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with interest. I have the honor to thank you."

"Your Highness the Arch-duke, I have the pleasure of saying to your face what I recently said behind your back; not that you are a villain—that would be indeed a platitude—but that you are a cad."

"Gentlemen, auf Wiedersehn!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

One Possessed.

SAUNDERS walked swiftly away from the Freiherr's house in the Roderick-strasse, but not because he feared pursuit. Neither was he congratulating himself very heartily on a hair-breadth escape. He had not, in truth, been very highly alarmed under the muzzle of the Arch-duke's revolver. He was reasonably confident that Cyril would have missed him with his first barrel, and unreasonably confident that in that case Cyril would have been a dead man. Saunders was an optimist with a superb trust in his own physical and mental infallibility, and however irritating such people may be in times of peace they are invaluable assets in time of war. Just now he strode rapidly over the snowy pavements because it was necessary to harmonize his steps with the vigorous gait of his marching thoughts. Karl was a prisoner somewhere in the Krippe-Thor. Fritz, mishandled and senseless, had been sent to the same disreputable den. What was Meyer doing? Was Drechsler meeting boldness with equal boldness, or was he failing at the crisis, as some men with the best intentions are apt to fail, not from want of physical courage, but from pure lack of morale?

There was no suggestion of excitement in the streets. In fact, they were surprisingly empty. He turned into the Bahnhofstrasse, expecting here at any rate to meet with wayfarers and lighted cafes. To his astonishment the main thoroughfare was even more conspicuously empty than the side street. From the central line of iron standards hung the endless chain of white arc lights, but not a shop was lighted, not a vehicle was in the roadway, or a soul on the pavement. The solitude of the usually busy thoroughfare was abnormal, alarming almost, more subtly suggestive of tragic events than a crowded square or shouting citizens. Suddenly a patrol of Dragoons came trotting down the middle of the empty road.

Saunders' presence seemed to act on the soldiers as the view of a fox acts on huntsmen. The trot quickened to a gallop, and the troop bore down on him with a rush.

Saunders stood his ground, because it seemed to him the safest thing to do under the circumstances. When the Dragoons drew near, he held up his uninjured arm, and the men reined in their horses. "Saunders, by the powers!" cried the officer at the head of the patrol, who was no other than Nolda.

"I believe so," replied the Englishman, "though I fancied for the moment I was a stag at bay."

"Himmel! I'm glad you did not think to run. You'd have been shot or cut down for a certainty. It's dangerous being abroad to-night."

"So I am beginning to discover. May I ask why this excess of military zeal?"

"Orders."

"Whose orders?"

"Meyer's—Meyer's and Drechsler's. Martial law has been proclaimed. You know what that means."

"I have a rough idea. No crowds are allowed to assemble in the streets. After sunset one or more persons constitutes a crowd. I was perilously near constituting a crowd myself."

Nolda laughed, and then grew quickly serious again. "Go back to the Palace," he said. "We've had our hands forced, and are bound to be brutal. Cyril dodged us on his return from the Schlect Weg, and has gone to ground with his royal booty somewhere in the heart of the Morast. Fritz has been kidnapped, and Meyer has had a narrow escape."

"So much I know. What I want to learn is what our side has been doing." "A mighty lot—on paper," said

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