You have charms of your own.”

“No, no,” insisted the enthusiastic Colonel. “Here ve are poor and bestial. Ve haf soch ambitiousness to be like America; give us de chance, ve be go-getters, back-slappers, cake eaters, beeg butter-und-egg men. You gif us easy terms on de debt, ve show our gratefulness ve start de Rotary Clubs, ve tear down de old

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buildings put up apartment housings, ve dig sobvay mid beautiful newsstands and lofely pictures on de magazine covers.”

“I can see you have made quite a study of American life,” said the surprised envoy.

“It is de civilization of de future,” continued the Colonel in his vigorous guttural. “Strong, romantic, eggsiting. Alvays de Herr President he ask me about America, I tell him it is Paradise, de contry of beautiful vimmen vere de hosbands is shot up in an office from nine A.M. till six P.M. Und your Washington Deecy, soch a magnificence. De perfect sitting-place for a government dat would be chenerous to poor liddle foreign contries. Und your Prohibition, a noble idea: a contry vere no one never drinks, it leave so moch more for de rest of us.”

“Some of your impressions may have been a little misleading,” said Quackenbush, “but certainly they are very flattering. You must come again.”

“He tell you how moch ve admire America?”

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asked Guadeloupe, who was unable to keep up with the rapid-fire of his interpreter.

“I say to Herr Quackenbush dat all de modern civilization come to us from his contry, de Ford-cars, de movies, de fine plumbings. I say ve owe de Americans a great deal.”

This last phrase, which the President could understand, seemed to him ominous, and he frowned covertly to his volatile adviser.

“Now that the United States has recognized the Illyrian Republic,” said Quackenbush, turning politely to Guadeloupe, “we shall expect you to send a minister to Washington. Why wouldn’t the Admiral—I mean, the Colonel—be just the man? I could give you some telephone numbers in Washington that might be useful to one of your tastes,” he added, observing that the Colonel was waving the cocktail shaker to verify its emptiness. “There would be no need to mention the matter to Mrs. Quackenbush.”

“Dat suit me down to de terra firma,” replied the Colonel brightly. “First crack out de box

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I be real von hundred per cent American.”
But the President shook his head.

“I could not spare de Colonel,” he said.
“He is my four flushes. Besides also, Colonel Cointreau is delicate official on de staff of de League of Nations, Geneva need him near de bedside. He is de midwife for any contry dat is going to haf a baby repoblic.”

The conversation was interrupted by Nyla. Evidently the Colonel’s instructions had been followed, for she was lovely in an airy frock of some golden tissue. She was introduced to Herr Quackenbush, and greeted him charmingly. But it was plain to that experienced observer that the brightness of her eyes was chiefly for the interpreter. Nor did he even blame her; he too was vastly taken by the humorous young official.

“It pleases for me to meet you,” she said in so daintily foreign an accent that the gross jargon of the others was put to shame. “Dat is de speech Colonel Cointreau tell me Americans always say to demselves.”

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What is so delicious as one's own tongue delicately mispronounced by a beautiful woman? So thought the ambassador and made her his best bow. He turned to Cointreau.

"Certainly you can't pretend that America has any monopoly of pretty girls."

"Speaking for de League, I am happy to state dat no contry has monopoly of good fortune," replied the Colonel readily. "Tanks to de brodigality of nature, dere is gonsolation everywhere."

Nyla reproved her father for having kept Herr Quackenbush talking when it was time to dress for dinner. The President appealed to his adviser with his eyes, but saw no sign of encouragement. When the two statesmen had gone, the Colonel began a graceful speech about Nyla's costume, but she cut him short.

"Gene," she said mysteriously, "you understand about Americans, perhaps you can help."

"What's the trouble?"

"I know it sounds silly, but—do you suppose Frau Quackenbush has a secret sorrow?"

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“She has Mildred, but there’s nothing secret about *her*. And even Mildred has her points.”

“Well, there’s something wrong, She’s making queer noises.”

“Who, Mildred? It’s that cocktail.”

“No, not Mildred, Frau Quackenbush.”

“What kind of noises?”

“Lorli says she’s sighing and groaning.”

“Probably trying to get into her dinner dress. The American women have a passion for wearing their clothes too tight.”

“Lorli says she’s in a terrible state, tears running down her face.”

“They can’t run far, not on that figure. Maybe she’s heard she’ll have to dance with your father.”

“But what can we do? It’s terribly embarrassing. You know how much depends on this evening.”

“She’s got nervous prostration from spending the day with Mildred.”

“Gene, please be serious. You said the League

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sent you here to help us, and now when something happens you don't do anything."

"I *am* serious. I never was more serious in my life. You don't know what a lot I've got on my mind."

"But Gene, you're so clever, I thought perhaps you could think of something. If you could have a talk with her, I'm sure you could cheer her up. You're the only one here who can understand her."

"What's the matter with her husband?"

"If *you* had a secret sorrow, would you confide it to Herr Quackenbush?"

"He knows some useful telephone numbers. But maybe I have a secret sorrow. Nyla, listen, I want——"

"I've got to go and see that Daddy finds his studs."

"But Nyla——"

"If you can comfort Frau Quackenbush, you can tell me about that later."

"Nyla, you little fiend——"

The blue sleeves of the Admiral were round

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her, but only for an instant. The victory was as brief and fallacious as any of the engagements of the Dalmatian navy, for just then Romsteck entered, with a petty cough, to supervise the removal of the appetizers.

The major domo's manner as the footmen cleared away was perfect. The Colonel, on the other hand, seemed somewhat at a loss. He lit a cigarette, studied the bullet-holes in the panel, and then stood with his back to the room, looking off over the terrace. The underlings departed noiselessly; finally Romsteck signalled with another small cough.

