THE PRINCESS OF GRATZEN

By Louis Arthur Cunningham, Author of "Of These Three Loves," "Marionette," Etc.

CHAPTER XIV

The train whistled drearily and its light shone whitely through the darkness. The silent children clutching their little suitcases were shepherded on to the dingy train; then Meridel got on and finally Rudolph. There was the hiss of steam, the tinny clatter of milk cans, the shouts of the trainmen. In the coach were a few habitants a priest reading his breviary a half-dozen soldiers returning from leave.

"Where shall we go tonight ,Uncle Rudi?" It was the first question either of the children had asked since being told that they were leaving Philibert. They were not at all excited at the prospect of the journey; they had already traveled far too much for their years. They were repressed at saying good-bye to their little playmats. "We don't like going away It is so lovely at Philibert and old Florian said there would be snow any day now—"

"There is the snow," said Meridel. It had begun to swish against the pane, thick and driving.

"Oh!" said Rosine "And shall we have sleds and skis tomorrow? And will Roger come soon to take us up to the mountain? He said he owned a great toboggan —that's a long sled —and we could ride on it."

"Tomorrow we shall see" promised Meridel "Tonight we shall go to the inn of our good friend Jules Goujon Jto the Coq d'or."

"Oh, we shall see Emil and Magda!" Rosine sat up. "They will play for us. It will be nice. Are we nearly there?"

The white garment of the first heavy snow covered the city by the time the train reached the station. Pol Martin and Rosine ran ahead of their elders out into the street to feel the cool caress of the snowflakes on their ruddy cheeks to make snowballs and pelt each other with them until sternly called to order by Rudolph who loved the first sight of snow just as much as they did. He had been in Canada long enough to know that, though the snow is heartily condemned by almost everyone who has reached the age of disapproval there is never a man or woman who does not love the first few flakes falling slowly out of the gray sky and coverng the ugliness of earth.

"But it is lovely!" said Meridel, looking up at the lights on the mountain "I have never seen anything more beautiful. But it was made for Winter it was made to wear the white robe this country. How I should like to see the trees all covered with snow on the hills at Philibert!"

"You shall see them soon, Meridel." Rudolph did not like the city; the automobiles darting by soundlessly in the snow, the heedless, hurrying crowds. No one gave a second glance at the queer quartet —Meridel lovely as an angel in spite of her shabby clothes the two bright-eyed children, Rudolph, big tall and staid in bowler hat and fine black coat lined with beaver. No one cared about these poor exiles. Why should one give them a thought when half the world was in chains when hundreds of thousands might never again find the homes they had lost!

Rudolph piled them all on a street car and they rode warmly to the little lane down near the docks where Jules Goujon had settled, where the golden cock perched himself defiantly above the door and looked as if he might at any moment give voice to a strident cock-a-doodle-do

"There is the golden cock!" Pol Martin spied it first when the light of the street lamp and the brightness coming up from the taproom shone upon it. "Is it the same one he had in Gratzen Meridel? How did he bring it here?"

"Not the same one, I think," smiled Meridel. "But its brother perhaps. Come, my children. You are one of my children, Uncle Rudi."

"You are a good little mother, Meridel. Yes(I fear I am but a child in many things. Perhaps it is not too late to grow up."

"Oh, never, never grow up!" She squeezed his arm as they went down the steps which last, she remembered she had desecended with Roger Fabre. Where was Roger now? Where were so many loved ones, so many things beloved? Where were the snows of yesteryear?

Warm was their welcome at the Coq d'or. The loyalty and friendship and great-heartedness of Jules Goujon enveloped them all, shepherded them to the cozy fire in the parlor brought them coffee and cakes and wine.

"Stay with me tonight!" Jules stepped back when Meridel told him they would shelter with him until tomorrow. "Stay with me always. I have this big house —three floors. All warm. All furnished. My business is good here It is well here."

"The Baron Rudi," said Meridel, studiously avoiding Rudolph's imploring gaze, "has met with some little reverses and it may be that he will go to work."

"What matter! He is still the Baron de Morpin."

"Do you need a partner, Jules?" asked Rudolph miserably. "I have some money to invest."

"Partner! Jules Goujon a partner with the Baron Rudi de Mor—"

"Just Rudolph Morpin now, Jules. I can cook. I am an excellent waiter." He grinned. "I have a superb taste in food and wines —as you know."

"Then you will help me. We shall make the Coq d'or famous here as it was famous in Gratzen. We shall have here a little country of our own — we who are too old to become anything different. The little ones they will grow up to be Canadians. They will go to school and play with the other children. We shall be well. You will permit me to drink a toast to our well-being, to our happiness to our land and to Canada that has sheltered us?"

"Yes!" said Meridel.

"Yes!" said Rudi.

And solemnly the toast was drunk. Efil and Magda played for them and sang the folksongs they loved. They all joined in the singing —Jules's great bass, Rudloph's baritone, the sweet contralto of Meridel, the soprano voices of the little ones; and many passing in the street stopped to listen and to marvel

"What is all this?" asked one. "It is lovely music, but I do not know the language."

"Oh" said the cop on the corner, "a bunch of those people from some little country in Europe that Adolf swallowed up."

"Well they seem happy enough about it" said another. "More power to them."

Aye happy enough, but in the hearts of even the very youngest ones was an ache too deep for tears, a lost, wondering sensation, a ghost of fear, that made them clasp hands that made them thankful for the warmth of the room, the goodly fire, the stout stone walls and the sky where no death lurked.

