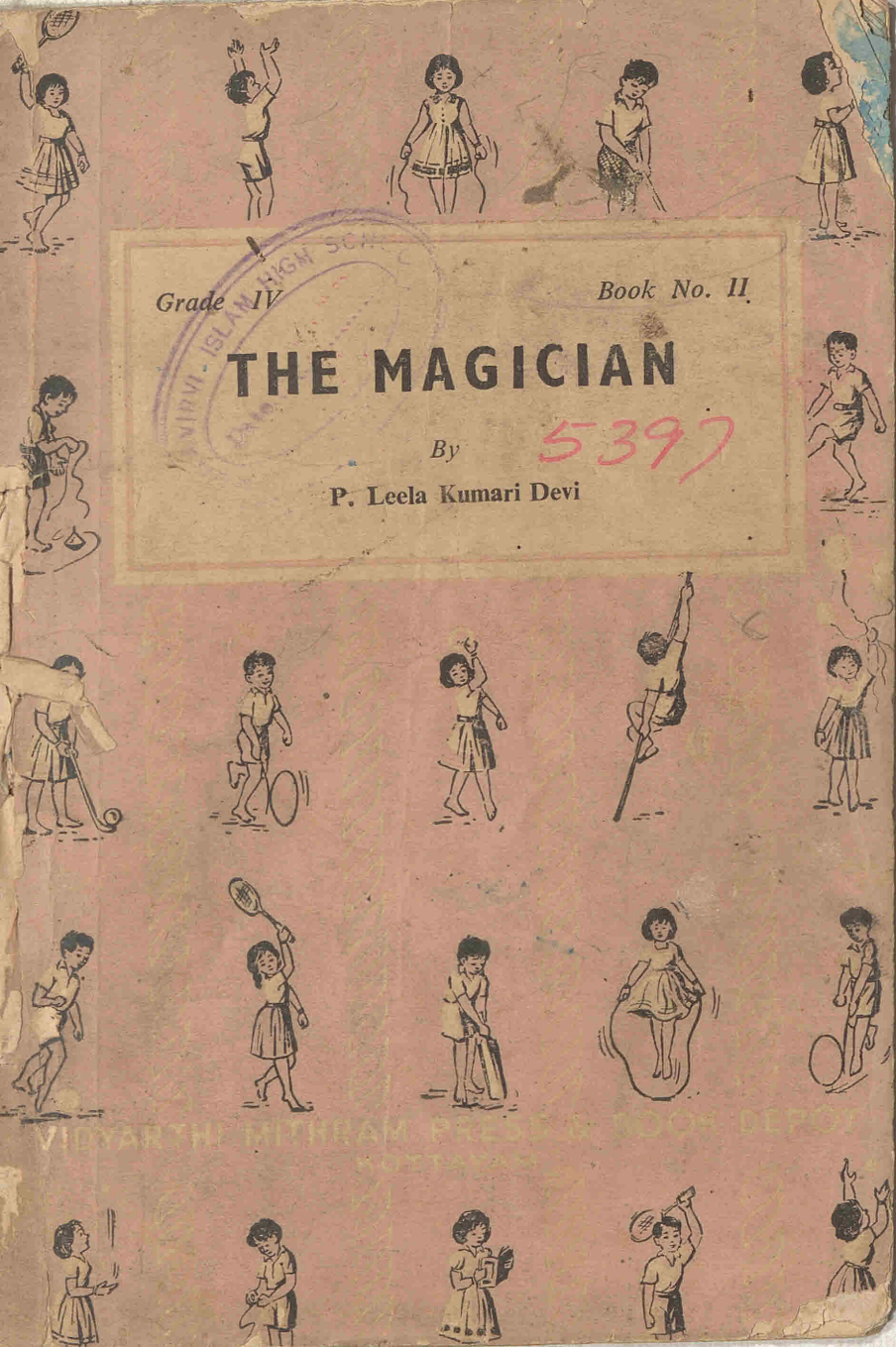


VIDYARTHI MITHRAM PRESS & BOOK DEPOT
KOTTAYAM

Grade IV *Book No. II*

THE MAGICIAN

By

P. Leela Kumari Devi

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THE MAGICIAN

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STANDARD IX

MAHARAJA'S HIGH SCHOOL
Date.....
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By

P. LEELA KUMARI DEVI

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THE MAGICIAN

BY P. LEELA KUMARI DEVI

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PREFACE

This book has been written for Standard IX pupils as a home reading book. No structure which the pupils have not learned in the lower standards, has been introduced. So also the majority of the vocabulary is from their active and passive sphere. Very few new words have been sparingly used. Hence there is no chance of they being obstructed in the course of their reading.