"Romsteck," said the Colonel, without looking round.

"Sir?"

There was a pause.

"Could you cash a check?"

"No sir."

Another pause.

"But I'd have no objection to lending it to you, sir."

"Romsteck, are you trying to embarrass me?"

“Impossible, sir.”

“This League of Nations business is so uncertain.”

“Very.”

“I might be called back to Geneva quite suddenly, and I find that I have neglected——”

“Precisely, sir. I admire you for it.”

A pause.

“Damn it, Romsteck, you *are* embarrassing me.”

“It does you credit, sir.”

Another pause.

“If a couple of hundred florins would do, sir, it would be like old times. Quite in the Grand Ducal tradition.—I felt the tradition reviving yesterday; but I was sure of it when—when I interrupted you just now, sir.”

The Colonel wheeled angrily and strode across the room.

“Look here, not a word against the Fräulein, do you understand? Damn you, the grandest grand duchess in the whole mildewed tribe wasn't worth the heel of her slipper.”

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“That also does you credit, sir,” said Romsteck calmly.

Cointreau stared at him and then turned again to the door by the terrace.

“Well, what is it?” he asked presently.

“What leads you to believe there is anything further, sir?”

The Colonel laughed, flicked away his cigarette, and came back into the room.

“Romsteck, I underestimated you. You’re a clever man. But there’s not much time before dinner. I’ve got a good appetite, I’d hate to spoil it.”

“There is a man here to see the American ambassador.”

A pause, and the Colonel studied Romsteck’s face keenly. It was properly inscrutable.

“Does he make chewing motions with his mouth?”

“It might be so described,” admitted Romsteck.

“The ambassador is dressing. The man will have to wait.”

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“Would it not be better, sir, to see him now?”

“You know very well it is important the ambassador should not be upset. The Herr President particularly wants to keep him in a genial frame of mind.”

“Quite so, sir. Therefore I say, see this man now. He is from the American military police.”

“Ah. I think we shall need a little finesse,” remarked the Colonel. “Romsteck, I believe, this man is a dangerous fellow, dangerous to the best interests of a happy evening. I can count on you?”

“Absolutely, sir. It is quite in the Farniente tradition.”

“A glass of the 1865 cognac and two or three footmen, the big ones, would be helpful.”

“Very good, sir,” and Romsteck retired.

He returned a few moments later, ushering a burly fellow in citizens' clothes, who saluted briskly to the figure in brilliant uniform.

“American M.P., sir,” said the stranger. “Sergeant Higgins.”

“Please for to meet you,” said Cointreau in

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his best guttural. "I tought all de M. P.'s vere Engleesch."

"Military Police, from the zone of occupation. On medical detail from the Base Hospital at Coblantz. I have to see Mr. Quackenbush."

"I am sorry, M.P., I onderstand Engleesch mid huge difficulties."

"Maybe you can read it, sir. I have an extradition paper here that explains the matter."

The Colonel examined the document, apparently with some perplexity, for he lingered over it until three footmen entered with a decanter of brandy.

"Dere is a photographs here," he said. "Vot a nasty looking gustomer. You hunting somevon, hey? De Herr Ambassador he is fugitive?"

"No sir, but I need his OK to get coöperation from the Farniente police."

"It is pitiful, M.P., de Herr Ambassador could not be coöperated schust now. His vife got hysterics, his baby got de nervous prostrations, himself is about to try to gollect some money from de Illyrian dreasury. It is a diffi-

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cult moment. You seddle down qvietly, visit de sights, by und bye ve see vot ve can do.”

“I’m sorry, I got my orders.”

“I do not onderstand,” said the Colonel affably, signalling the footmen to approach. “Anyhow, our old Illyrian osbitality must be observe. A glass of de 1865 cognac, M.P., den ve summon de Herr Quackenbush.—More dan vonce, dey tell me, dis cognac have save de state.”

The sergeant, much pleased, accepted the glass and drank with enthusiasm. He was then surprised to find Colonel Cointreau holding a small shining barrel at his face.

“Put ’em up!” said the Colonel. “Quick! No noise about it, buddy.”

The M.P.’s arms rose, one hand still holding the empty glass, which Romsteck carefully took and replaced on the tray. The three brawny footmen stood ready.

“You dirty Fritz, what’s the idea?” cried the astounded victim.

“Tousand apology,” said the Colonel, re-

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remembering his accent, "but ve cannot haf Herr Quackenbush interruptioned dis evening. You take my advices, M.P., and keep qviet, it is de old Farniente tradition."

The man ducked suddenly and dived for the Colonel's legs, but the footmen threw themselves upon him. The struggle was fierce but brief. It cost the Colonel one of his Dalmatian epaulettes, but the cold pressure of his weapon on the policeman's cheek brought the enemy to terms.

"Sorry ve haf to be so rude," said the Colonel. With one hand he detached his scarlet sash and handed it to Romsteck, who gagged the angry captive. "Dis is de first time de Dalmatian navy ever see any active service.—Romsteck, take him away. Keep him quiet until the morning."

The major domo and the footmen led off the bewildered M. P. The Colonel, now that the tension was over, put his revolver to his mouth. On it he played a cheerful variation of the Moating Song.

XIII

COLONEL COINTREAU, resourceful as usual, hunted about the drawing room for a pin. As he expected, he found one eventually in the long blue damask window curtains. He stood trying to reattach the large golden epaulette to his shoulder when he was startled by a soft explosion. It came apparently from the great hall, a sudden popping sound followed by a faint whistling gasp. It was not unlike the fracture of an electric light bulb fallen from a height; but there are no electric lights in the Farniente Palace. He listened sharply. But nothing further happened, so he resumed his task, attempting to adjust the heavily fringed ornament at its proper angle. He had got it affixed, rather insecurely, when the sound came again, louder. This time there was discernible also a sort of strangled fizzing.

