The Mummer's Throne

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18.

Something like a frown knitted the pale face of the priest. His skin was white and drawn as if from some long illness. It was only the steady gleam of his dark eyes which showed that occasionally the man fought for mastery with the priest and anchorite.

"You ought to have come here be-

The King caught his lip between his teeth and bit it passionately. He might have exploded violently, only he caught the wounded look in Floringel's even

zel's eyes.

"Lead the way," he said. "We can talk of these matters afterwards. This is my bride."

The priest's pale, hard face soft-ened as he laid his hands gently on Nita's head and blessed her. It seemed a strange and weird dream to seemed a strange and weird dream to the girl afterwards. In a dull, muffled way she heard the hollow ring of her own footsteps upon the bare pavement, she saw the little chapel with its stone-hewn walls picked out feebly by a pair of candles burning on the altar. She could see figures masked and cowled in the carved oak stalls. She started presently when an unseen organ opened its silver throat, and the whole place was flooded with some rapt melody. She was not acting now. She stood there white and pale, trembling and frightened, and yet full of a fearful joy. In white and pale, trembling and fright-ened, and yet full of a fearful joy. In a kind of mist the long, lean, black figure of the priest stood out; he was saying words which to her were strange and yet oddly familiar. And presently the King of Montenana had her shaking hand in his, a plain gold ring encircled her finger. . . It was all over now. The irrevocable step was taken, and the unseen organ was taken, and the unseen organ broke out into a joyous chant which was like the tread of armed men coming back after some glorious victory. Then the mist faded away, and the whole situation flashed upon the young queen.

"Let me be the first to offer my congratulations," Father Bentos said. "Permit me to-

He paused and held up his hand for silence, for there was a sudden thundering knocking on the chapel door and hoarse cries outside. With a dignity all his own, at a sign from Florizel, the priest threw back the heavy doors, and half a score of men entered. At the head of these, fully clad in uniform with his sword at his hip, came General Rutzstin. His great grizzled head was thrown back. his face was pale beyond the whiteness of his recent illness, a great grim

rage blazed in his eyes.
"What is the meaning of this?" he

demanded.

King Fritz confronted him. Here was the King, stern and hard and full of courage, a dignified picture enough now. It was only at that moment Nita realised that here was a ruler indeed. indeed.

indeed.

"That is precisely what I was going to ask you," the King said sternly.

"What is the meaning of this? How dare you, a subject of mine, intrude in this insolent manner? But I am forgetting myself, general. Let me present to your Majesty my faithful subject, General Count Rutzstin. General, your Queen."

The general bowed to his sword hilt.

hilt.
"I am your humble servant," he said hoarsely. "Oh, this is indeed a great day for Montenana!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

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