

heroine of a ribald tale which would set mirth holding its sides in camp and tavern, would be to lower the dignity of Podina itself. She must not do this. Duty stood as plain as a beacon on a hill top. Yet she was a woman as well as a Duchess. Not for the first time did the woman in her point along the flowery by-path which led from the road she had elected to follow. It was pleasant to look along that path, and dream of all the beauties that must be upon it as it ran its long journey through life; but she had refused to be tempted. To-day, now that she had put herself beyond temptation, the longing to tread that flowery way came with renewed force; and then she remembered the Elector's letter. She read it again, understanding it clearly now, seeing all the subtle craft in it. The Elector knew the truth, and with feigned frankness and good-will advised her to take the road he had always schemed that she should take. He knew more of Savaria than she did, more of Savaria's Prince probably. He was counting on love to make her subservient to her husband, knowing that Prince Maurice would be a tool in his hands. It was his subtle plan to absorb both Podina and Savaria presently. The thought strengthened her. He should have the Duchess to deal with, not a weak woman. And then came another question. Was Prince Maurice so weak a man as this arch schemer imagined? She did not answer the question, she could not, but she lost herself in memories. She saw the scarlet and green figure which had ridden beside her through the forest; she saw the trooper with the bandaged head watchful on the edge of the dais; in fancy she saw the jester guarding her door that no one might pass it to do her harm. Memory seemed to halt here. She did not think of her interview with

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