Long after the children had gone wearily to bed Meridel, Princess of Gratzen, the Baron Rudi de Morpin and Jules Goujon of the Coq d'or, sat before the fire and talked of other days or fell silent and gazed into the glowing coals in the hearth only to see there the lost dreams and dear images the visions of things deemed solid as the hills that a breath had swept away .

"We have peace and rest and we have God," said Meridel softly. "We have so much to be thankful for. We have found a friend in you, Jules."

"Highness!"

"No more Jules." She smiled, stretched her arms. "I am Meridel de Morpin now. I begin a new life, and I am glad. I breathe a different air and it is like wine. Strang that in death there should be resurrection."

"Was it not always so?" said the baron.

(To Be Continued)

Hon. John Bracken Farmer's Spokesman

(The following sketch of Hon. John Bracken, newly elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, appeared in the Globe and Mail before the meeting of the Winnipeg convention. The objective light it throws on Canada's "Man of the hour" is interesting.)

In the last few days of July of 1922 three farmer-members of the Manitoba Legislature visited the president of the Manitoba Agricultural College. The professor-farmer shook his head. The men went away. They came back. The professor-farmer again said no. The third time he consented. That is how John Bracken, farmer, brilliant running half-back Premier of Manitoba for twenty years, undefeated in any election and the voice of the Prairie wheat farmer, became leader of the Farmers' Party and Prime Minister of his adopted Province.

A Bit of History.

Here is what had happened. At the end of the Great War revolt against the old parties swept across the prairies like a consuming fire. Sixty-six farm members under the banner of the newly formed Progressive Party swept into Ottawa. In Manitoba the Provincial election brought the farmers into office. And there they were with a slim majority, and no leader and no Premier. John Bracken had not run in that election. He had no more interest than that of any other citizen in elections. He was busy as head of the Manitoba Agricultural College. Had been for two years. And before that had been professor of field husbandry at the University of Saskatchewan for 10 years. In looking for a leader, and therefore a Premier, they picked on a man who had never belonged to any political association, had never had any party or election experience.

The wise fellows in the Opposition had a great time. This farmer would be a pushover. How could he govern a Province without the guile and experience in skulduggery that a politican must have?

Well, John Bracken fooled them. And he didn't do it by any card tricks or by turning corners fast. He set out to give the soundest administration that Manitoba had ever had. His interest in the farmer never flagged His crusading for reform remained with him. Always the Progressive, always keeping the little fellow before his mind's eye, he won election after election. In '27, in '32, in '36 and in '41. While Province after Province lost Premiers, while the Federal picture changed, John Bracken kept on his even way.

Not a Politician.

His early words are still important. When he was chosen to lead the farmers in '22, he said this: "I know nothing much about politics. And what I know I don't like. If you men will support me, stand by me when I made mistakes, and if you think I can serve you and the Province, I will join you and see what I can do."

Today, with his name most prominently mentioned as a possible conservative national leader, much of that statement still applies. He knows politics now, but refuses to worry about party labels. In the Parliamentary Guide he doesn't list his adherence to any party. He is the unusual person in public life who meets issues as they come, with party always an unimportant factor.

Proficient in Athletics.

This honorary president of the R.C.A.F.-Bombers football team of Winnipeg is of Ontario birth and of English, Scottish and Irish ancestry. He was born at Ellisville, Ont., in the County of Leeds. Or if you want it more exact, he was born on Lot 15, Concession 7, in Leeds County. At Seeley's Bay he went to public school. At Brockville he went to high school. He received his Bachelor of the Science of Agriculture degree at the Agricultural College at Guelph. There he was the captain of the college football team and not only a top running half but a first-class tackler and plunger. After Guelph he took postgraduate work in the University of Illinois.

Authority on Farming.

Author of a book on dry farming, always interested in farm problems, John Bracken remains the farmers' voice in the Canadian West. It was he who in '39 on behalf of the Western farmers tangled with the Hon. James Gardiner, Minister of Agriculture in Mr. King's Cabinet, and won for the farmers. That is one of the things that few other public men have done.

At 59 John Bracken is an erect, compact figure, who curls a first-class game. There is nothing shopworn about him. He is keen, virile, on his toes both mentally and physically. He is considered the most progressive figure among all the Premiers in Canada.

Since the war broke on the world John Bracken has been an all-outer on the war. His Legislature passed a resolution endorsing the Canadian Legion call for the complete mobilization of wealth and manpower for the winning of the war. He is a strong believer in the British Commonwealth of Nations and has, in addition, a deep personal interest in the outcome of the war; two of his sons are on active service.

Sons in the Army.

Of his four sons, one is a lieutenant with the R.C.N.V.R., on the Pacific Coast. That is J. Bruce Bracken. Another son is Flying Officer William Gordon Bracken, with the Royal Air Force in Ceylon as a flier.

Mr. Bracken has given no hint as to his interest in the conservative leadership. He has done an excellent job where he is. His Province is happy with him. Whether he is interested will depend a great deal on how progressive the policies of the Conservative Party are after the convention adopts its resolutions. For John Bracken is not interested in looking back. He knows that the march of events must bring definite reforms. He had fought for them throughout his career. He has no intention of backing away from reform now.

This masterful man, hard as steel, with a mind that works quickly, and with a deep feeling for the man who hasn't had a fair break, is not asking for any leadership of any party unless it looks ahead to a better world.

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By Edwin