

pestuous humour," said Hans. "It's a comfort to know that the worst storm must have an ending. Besides, she may like the cut of your figure and the lack of grace in those square legs of yours. They do not please me, but you can never tell what will please a woman."

The landlord looked at the big trooper, vaguely wondering whether he had treated him with sufficient respect. Truly he must be a person of distinction to speak of Her Grace in this familiar manner. The landlord had never seen the Duchess, but strange stories concerning her had found their way even to the seclusion of the Three Shields. The devil's own temper was in her, said one report, so that it was no easy matter to be in her company; yet other gossip declared her beauty to be so great that a score of princes in Christendom were ready to be at one another's throats because of her. Until this moment the tales had not interested the landlord, but now there was an unpleasant trembling in his knees.

"I'll tell them in the house," he said in an awed tone. "I'll do my best. Perhaps, sir, you'll explain it is my best, bad as it may seem. Heaven grant she's found some sort of a fool to put her in a good humour."

Laughter followed the landlord as he ambled nervously into the house, and then Gustav held up his hand.

"Horses on the road," said Hans, and he began looking to his dress, pulling it this way and that and stiffening his figure to fill it adequately.

The cavalcade was rapidly approaching, and a trooper, riding in advance, dismounted hastily at the entrance to the enclosure.

"Is he found?" Gustav asked.

"No," was the answer.