Comprehension Questions have been given at the end of every chapter. Pupils are directed to answer them before they proceed to the next chapter.

The Author.

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Questions

THE MAGICIAN

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CHAPTER I

The Visitor

Men are of different kinds. Some understand things for themselves. Certain others learn from the experiences of others. A third kind of people neither understand things for themselves nor learn through the experiences of others. There is a fourth class which combines the qualities of all the three types. The magician whom you are going to be acquainted with in the story belonged to the fourth class.

During the time of the Duke of Valantine, there lived a magician in Italy. He pretended to know all the secrets of nature, of medicine and of magic. His fame had spread over the length and breadth of Italy like small

waves over water. He told people that plague could be cured by the oil of scorpions captured in sunshine, and that the ashes of a wolf's skin never failed as a remedy for baldness. Again, to stop the bleeding at the nose, his cure was the application of the bark of the olive tree into the nose of the patient. Here it was also stated that it would be better if the bark was taken from a young tree in the case of a young patient and an old tree in the case of an aged patient. Another of his belief was that serpents cooked in wine and afterwards eaten, would make a leper sound and whole.

These were the powers the magician was supposed to possess. With these, he cheated people and earned a living. In fact there was none in Italy who was cured by him. But yet he was famous. That was the fun of it.

He was considered to have been deeply read in treatment of poisons and about enchantments. His nature

was so out-spoken that he did not fail to say that he possessed the power of summoning spirits to his presence. He told people that he could even seek the help of the spirits to restore life to the dead if necessary.

He stated that he had discovered a medicine that kept him still young and active at the very old age of two thousand years. He claimed that he was two thousand years old. He made people to understand that he had another medicine that would reduce an old man's age and bring back to him his lost youth.

There were still many in the town who remembered to have seen the magician as a dirty boy wandering along the streets of his native town. But his renown was so great that no one dared to question his age. Great men and women sought his help both publicly and privately, and in place and out of place. To them he was a worthy fellow.

His house stood in a narrow street, behind a street of huddled houses. It was a quarter far away from the town, admirably suited to a man of the magician's habits. Men from every corner of Italy frequently came there to seek his help and advice.

It was a June night. A beautiful lady followed by two attendants came there. This was none other than the beautiful Bianca, the only daughter of the Duke of Padua. With much had heaven blessed her. And yet with all these gifts, there was still something she lacked. It was to possess that something with the help of the magician that she had come there. But she did not wish to give publicity to her visit. So, to attract less attention she came on foot, followed by two attendants. As they entered the narrow street, she bade one of them to put out the torch he carried. Therefore, in the dark they

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huddled = crowded

had come along almost stumbling on the stones, to the magician's door.

She asked one of the attendants to knock at the door. Even as the attendant took the first step towards the door, it opened suddenly and a man dressed in white appeared in the passage with a lantern. The figure bowed to her and bade her to enter. Another door opened and a courteous gentleman of great importance appeared before him. The maiden watched the man from head to foot. She was convinced that there was nothing fearful in him. She took courage and went in.

She was taken to a huge dark room at the end of a passage. The room had no windows. From the ceiling to the floor, the chamber was hung with black curtains. It was cold and silent as a tomb. She looked around and the magician was not seen. She sat there to await the arrival of the magician. Still he did not appear. Suddenly she saw a great pillar of fire in the middle

of the chamber. It blinded her and she gave a cry of fear. Suddenly it disappeared and a deep and calm voice rang in her ears.

"Fear me not. I am here. What do you seek of me?"

The poor maiden looked before her in the direction of the voice. It seemed to her the chamber ended in a wall. She saw a man gradually taking shape as she watched. At last it was clear. She saw a small table upon which stood a huge lamp of ancient Greek design, in which some oil was being burned. At the lamp's foot a human skull grinned horribly. At the table itself in a high backed chair, sat a man in dark gown and his head covered by a hat like an inverted saucepan. The maiden was all attention. His piercing eyes, red beard, long nose and the projecting cheek bones made the scene more fearful to her. She felt as if she was having a dream. So great was her wonder that she could not believe her eyes.

