



DIGEST.

Weidenbruck is the capital city of Grimland and the residence of Karl XXII., who is ill unto death. Fritz, Baron of Friedrichsheim, the finest monarchist in the realm, is wasting his time with "women and wine." When the young king comes to the throne, Fritz joins with Max Stein, General Meyer, and Herr Saunders to maintain the succession. About this time Mrs. Perowne and her daughter, Phoebe, arrive in Weidenbruck and meet Fritz, who describes himself as Herr Lugner. Saunders intercepts a letter to the Ex-Queen of Grimland which reveals a plot. The plot is the concoction of Cyril of Wolfsnaden who aspires to the Regency, and by probably violent methods. Stein, Meyer and Saunders plan to circumvent this by working to have Fritz, Baron of Friedrichsheim, promoted to the Regency. Fritz consents to the plot.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

"ZUMMAT?" repeated Fritz, in some mystification.

"Zummat" is West Country dialect for "something."

"Ah! I see; excellent!"

"I hail from the West of England," Phoebe pursued. "If you have studied English history you will remember that it was from the West Country that the old sea-dogs sailed forth in Elizabeth's time to singe the King of Spain's beard."

"A country of brave men! I can well believe it."

"Why?" asked Phoebe.

"Because a country that produces brave men invariably produces beautiful women."

Miss Perowne's eyes glowed a solemn rebuke. "You persist in gallantry despite my objection," she said.

"Your reasons for objecting seemed so thin," he protested. "A motto which says 'Do zummat'—"

"Don't you see? Do something! Be something! Don't be a mere doll, an empty-headed piece of china with a draping of artistic chiffon and a host of sawdust-stuffed admirers. It is easy for men to work, to vote, to oil the machinery that makes the world go round. It is very difficult for women, and I want to help to make it easier."

"That is a fine ambition!"

"You say so, but I cannot believe that you think so."

Fritz was silenced for a moment. Then he said quite simply:

"You are right. I am insincere. I have really no views on the subject. In Grimland they would be out of place."

"Surely a truth is a truth the world over."

"I think not. What is a truism in London is a lie in Weidenbruck. Have you brought your motto with you to Grimland? Does it hang over your bed at the Concordia?"

"No, I left it in England."

"You were wise. While you are in Grimland give up the idea of doing 'zummat.' Confine your activities to ice-skating and skiing parties. They are more healthful. Adopt as your motto—'Dolce far niente.'"

"That is the one you have adopted for yourself?"

"I?" he cried lightly. "Yes, I do nothing, I am nobody, and I exist. If I were a somebody, an ambitious, active-minded man I should probably cease to exist. That would be deplorable. But I see Mrs. Perowne approaching us, and that reminds me that I have a luncheon-party at half-past twelve, for which I must on no account be late. A thousand thanks, Miss Perowne, for partnering me in that delightful waltz. Good-bye."

"Does Herr Lugner skate better than he fights?" asked Mrs. Perowne with a shrewd side-glance at her daughter, as they skated back to the pavilion.

"He skates quite perfectly," was the reply. "I should say he was an adept at most utterly useless accomplishments."

There was more than one luncheon-

party at Weidenbruck that day, but the most important was taking place in the aristocratic thoroughfare known as the Roderich-strasse.

In the dining-room of an old stone house quite a number of gentlemen were eating and drinking heartily, and incidentally doing a fair amount of talking.

At the head of the table sat an elderly personage, very thin and upright, with close-cropped white hair, a short, pointed beard, and one of those high-bridged noses that so often accompany a domineering temperament. The rest of the company was composed of men of varying ages, and though they differed widely in physique and complexion, some vague suggestion of a type pervaded the gathering. They gave as a whole no great indication of intellectuality, no tinge of the artistic temperament, no suggestion of business capacity. And yet, if what they lacked was obvious, it was equally plain that they were not common men. Perhaps the room itself gave, as well as anything could, the keynote to their pervading type. It was a lofty, well-proportioned chamber, panelled in richly carved walnut from frieze to skirting. The leaded lights of the heavily transomed windows were colored and diversified with the quarterings of innumerable coats of arms. The great stone mantelpiece was an affair of pompous and flamboyant masonry, expressing with heraldic redundancy the dignity of the house it adorned. Round the sombre walls was ranged a number of portraits of men and women arrayed in the costumes of different periods, but breathing one and all the same atmosphere of cold pride and self-sufficiency that animated the white-haired old gentleman who presided over the banquet.

