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ing and skating and hunting the wolf, and in my manhood, whatever my follies, I have never neglected the vigorous sports of the highlands. I am tough, Charlotte, and I am not easily hurt."

"Then you are angry."

"No, I am not angry. I am depressed."

"Why?"

"Because I am afraid."

"Again, why?" demanded the ex-Queen.

"Because I met a man who was not afraid of me."

"Explain."

Briefly the Arch-duke related the episode of the Council Chamber.

"I tell you, Charlotte," he concluded, "there is something uncanny about that fellow, who looked death in the face without flinching. He has a destiny, and knows it."

"Who was he? What was he like?"

"I do not know who he was, for he refused all information. But his face is like a woman's, save that it has inflexible determination as well as infernal beauty. He has a low brow sleek black hair, and aquiline nose, and eyes like stars of fate."

"Fritz of Friedrichsheim!" exclaimed Charlotte.

"No," said Cyril, shaking his head, "it could not have been Fritz of Friedrichsheim."

"But I feel sure it was," persisted the ex-Queen.

"And I am certain it was not."

"Why?" maintained the woman.

"Because, for one thing, I told Major Lacherberg to deal with him yesterday, and when Lacherberg deals with a man, that man does not perform a deed of vigorous heroism on the following day. Moreover, Fritz, whom I have heard of, though never seen, has been reported to me as a young rake, a lover of dice and cards and late hours, a woman's man, a drinker of German wines and French brandy."

"Well?"

"The man who smiled at my revolver was not a rake. He was something—Gott! I know not what he was—but he was something greater than that, and I am afraid of him."

"Nevertheless it was Fritz of Friedrichsheim," persisted Charlotte. "Look," she said, opening her album at Fritz's photograph, and keeping her right hand over the superscription. "Was that the man?"

"Yes, that's the fellow," admitted Cyril in astonishment.

Charlotte took her hand from the signature.

"Teufel!" exclaimed Cyril. "So von Lacherberg has not dealt with him after all. I tell you that young man has a destiny. I am——"

A knock at the door interrupted him.

"Major von Lacherberg," announced the old waiting-woman.

The Major stood in the doorway, a stiff, angular figure, rigidly at the salute, a look of interrogation on his wooden features.

"The Arch-duke has been elected to the Regency," said the ex-Queen, as if in answer to his mute inquiry.

"Congratulations, Highness," said the soldier, dropping his right arm and advancing two paces into the room.

"One moment, Lacherberg," said Cyril sternly. "Being informed that a certain young man, the Baron of Friedrichsheim, put forward some absurd pretensions to the Regency, I gave you orders to deal with him. I have irrefutable evidence, into which it is not necessary for the moment to go, that he has not been dealt with."

"I forced a quarrel on him, Highness," said the dragoon with a shrug of the shoulders. "I put an open insult on him yesterday in the public room of the Concordia, but he refused to fight."

"Impossible!" cried Cyril. "Fritz is no coward. What does it mean?"

"It means, Highness, that Fritz of Friedrichsheim is taking no risks."

The Arch-duke had difficulty in suppressing a shudder; the expression so exactly interpreted his worst fear.

"I have seen some plucky things in my life," went on von Lacherberg. "I have seen men face certain death with a jest on their lips. I have seen men lead a forlorn hope with the smile

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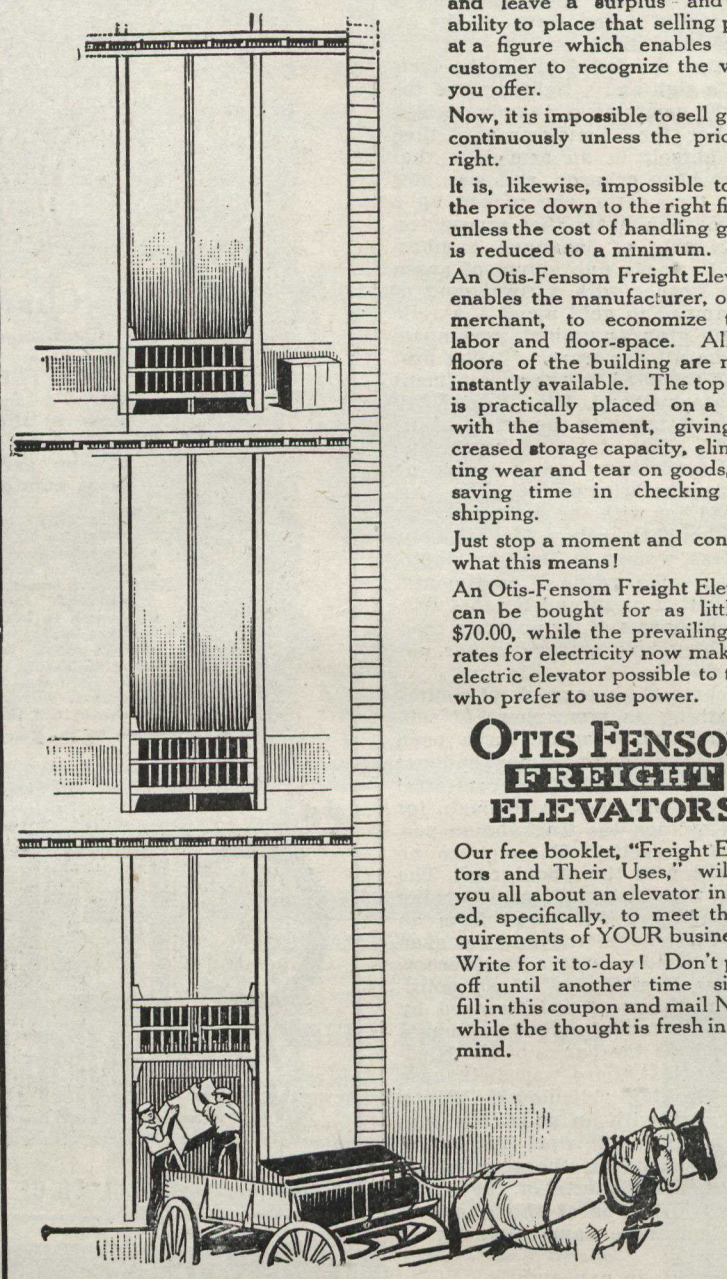

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