

ers told him that it was also hopeless.

"I am here to suggest," he said, "that whoever you elect to the Regency, you do not elect His Highness the Arch-duke Cyril of Wolfnsaden."

The Freiherr smiled faintly.

"Doubtless you will not confine yourself to a negative suggestion," he said, in his tones of irony. "We should like to know definitely and authoritatively whom we are to elect?"

The sarcasm struck Drechsler like a blow in the face.

"We should like Fritz of Friedrichsheim," he said; "but we will not have Cyril of Wolfnsaden."

"Will not?" repeated the Freiherr, with uplifted eyebrows. "Perhaps if your insolent demand was backed by some suspicion of an argument—"

"Argument!" cried Drechsler, losing all patience, "the House of Representatives will give you two hundred and forty. The people of Grimland will give you six millions. We are living in the twentieth century, not the sixteenth. A popularly elected government, such as I at this moment represent, can deal with a man; we cannot deal with a butcher!"

The last word, uttered in a voice of thunder, was followed by a deathly silence, a silence that was infinitely more eloquent than the howls of protest he had anticipated. It was the silence of hate, of affronted majesty, of narrow, bitter, controlled minds contemplating an ardent and irresponsible one.

Drechsler stood his ground bravely before the carved faces and the basilisk eyes, but despite his bold front and unshaken determination there was a sinking feeling in his vitals, as if he had lost blood in the contest of wills.

When the Freiherr spoke again, he no longer condescended to face the Prime Minister.

"Our petitioner has used an offensive expression of a personage closely related to the Royal House. I extremely regret, my lords, that it is in my house that your ears have been so grossly offended."

Drechsler strode to the door. He was himself again—a resolute minister dealing with a bevy of titled anachronisms. He tried one final effort.

"If you will not have Fritz of Friedrichsheim," he said, "give us an honest, human, and enlightened ruler. There are others with claim to the Regency-General von Bilderbaum, my lord of Grauberg, the Baron of Hueffen."

"A compromise, my lord!" cried Tortonform eagerly. "A wise compromise—Grauberg or Bilderbaum."

The Freiherr's face was like a mask.

"A compromise," he said, "is the result of the interplay of equal forces. Herr Drechsler—"

But the Prime Minister had gone, slamming the door behind him with all the violence of an outraged social democrat.

In the silence that followed his departure the sound of the bell was again heard.

"His Worship the Mayor of Weidenbruck," announced the butler.

The Freiherr sighed wearily, but gave the necessary permission for his admittance.

If the Prime Minister had seemed a strange figure at such a gathering, Herr Neumann, the Mayor, was infinitely more so. A little plump man, in black broadcloth, with a coat that was too long in the sleeves, and trousers that were too short in the leg, he not only looked an exceedingly common person, but he lacked the touch of strength and determination which redeemed the statesman from insignificance.

"Well, Herr Neumann," began the Freiherr, with a touch of impatience, "what is it?"

The Mayor fumbled in the tails of his ill-fitting frock-coat and produced a large scroll. Then he wiped his forehead with a red handkerchief, for his nervousness was pitiful.

"The Town Council has passed a resolution, my lords," he began.

"They seem to do little else," sneer-



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