It was the magician who broke the silence. "Speak, Madam, I am here to do your will."

It was encouraging to her. It would have been more encouraging if he had explained everything about his strange appearance. But she dared not ask him. And when she spoke, her voice was unsteady.

"I need your help", she said. "I need it badly".

"It is yours Madam, to the entire extent of my vast Science".

"You, you have great learning?", she questioned.

"The limitless ocean", he answered modestly, "is neither so wide nor so deep as my knowledge. What is your need?"

She was mastering herself now. But still she hesitated to speak. Because the thing she wanted to know was not such as a maid may boldly speak of. She approached her subject by and by.

"You possess the secret of great medicines?" said she.

"Madam", he answered calmly, "I can make an old man look young and turn the dead to life with the help of spirits".

"But can you make me look younger than really I am?" she said.

"Is this your need?"

"Yes, Sir", she answered low.

He sat back and further considered the pale beauty of her, the low brow, the black tresses of hair, her splendid eyes, thin and curved lips and the noble height and shape. After a few minutes, he said, "I see great difficulties to be overcome. It is costly".

"What's that to me? Do you think I will count the cost in such a matter?"

"Understand me", the magician said, "the drugs I have collected from all corners of earth are often of great price. You have to bear it, since the medicine is for your service".

"You have such medicine then", she cried, her hands clasping in sudden increase of hopefulness. She took a purse of gold from her waist and flung it upon the table.

"Fifty ducats", she said, "Will that suffice?"

"Perhaps", said he, "should it fall something short, I will myself add what may be lacking". With scorn he pushed the purse inside. He stepped to the shelves, took a slender little tube of glass, containing some fluid—a dozen drops at most. He held it up so that it gleamed golden in the light. He gave it to her saying, "This is my medicine sufficient for your need. To this you shall add two drops of your blood, neither more, nor less, and drink it in wine before going to bed. Now the time is quite agreeable. Go and be you happy!"

There was the sound of an opening door. The curtains parted and the white robed attendant appeared salaaming,

waiting to reconduct her. The lady followed him and took leave of the magician. The magician was left alone in his room.

QUESTIONS

Answer in two or three sentences each:-

1. What sort of a man was the magician?
2. How did he become famous?
3. How could he cure plague?
4. What remedied baldness?
5. How could the bleeding at the nose be stopped?
6. What cured leprosy?
7. How did the magician cheat people?
8. How old was the magician? Was it true?
9. What were his special medicines?
10. How did he restore the dead to life?
11. Did the people believe in his age? Why?
12. Did anybody question his age? Why?
13. Where was the magician's house?
14. How was the location of his house suited for his habits?

15. Who was the visitor ?
16. How did she come there? Why ?
17. What was the first wonder the lady had at the magician's house ?
18. How was the room where the lady was taken to ?
19. What was the second wonder she experienced there ?
20. What were the things she noticed in the room ?
21. Why did the magician seem fearful to her ?
22. How was her voice when she spoke to the magician ? Why ?
23. What was the purpose of her visit ?
24. Was it easy for the magician to grant her wish ? Why ?
25. What was the real difficulty in granting her wish ?
26. What did she pay for the medicine ?
27. When did he give her medicine ?
28. How was the medicine to be taken by her ?

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CHAPTER II

The Intruder

No sooner had the lady gone, than the magician emptied his purse on the table and looked at the collection very eagerly. Then quite suddenly he was startled by a laughter, short, abrupt and full of scorn. The magician looked up, his hands spreading to cover and protect the gold. Before him in the middle of the chamber stood a tall figure, all in black—black cloak, black cap and black face out of which gleamed two eyes considering him. The magician attempted to speak, but courage failed him and terror struck him dumb.

Presently the figure advanced, silent footed and staring at the magician. The latter could hold it no longer. He sank into his chair. The figure stopped before the table within an arm's length of the magician. In a mocking tone he wished greetings. It took

the magician some moments to realise that the figure was no ghost, but of flesh and blood. At last he spoke in a quivering voice, "Who are you ?"

The figure took off his outer dress showing a graceful well-built figure, dressed in velvet which was studded with diamonds that sparkled as drops of water. A sword was hanging from his waist in its sheath. One of his hands was raised to remove the cloth from the face and there stood before him the Duke of Valentine.

"My Lord!" he cried greatly amazed and extremely uneasy. Then he put a foolish question. "How came you in ?"