Hastily he crossed the room and flung open

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the door; on the very instant he was met point blank by a second repetition at close range. This time it was unmistakable: a sneeze, followed by a gulping sob. The mourner was Frau Quackenbush, weeping fluently.

“My dear lady,” he cried aghast. “Vat can be loose, indeed? Lean on my arm, lean on de Dalmatian Navy dat have gonsoled so many unfortunate females. So, so; there, there.”

He supported her tenderly to the sofa, where she sank heavily, carrying him with her. In spite of her beautiful silver gown Frau Quackenbush was a lamentable sight. Her eyes were bloodshot, glazed with tears; her nose red and swollen, her handsome features puffed with misery. She buried her face in her handkerchief.

“Ach, Himmel!” exclaimed the astounded man. “Speak, lady. You haf a pain? Mildred is sick? De gown too tight? Some calamity is too moch bust!”

She shook her head faintly, holding the handkerchief to her face, a small vinaigrette held limply in the other hand. Cointreau respectfully

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removed the handkerchief hand and pushed up the smelling salts under her nose. She sighed, and then was seized by another sharp convulsion. She trembled, shuddered, emitted a gargling groan and struggled for breath. The vinaigrette bottle clattered on the floor.

“Got save us! You feel easier? Ve must buck up, de gompany be soon here.”

“I can’t go through with it,” she moaned faintly.

“Vat rascal have got you in dis gondition?” said the chivalrous Colonel. “Your osband, he is onkind? I call him out, I schpit him mit my sword.—No, Mildred gone to bed mit de sword. I play him a fatal jackpot.—Lady, lady, tell to me vat is wrong mit your bosoms.”

“I can’t tell you,” she gasped. “It would offend you.”

“Nodding ladies ever did could offend Coin-treau,” he declared soothingly. “Alvays I prepare for de vorst.”

She shook her head, and mopped her eyes hopelessly.

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“Is it de sorrows of our little contry dat bray upon your spirit? De difficulty of gonversations mit de Herr Bresident? I imblore you, Frau Quackenbush, be confidential in me. Ve be soch friends, ve dance, ve make insinuations. See, ve haf pretty gustom of Illyria, ve ar a favour for friends. You brace up, not distress de Herr Bresident mit dese griefs, I gif you my trophy. Please, you ve ar it for me?”

He plucked the loosely pinned epaulette from his coat and offered it gallantly. With bleared eyes she could hardly see it, and recoiled with a choking cry.

“What is it, more goldenrod? Take it away, it’s killing me! The whole house is full of it. Send upstairs for my atomizer, I’m suffocating.”

A light broke upon the distracted Colonel. Like a man putting out a fire he leaped to his feet, rang the bell, then seized the bundles of goldenrod lavishly displayed in every vase and hurled them through the open door far across the terrace.

“It’s my hay fever,” said Frau Quackenbush

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in a strangled whisper. "Goldenrod is the one thing that absolutely kills me with asthma. I didn't know you had it in Europe."

She sank back against the cushions with another shattering sneeze.

"The maid said you got it for me as a special compliment," she murmured huskily. "So I didn't like to throw it out."

When Herr Guadeloupe and Nyla entered the salon a few minutes later, Frau Quackenbush was stretched, an imposing contour, on the couch. On his knees beside her the remorseful Colonel, uttering frantic endearments, was pumping the atomizer into her nose and throat.

"Tell me, dear lady, do de nostrils seem any happier?" he was asking solicitously. "Hosh!" he cautioned the horrified President. "I tink she revive. She breathe more freely. Open wide, ve spray out de pharynx. De pharynx, de larynx, and all de mucous membranes. She have a dreadful attack, unspeakable."

"Gott!" ejaculated the President. "An attack? Is it assassinations, ravishings? Ach, de

Herr Ambassador add anoder million florins to de debt."

Frau Quackenbush struggled gamely to her feet.

"I'm better, Herr President," she said hoarsely. "Please don't be alarmed."

"She was very nearly ruined, but she improve," said the Colonel, medicating the air busily in various directions.

"You prefer ve cancel de guests?" asked Guadeloupe anxiously. "Perhaps Frau Quackenbush too sick for de dancings?" he added hopefully.

"No, please," she said. "I shall be all right in a moment. The Colonel saved me."

"But still I do not onderstand vat is happen," said the mystified President. "And how is dis?" he added, picking up the severed epaulette from the rug. "Signs of stroggle? Surely de age of ravishings is gone by?"

"Ve hope de age of ravishings never go by," said the Colonel charmingly. "Frau Quackenbush und I haf our liddle secrets. It is de old

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Farniente tradition. Hosh now, here come de Ambassador.”

The footmen brought in candles, and a moment later Romsteck announced the first of the arriving guests.

“Herr Finance Minister Leutz, Frau Leutz,” he shouted solemnly.

As the company gathered the Colonel devoted himself assiduously to Frau Quackenbush, and by the time dinner was served she was greatly improved and in excellent spirits.

Nyla went in to dinner on the Colonel’s arm.

“Gene, I knew you could fix things somehow,” she whispered gratefully. “What’s become of your sword and the lovely red sash?”

“I gave them away,” he said. “I’m giving away the whole outfit, bit by bit. Wear this for me.” And he gave her the golden epaulette.