The house was the house of the Freiherr of Kraag, and the gentlemen who graced his board were the inner circle of the Rathsherren.

The Freiherr himself was an individual whose remote ancestor had won his patent of nobility for the fearless defence of the city of Kraag against a vast host of invading Turks. Since that extremely early date the family had existed calmly and decorously in a massive castle on the outskirts of Kraag, adding the present mansion in the Roderich-strasse to their feudal dignity towards the latter end of the sixteenth century. The history of the other herren was equally picturesque. They represented the blue blood of Grimland. Their pedigrees were long, and their quarterings innumerable. They were the Rajpoots of the State. They condescended to live in the world, but not to do the work of the world. Nobility forbade, and circumstances did not compel. They had their vineyards and their tilth, their pine-forests and their prerogatives, and they clung to them with the same praiseworthy tenacity that the Freiherr's ancestor had clung to the battle-swept ramparts of Kraag.

"To use one's privileges," the Freiherr said, "is often to arouse indignation. To forego one's privileges is inevitably to excite contempt."

A young man with broad shoulders and a big frame—the Count of Tortonform—answered his host's dictum.

"As we desire neither to invite indignation nor contempt," he said, "it would be wisest to exercise our legal rights in the best interests of the country."

"We are here not to consider the interests of the country, but the interests of the Rathsherren," was the President's cynical retort.

"The two should be identical, my lord," responded the young man.

"They probably are, my dear Tor-

tenform," said the Lord of Kraag amiably, "but it is our immediate interests which are under discussion. We have been much threatened of late, and it behooves us in electing a Regent to choose someone who will give us the full support of his authority."

"In other words, Cyril of Wolfsnaden," said Count Ernest von Tortonform.

The Freiherr smiled tolerantly. "His name certainly occurs in connection with this important post," he said. "He is, I have reason to suppose, well disposed towards our order."

"He is distrusted and feared by the people," maintained the other. "If we elect him to the Regency we excite the hostility of the Town Council, the House of Representatives, and every popularly elected body in Grimland."

"Undoubtedly," admitted the elder man, "but to shrink from consequences is no part of our nobility."

A ROUND of genteel applause greeted this statement. A deal of wine was being absorbed, white wine from the valley of the Niederkessel, rough red wine from the hillsides of the Wodenthal, maraschino from Sebenico in Dalmatia. Whatever else they lacked the Rathsherren were not deficient in stubbornness, and their native tenacity was not modified by the generous fare of their lordly host.

"My lords," said Tortonform as the murmurs died down, "we are all willing to do right irrespective of consequences; but I submit that the election of Cyril of Wolfsnaden would not be the right action, and that if it is dictated solely by a conscious need of protection for our order it is not a very brave action."

"Whom then do you suggest as Regent?" asked the Freiherr quickly, for Tortonform's thrust had gone home. "I suggest Fritz of Friedrichsheim."

"A youth!"

"A young man of great promise, and one devoted to the dynasty."

"A popular hero, my dear Tortonform," sneered the Freiherr. "I distrust popular heroes. They are too like popular medicines—they promise much and perform little. It is true he is a noble, the equal of the proudest of us in lineage; but he is too contaminated with socialistic and fantastic theories. Had he been sounder in his views he might have become one of us, when death made the last gap in our ranks."

"We should have been richer for his inclusion," said Tortonform beneath his breath.

Then a flat-featured man with a yellow beard spoke.

"I think our good Count of Tortonform has learned too much from his English friend Herr Saunders," he said. "What might be wise in a highly developed and democratic state like England would be very foolish in a less advanced nationality. We shall shortly have our formal meeting in the Strafeburg, when all members will be present, and I have an idea we shall elect a man of maturer years and sounder ideals than the beardless Baron of Friedrichsheim."

The enthusiasm and applause which greeted this declaration was prolonged and rather noisy. The Rathsherren were mellowing.

As the buzz of applause died down the clang of the front-door bell was distinctly audible, and a moment later the Freiherr's butler stood in the dining-room doorway.

"Herr Drechsler desires to see your lordship," announced the menial.

"Herr Drechsler! The Prime Minister!" said the Freiherr, frowning. "Show him in."

"Herr Drechsler came into the smoky, fume-laden atmosphere of the



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