XIV

THE summer moon poured on Farniente its soft endearing lunacy. The terrace, where Nyla and the Colonel were sitting out this dance, was a milky twilight; from the ballroom came the sweet innuendo of the latest Viennese waltz. Illyria is haunted with music. It sounds in chorus from village inns, it chimes from old belfries, gypsies fiddle under vineyard arbours, even the cowbells in mountain pastures cry a queer elvish clang. The Colonel can be pardoned if in that perfect blend of evening and congenial company he had laid aside international cares for a moment. The music in the ballroom ceased; he took out his mouth-organ and repeated the air, which his quick ear had accurately caught.

“I wish they wouldn’t play such emotional tunes,” he remarked. “It makes the roots grow so quickly.”

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“Beautiful, beautiful world!” exclaimed Nyla happily. “It doesn’t make me feel like roots. It makes me feel like escaping into that magic paleness, going farther and farther—on and on and on. Doesn’t moonlight make you feel like that, Gene; almost as though something was after you?”

“I know the feeling,” said the Colonel. He played the tune again, retarding it in an absent thoughtful fashion. “Speaking of travelling and all that sort of thing, I’ve got some important papers to get off to the League. Confidential reports, you know. I ought to let them know that the republic has been successfully inaugurated. What I mean is, I suppose there’s a late train that I could send them on?”

“There’s the two o’clock. That connects with the sleepings at Laibach. I know, because Daddy had to take it once when they summoned him to Geneva. Gene, you’re so conscientious. Couldn’t your work wait till tomorrow?”

“Oh well, perhaps it could,” admitted the

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Colonel tenderly. "But the last thing—one of the last things—Ramsay Macdonald said to me was, Get your reports in promptly."

"Please forgive me," she said, conscience-stricken. "I mustn't forget, just because you've been so perfectly darling to me, that you have to attend to business."

"Supposing that you'd never met me," he began earnestly, and then interrupted himself. "By Jove, that just fits the music!" he cried, and played a snatch of the air again. "We can make up some words of our own. Come on now, take turns with the lines."

The orchestra indoors just then took up the tune for an encore. To that soft accompaniment the Colonel sang his first line:

"Supposing that you'd never met me——"

"In that case let's never suppose.—" she hummed in reply.

"But then you could never forget me.—" continued the Colonel.

"I'm stuck," she said. "I can't get it. Wait a minute—*Our poetry never be prose.*"

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“Grand!” said the Colonel. “We’ll knock Irving Berlin for a loop. Here we go: *That is the tragic in every sweet magic——*”

“*Yes, even the fairy tales end——*” she improvised, in a prettily pretended pathos.

Both paused, struggling for the next rhyme. The Colonel got it first, and warbled in a thrilling *espressivo*:

“*So we can’t sever, forever and ever
Let’s pretend Not To Pretend.*”

He finished off with a fine rich flourish on the mouth-organ.

“Gene, you’re *wonderful!*” she cried ecstatically. “You’re much too good for the old League of Nations, you ought to be a bandmaster or something.”

The delighted virtuoso replied with both arms and the one word that was his favourite ejaculation.

“Darling!” was his simple declarative statement. One word and two arms, he used to remark, could best express a tender crisis.

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“I *do* so like to be admired,” he murmured, “and I’ve had so little of it.”

“Nonsense,” whispered the infatuated Nyla. “The League must be frightfully proud of you, going round making people happy.”

“Never mind the League,” he said. “Let’s forget the League for the nonce. In fact, for several nonces. We’ll go off and found a republic of our own. We haven’t had that voyage on the moat yet.”

But the affairs of state are not so easily forgotten. Others were also finding the terrace useful, though perhaps less pleasant. Herr Leutz, escaped from the dance floor to a tilting ground not less perilous, was strolling with the ambassador. From the ambassador came only a mild fragrance of cigar while Herr Leutz’s words of woe were audible.

“Von hondred eight million six hondred and sefenty four tousand fife hondred and tventy fife florin,” he was saying. “Blus aggrued interests up to now, blus interests for sixty-two year—Ach, Herr Ambassador, you call dat

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gapacity to bay, dot sound to me like de massacre of de innocents. Und if de florin she go any lower ve haf to hire a plumber to hunt for her down de drain pipe.”

The tactful Colonel was about to lead Nyla away from this painful scene when a dark figure that had been peering about in the moonlight approached cautiously and proved to be Romsteck.

“Your pardon, Fräulein,” he said politely. “Colonel, here are the dispatches you were expecting.” He handed an envelope.

“Oh yes,” said the Colonel, at first a little annoyed at the interruption. Then the shape and feel of the envelope reassured him. “The dispatches, yes. I wouldn’t have missed them for—for a couple of hundred florins.”

“Exactly, sir. The Colonel is always accurate.”

“A lovely evening, Romsteck. Are all the guests quite happy?”

“There is one, Colonel, who cannot be kept happy indefinitely.”

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“What does he mean?” asked Nyla.

“He must mean Frau Quackenbush.”

“Poor Daddy, he’s having a terrible time.”

“If we say von million florin a year for sixty-two year,” continued the unhappy voice of Herr Leutz, “mit an average rate of interests of not more dan von per cent——”

“This is too gruesome,” said the Colonel, and they turned toward the dance.

Through the open French windows they could see glimpses of gliding couples, where the fashionables of Farniente did honour to the occasion. But there were also some whose ambit would require a bumpier participle. On those polished timbers the honest proletarians of Herr Guadeloupe’s ministry had rallied bravely round their chief. One after another, with despair behind their creaking shirt fronts, the doomed men had partnered Frau Quackenbush in a series of exhausting oscillations. The unfortunate lady, jarred from clavicle to coccyx, wondered secretly whether even the hay fever would not have been an easier ordeal. Now the

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President, having vainly sought the apostate Colonel, was doing his best. Holding the lady gingerly at a distance, so that he could gaze downward unimpeded, Herr Guadeloupe was too busy coördinating feet to attempt small-talk. Save for his automatic repetition "Excuse, I tell de world," or his anguished "Sorry to meet you" when they came solidly against the massy postern of some Illyrian dowager, he performed in anxious silence. The orchestra leader, keeping respectful watch on the chief magistrate's timing, made the mistake of trying to help him by halting the music when he went wrong. The unhappy man dared not raise his eyes from the floor except when he occasionally cast a haggard look in search of his adviser. The latter had been only a brilliant migrant in the crowded ballroom, seen sometimes in the distance floating serenely with Nyla, then disappearing again into the moonlight.

So Frau Quackenbush, aware that a few more such collisions would be fatal, did the steering. The President turned always in the same direc-

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tion. His brow, fiercely intent, drooped lower and lower upon her generous acclivities until his head almost seemed to teeter there unstably like the rolling stone on its perch of moss. His English had vanished in his hour of need; he no longer could remember any phrase adequate to thank Frau Quackenbush for the honour and suggest recess. When the orchestra paused he waved an arm mechanically and continued his murderous rigadon so that the musicians were forced to resume. Indeed, as Frau Quackenbush began to suspect, cocktails, heat, excitement and continuous rhythmic gyration had bewitched him into a sort of hypnosis. It began to seem a nightmare in which she was condemned to rotate forever while a small dervish in dangerously slack trousers drowsed uneasily on her bosom. She herself was succumbing to the unholy vertigo. Her face was flushed, her eyes closed, she had a strong desire to scream. She controlled herself, as I suppose many a strong-minded matron has done in moments of hellish temptation, by forcing herself to recall the par-

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liamentary procedure of the Ohio Federation of Women's Clubs. Through clenched teeth she murmured the sanative and gracious ritual. *Minutes of the Last Meeting. Reports of Committees. Special Business. The Literary Program. Madam President, we have with us today the distinguished British poet—*Already the Illyrian ladies had begun to stare and whisper, a buzz of scandalized sensation to pass round the room. Then the Colonel, who had seen the crisis, deftly slipped through the throng. He broke every rule of high etiquette by cutting in on the President's partner and unwound the spell by a few resolute twirls in the opposite direction. One on each arm he led the collapsing pair to the coolness of a window. He lent Frau Quackenbush a handkerchief, her own having slipped too far down to be decently retrievable; from his pocket he produced the forgotten hay fever atomizer and sprayed the panting President.

“Ha! My interpretations!” gasped Herr Guadeloupe. “Vere are you all dese years? Frau Quackenbush, you are phenomenon I never for-

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get. Some chiropodist, I tell de vorld. Ha, ve demonstrate de Perpetual Motions, you and I. Gott, I try to keep my eye on your feets but dey spread like cockroaches. It look to me impossible you haf only two legs? I tink you must be quadruped in disguise. Tousand gratitudes for de agonies of a lifetime.”

“You must pardon de Herr President his enthusiasms,” explained the Colonel. “He is fanatical dancer, he dance till de cows come home to de nest.”

Frau Quackenbush was temporarily beyond speech. The Colonel put a chair for her on the terrace, brought her an ice, removed her slippers.

“I’d like to go paddling in that moat,” was all she said for a while.

“Ve go swimming if you like,” said the Colonel, always ready.

“That’s the second time you’ve rescued me,” she said gratefully. “If you ever come to America I can show you how I appreciate it. As long as I’m chairman of the Entertainment Com-

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mittee there'll always be a lecture platform waiting for you at the Cincinnati Women's Club."

It was the supreme tribute, and the Colonel bowed, greatly moved.

IN THE great hall, under the beam of many candles, Herr Guadeloupe and Nyla were saying goodnight to the departing guests. The President looked senile with fatigue. Not the caducity of the florin, nor the anxieties of the American bondholders, nor height nor depth nor any other created thing could much longer keep him from bed. But Nyla, shining in her golden frock, radiated the divine vitality of girlhood. Her dark hair, her lilac eyes, her pretty tinge of excitement, were caught in a mild flush of quivering light. The impressionable Colonel, halting on the curved stair by the portraits of old lords of Farniente, vowed to himself that those painted ruffians had never looked down on prettier neck and shoulders. "I'll bet you never did," he remarked to the Duke Friedrich, whose yellow canvas face looked

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biliously at him. "Never one so lovely. Or so chaste," he added with a sigh.

"It would be a pity if the Dalmatian Navy never had any sea service," he said to her as she turned from dispatching the last leavetaker. "I have the punt all ready."

Now in the ancient flat-bottomed boat, tilting heavily aft, they idled gently. Low under those licheny walls the water was dark, scribbled here and there with silver where the moon leaked through the chestnut trees. The Colonel paddled softly with an oar, then with the optimism of a true Dalmatian navigator entrusted his vessel to destiny. The small melody of the Moating Song sighed from his mouth-organ. A gradual diminution of brightness in the windows above them showed that candles were being puffed out one by one. In Illyria the gayety of evening is not blackened at one flick, by snapping a switch. Windows extinguish like stars, paling softly.

"It would be preposterous," he said, "not to pay such a night the tribute of an embrace."

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They paid it. The florin may depreciate but the Illyrian kiss remains always perfect par, a sterling medium of exchange.

“Pinch me,” she said at last. “I guess I’ve been enchanted into a different world. I thought for a moment you were some kind of fairy prince.”

It was too comprehensive to be described as a pinch.

“Let’s do this every evening. Your work won’t take up very much of your time, will it? Is this going to be included in your reports?”

“One has to exercise discretion,” said the Colonel. “Otherwise everybody at Geneva would be after the job. Republics would be breaking out all over the place.”

“I wonder if you do this sort of thing because you like it, or because the League makes you?”

“Geneva expects every man to do his duty,” he said tenderly.

From the distant cathedral came the boom of midnight, followed by small tinny chimes tinkling in various quarters of the town.

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“Those little churches had really quite forgotten the time,” said Nyla, “but as soon as the big one shouted twelve o’clock they all hurried to pretend they knew it too.”

“I wish they wouldn’t make such a point of it. There oughtn’t to be any time in a place like Illyria. Nothing but eternity, like this.”

“Mention it to the League,” suggested Nyla happily. “Darling, you can do anything. You *are* a fairy prince.”

The Colonel seemed troubled. Perhaps he remembered that at midnight fairy princes turn back into disinherited cadets, coaches of state into pumpkins. Fairy tales have so many disquieting analogies.

The slow current had drifted them round the North Tower, under the terrace balustrade. All that face of the house lay in thick shadow.

“Gene!” she whispered, clutching him in sudden panic. “What’s that? Look, over there on the parapet. Something white.”

“I don’t see anything,” said the Colonel. “Great place for a ghost, though. Surely this

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house ought to be haunted by Dukes with bullet holes in them. Or maybe the ghost of the florin.”

He pushed the boat off from under the wall into midstream, where they had a wider view.

“Jove, there *is* something there.”

Far along the terrace hovered a glint of white, apparently suspended above the ground. It was small enough truly to be the wraith of the florin. Then it disappeared. There was a splash and a faint choked cry.

“Gene, it’s the little girl! Hurry, hurry.”

The old punt was unwieldy in the dark. The rowlocks were missing, and though each seized an oar their desperate paddling only succeeded in twirling the craft in a wild swing which brought them bumping back against the wall. The Colonel hastily scrambled up the rough stonework. He would have fallen but Nyla boosted him fiercely from behind. He vaulted the balustrade and ran along the terrace. Now he could see a small white commotion in the water. With a leap he cleared the parapet and dived in.

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It was indeed Mildred. Nervous excitement, the cocktail, the uproars of the orchestra and a lively indigestion had made sleep spasmodic. Her dreams were all of the brilliant elevator man who was going to take her promenading by the moat in the morning. She had been put in a room by herself. Thence, after restless rollings in a vast canopied bed, she had eventually sallied out in an almost somnambulist trance which was half fatigue and half the uneasiness of colic. A rearward stair brought her unobserved to the postern door onto the terrace. Here, refreshed by the clear night, her extravagant and erring spirit desired one more tiptoe along the stone balustrade.

With considerable difficulty the Colonel held up the strangling figure while Nyla, groping along the wall, pulled the punt toward them and shouted for help. The dress uniform of Dalmatian admirals, as fortunately few of them have learned, makes an ill swimming suit. The Colonel was heavily sogged by his golden festoonery. He swam laboriously, grasping

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Mildred by her armpits; her nightgown had parted and gone adrift in his first attempts to seize her. Eventually they got her into the punt. The dripping Colonel scaled the wall, hoisted up the half-drowned child, and hauled Nyla afterward, leaving their shallop to drift where it would. Mildred, after groaning faintly, suddenly ejected several pints of moat and began to bawl lustily.

"I wanted to see the elevator man," she screamed. "Take me away from this rotten hotel."

Her slippery nakedness, shining skinnily in the dim light, was pathetic and yet irritating; the Colonel, exhausted, sat panting in a trickle, more than half prepared to lay a tingling palm on the chubs of her small bottom.

By this time the terrace was filling with all varieties of negligee. Romsteck, who had apparently made no move to retire, was the only presentable figure. Frau Quackenbush, who had seen her daughter safe in bed only half an hour earlier, came trailing ribbons with a scream of

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maternal dismay. The President sped out in a flannel nightshirt.

“Gott!” he cried. “Yet anodder attack on Frau Quackenbush?”

The ambassador was shouting inquiry from the bedroom window. He was beginning to wonder whether the post at Farniente might not prove too vivacious for a man of mature years.

“Mildred fell into the moat,” explained Nyla to Frau Quackenbush, soothing the sobbing child, and trying to dry her with a handkerchief. “The Colonel saved her.”

“De child,” yelled Guadeloupe to the anxious parent at the window. “He fell drunk in de moat. But not dead drunk,” he hastened to reassure. “Gott be tank, I feared it was anodder case for de billiards table.”

Herr Quackenbush appeared in pyjamas with a blanket, and Frau Innsbruck with a bottle of the 1865 cognac, the universal specific. In the middle of an admiring circle Mildred was given a hasty friction, then blanketed and carried off.

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“That bed was too lonely, I couldn’t sleep,” she wailed. “I want to go to bed with the elevator man.”

“You drink de cognac, Colonel,” said the excited President. “Happy days, my interpretations save from de perils of de moat.”

“My dear sir,” said the ambassador, “obviously I cannot thank you for what you’ve done. But if there’s any way I can show my gratitude—anythi sir, anything. You have only to name it.”

“De gustomary ting,” said the Colonel, rising from his pool, “vould be to ask you de hand of your daughter in marriage. I spare you dat sacrifice. But dere is von little ting.”

“Name it, sir, name it.”

“You are here, Herr Ambassador, as blenipotentiary to negotiate de debt. I overhear de Herr Leutz say dat von million florin a year, blus de interests at von per cent, is Illyria’s extreme gapacity to pay. Vill you promise me, on vord of honour, no matter vat happen, not to ask more dan dat?”

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Herr Quackenbush was a little taken aback at this injection of politics into a sentimental scene. He paused an instant. The Colonel improved the moment with a sigh, expressive of bodily weakness and perils encountered. He wrung a small cascade of drippings from his dismal finery.

“By God sir, I promise.”

“Goot!” said the Colonel calmly. “Remember de terms of de promise, vatefer happen. Ve half witnesses here. Besides, a gompact made among gentlemen in deir nightshirts must be specially sacred. Now I tink I go change.”

He kissed Nyla’s hand with a gallant air and went trickling across the terrace.

“Mr. President,” said Herr Quackenbush, “if you sent that man to Washington as your minister you’d have the United States paying *you* the debt in six months.”

XVI

ONE great advantage of stone stairs is that they don't creak. So the Colonel reflected, once more in his brown tweeds, as he cautiously felt his way down the iron hand-rail. He was in stocking feet, groping through the moonlight. He sat on the bottom step to put on his shoes. While doing so he had a sudden fright. The major domo emerged noiselessly from shadow.

“Don't you ever go to bed, Romsteck?”

“I was expecting you, sir. Is there anything I can do?”

“A clean handkerchief, perhaps. I think I caught a little cold in the moat.”

“Here you are, sir. Also I've got some dry money for you. I take it that the bills got wet. Wet money seems suspicious, somehow, sir.”

“Jove, you think of everything. I dare say you're just rolling in coin.”

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“Not at all, sir. I took this from Herr Quack-enbush’s trousers, while he was on the terrace in his nightclothes.”

“That won’t do. I can’t rob the man.”

“Certainly not, sir. If you will kindly return the wet ones I’ll dry them in the kitchen and put them back in his pocket in the morning.”

“You’re an excellent fellow, Romsteck,” said the Colonel rising. “Well, no loitering.”

“Beg pardon, sir, but are you really leaving?”

“Bet your life I am; and pronto; it’s one o’clock now.”

“Look here, sir, you stay. We’ll fix that M.P. somehow. You’re just what we need. We could get up a revolution and make you Grand Duke. Begging your pardon, sir, but all the chambermaids were suggesting it.”

“Delightful of you, old son. No, that splash in the moat cleared my head. I was getting a bit fantastic. That’s my trouble, they say I’m not quite right in my head.”

“None of the Grand Dukes ever were. That’s why we were all so happy.”

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“I’ve got to beat it. You see, Romsteck, I’m not what you suppose.”

“No, sir. I never supposed you were.”

“You’re charming at dialogue, but there isn’t much time. Remember I’ve got to go all the way round through the subway.”

“Through the passage?” said Romsteck, startled. “You know about that? But you can’t go that way, that’s where we’ve got the M.P. locked up.”

“Sure,” said the imperturbable Colonel. “He’s going with me. You don’t think I’m going to leave him behind to poison my memory with the Fräulein, do you?”

“Don’t go!” appealed the major domo. “I don’t mind, sir, if you are a bit mad. It doesn’t matter. It’ll do us good. Please, sir, for the good of the country, don’t leave us to the mercy of all these perfectly sane officials. The League of Nations will put it all over us without you to take care of things.”

“Damn it, man,” cried the Colonel in vexation, “you’re as mad as I am. Do you suppose

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I want to go, to leave the nubile Nyla and the 1865 cognac and all the fun? I don't want to make you morbid, but I'm not here from the League of Nations or the Department of Public Safety or anyone else. I'm just on my own, and the game's up. Come, we're wasting time."

"Very good, sir. I was afraid you couldn't be persuaded. I made up a little packet of sandwiches for you, and a flask of the 1865."

Romsteck handed him a parcel from a table in the hall, then lit a candle, and they set off for the cellar.

XVII

SERGEANT HIGGINS had had a trying evening. The cellar of the north tower is very nearly beneath the ballroom, and he sat there, angry and perplexed, listening to the clamour of music overhead. Disarmed, his gag was removed and he was given supper and a bottle of excellent vintage, but a couple of stout footmen made it plain that any attempt at escape or disturbance could mean the renewal of bonds and bandage. He had all the American doughboy's disgust at being shut out from any merrymaking in which the other sex participated; and through a small ventilator grating high in his prison he was teased by feminine laughters and light whisperings on the terrace. But philosophy and fatigue presently overcame indignation. He helped himself to an extra bottle of the Burgundy

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stacked in a corner, and fell asleep on a cot-bed against the wall. Thus he was spared, later, the amorous chords of the mouth-organ, which would have puzzled him. The Colonel's moating song was only a few feet from Sergeant Higgins's ear when the punt drifted past the tower.

He was too heavily asleep to stir when a key chirped in the rusty lock and the Colonel and Romsteck entered. Cointreau shook him and he sat up confusedly.

"Well, here we are," remarked the Colonel genially, standing over him with the candle. "The angel of the Lord appears in a vision to the Military Police."

"Aw, quit your kidding. Let a fella sleep," grunted the drowsy M. P. and fell back on his pallet.

"That's no way to greet the angel of the annunciation," observed Cointreau, joggling him again. This not availing, he tilted a few drops of hot candle-grease onto the slumberer's neck, which effectually startled him.

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“Buck up,” said the Colonel. “Tidings of great joy. Here’s the lost sheep, crawling right into your bosom. What are you doing in the wine cellar?”

“Search me, buddy,” said the sergeant peevishly. “I’d like to get my hooks on that bird in the Knights of Pythias clothes. He got me railroaded into this jug.—Who’n hell are you?”

“I’m the guy you’re looking for.”

“The hell you are! Wait a minute, where’s my papers——”

“Here,” said the Colonel, taking a pulpy document from his pocket. “I’m sorry it got wet. It was the fault of that Knight of Pythias.”

The M.P. examined the paper and then held up the candle to look at the Colonel.

“Your hesitation is natural,” said Cointreau. “The photo doesn’t do me justice.”

“I guess it’s you. Well, you’re under arrest, see?”

“Romsteck, it’s a pity you don’t savvy

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English," said the Colonel, turning graciously to the major domo. "Here, you've been such a sportsman I'll read you the indictment. The description's quite flattering. *Eugene F. Connolly, commissioned first lieutenant —th Infantry.*—I'm afraid I have no right to the name of Cointreau. I chose it because it's my favourite liqueur. It smells like orange blossoms. —*Cited for gallantry*—here, we can skip that—*Regimental interpreter five foot eleven, 170 pounds, birthmark*—Come, that's too intimate —*curly auburn hair, blue eyes, athletic and agile escaped from Rehabilitation Hospital suffering from shell-shock, psychoneurotic hysteria and dementia jocosa*—devilish pedantic, these Freudian terminologies, Romsteck—*obsessional fantasies regarding the League of Nations not be misled by gentlemanly manner and humorous conduct of the patient mentally irresponsible, pathological case of great severity.*—Think of their pursuing a man half way across Europe because he's got dementia jocosa."

"That's what the world's come to, sir,"

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Romsteck replied gloomily. "If a man laughs too much they think he's crazy. Consider a person in my position. I haven't dared to smile in thirty years."

"Ah well," said the Colonel, "I regret that there are also more serious items that I have omitted."

"I wish the Grand Duke could have known you," said Romsteck. "He always insisted that the Americans have no sense of humour."

"Come, sergeant, we'll be going."

"Now? Whyn't we tear off a little sleep, Lootenant?"

"Nix, old son. Sleep is for the innocent and easy spirit. You and I are going to take the companionable sobvay, unhouseled, disappointed, unannealed. Away, away, charioted by Bacchus and his pards."

"You're the guy, all right," remarked the sergeant. "Plumb cuckoo."

"Romsteck, you'll have to say goodbye to the President for me. I fear he will be distressed. I shall always remember him as I saw him last,

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in his manly nightshirt. By the way, here's a souvenir for you. My credentials from Geneva."

He handed over a small scarlet card stamped in gold, which Romsteck fingered curiously.

"The top of an American cigarette box," the Colonel explained. "The most official-looking thing I know. A friend of mine got into the Treaty Signing at Versailles with one of those.—Come on, sport. Back to the nut college. This way to the egress, as Barnum used to say."

He turned toward the hearth.

"I don't like it, that's the Gawd's truth," said Sergeant Higgins uncertainly. "Goin' out in dark night with a crazy man, me without my gun——"

"I say Yes," cried the Colonel fiercely. "Don't be misled by humorous conduct of patient. Get a move on, curse you."

He picked up the poker, to reach the spring of the passage-way; the M.P., misinterpreting this as an offensive move, leaped at him and they grappled. The door behind them opened with a squeak of ancient hinges.

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“What’s the trouble?” said Nyla.

She wore a blue wrapper and carried a candle.

“Gene!” she cried sharply. “Is something wrong?”

The men stood apart. Higgins gaped amazement at this vision of loveliness. Cointreau and Romsteck fidgeted uneasily.

“I heard talking down here, I was afraid someone was ill. Gene, what are you doing? Why are you all dressed?” She ran forward, seizing his arm.

“Damn,” murmured the Colonel with feeling. There was a silence while Nyla studied him anxiously.

“Your pardon, Fräulein,” said Romsteck. “The Colonel has had an urgent summons from the League.”

“Oh,” she cried, “and this is the courier to take your reports. I had such a fright. I was afraid you were going.”

“I am going,” he said. “I’m sorry, I didn’t want you to know. I—I guess they’re going to send me to America.—I’ve had an offer from

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a publisher to write my memoirs," he added, with a wretched attempt at jauntiness.

"To America? Gene, let me come with you. Gene darling, let me. I'll go *anywhere*. I don't mind roughing it. You mustn't go to a place like that without someone to take care of you. I'll work for the League, I'll do anything."

"Say, Lootenant," put in the embarrassed M.P., "I didn't know there was a skirt in this business. If you'll excuse me, I'll step outside with the janitor."

The Colonel at that moment had no eyes or ears—or arms—for anyone but Nyla. Romsteck beckoned, and the sergeant followed him to the door.

"You'll be O.K. in here, Lootenant. Take your time. I'll wait for you at the top of the stairs."

"Gene, you'll write to me?"

"Of course I will, darling."

"Do you *have* to go? Is the American republic in trouble too? Fix it up and come back

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soon. Don't get to be too much like an American."

"Honey, I'm sorry, I've got to tell you. I *am* an American."

"I always knew there was something strange about you," she said softly. "Never mind. Come back soon and attend to the roots. Let me have one good look, so I shan't forget."

She held up the candle, which gave him opportunity to glance at his wrist-watch.

"Hullo," he said. "Where's friend Higgins? Well, never mind. So much the better."

He climbed a chair and poked up the visor in the coat of arms. The passage-way opened.

"Gene, must you go that way? It looks so dark and nasty. Shall I call your courier?"

"No," he said grimly. "He had his chance. Don't let Herr Quackenbush back out of his promise about the debt."

"Gene, I'll study, so we can talk American together."

"Auf wiedersehen, Schätzchen!"

"Gootbye, gootbye," she cried into the

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tunnel in her pretty accent. "Oh Gene, it vas pleasure to have meeted you!"

And she burst into tears.

* * * * * * *

"Daddy," she said to Herr Guadeloupe at breakfast the next morning. "How much postage is needed on letters to Geneva?"

T H E E N D



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