"I too know something of magic", said the young Duke with a mockery that was evident in his voice and more evident in the smile that he bent upon the magician.

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evident = clear

The Duke did not think it necessary to explain how he employed his magic to get admitted into the magician's home. But the cunning wizard knew that his attendant was in the root of all magic. He thought his attendant should be keenly questioned or if necessary keenly whipped. But in the meanwhile the Duke should be well attended to.

The next moment he thrust the gold back into the purse, put it aside and sat again in the chair. He did not seem to notice that the Duke was standing. Completely regardless of the Duke, he leaned on the chair and combed his long beard in a leisurely manner.

"Between your magic and mine, My Lord, there is some difference", he said with hidden scorn.

"I should not be here else" replied the Duke and proceeded to the matter

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wizard = magician

that had brought him there. "It is said you have found out a medicine that brings the dead back to life?"

"It is true, my lord," replied the wizard with assurance. He was gradually becoming himself again.

"But have you tested it?"

'Yes, in Cyprus three years ago. I restored life to a man who had been dead for two days. He is still living and will testify."

"Your word will suffice. But you must prove it on yourself."

Hearing this the magician turned cold from head to foot and yet answered boldly, "If necessary, I would."

The Duke seemed satisfied and the magician felt a bit relieved. Then came the Duke's question.

"You have this medicine at hand?"

"Enough to restore life to one man—just that and nothing more. It is

a very scarce and very precious liquor and very costly as you may see my Lord!"

"Made, no doubt from the brain of some rare bird of Africa ?" the Duke mocked him.

The cunning magician knew very well the hit. But for his own safety he pretended not to understand the irony of it.

"Not so, My Lord," he replied, "It is derived trom....."

"No matter," said the Duke, "Let me have it."

The magician rose, turned to his shelves and searched it a while. After some time he came back with a small bottle containing a blood-red liquid. He held it to the light so that it glowed like a ruby. He explained how it

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irony =mockery
ruby =a rose-coloured precious stone

how it should be applied. The first step is to force apart the teeth of the dead man. Then pour it into his throat Within an hour he would revive, provided the body had first been warmed before a fire."

The Duke took the bottle in his hands. The other assured him that it could not fail to act; no matter how the man might have died. But if any vital organ had been destroyed, the medicine was an utter failure.

The Duke said, "There is a rumour in Italy that you applied medicine on a man who lay unconscious for a month and then died.

"That is not true my Lord. Of such a poison I possess the secret. These are mere tales spread by those who might have failed to get it from me."

---

rumour =a general talk

"And you say you have such a poison. What may be its nature ?"

"That is a secret", was the answer.

"I care not, I desire to know and I have asked you."

The magician had no other alternative but to fetch it. From the same shelf whence he had taken the first medicine, he drew now a tiny box, opened it and placed it before the Duke. It contained a fine yellow powder. He said one pinch of that would kill the person for thirty days and two pinches in half the time. The Duke eyed the man with scorn and said he desired to experiment it. The Duke held out the box to the magician.

"Swallow it." he bade him calmly.

The magician drew back in alarm. "My Lord!" he cried aghast.

"Swallow it," repeated the Duke without raising his voice and in the most natural manner.

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aghast = amazed

The man blinked and said, "Would you have me die my Lord ?"

"Die? Why should you die ? You are a magician, the most powerful magician. Your knowledge is wide and deep as the limitless ocean. You have lived already for two thousand years."

Now the magician began to realise the real purpose of the Duke's visit. It was true that a person died by his medicine. It was also true that he had made a great profit by the sale of his medicine. He understood at last that the Duke had come to punish him. The mockery with which the Duke dealt with him filled him with horror.

"Your Highness! alas! I fear it may be as you say!", he said.

"But even so, of what are you afraid? Have you not said that the medicine will restore the dead to life? I give you my word that I shall see that it is administered to you when you are dead. Come then, swallow the

powder and see that you die exactly a fortnight afterwards. If not I will have you hanged for cheating innocent men and the other dose will not be administered to you."

"My Lord! my Lord" groaned the unfortunate man.

"Now understand me", said the Duke, "if this powder acts as you say it will, and kills you at the appointed time, your medicine shall be given to you, to bring you back again to life. But if it kills you sooner, you may remain dead, and if it kills you not at all—why then I will hang you and publish the truth of the whole matter, that the men may know the falsehood of your trade."

With trembling hands he took the powder.

"See you spill none of it."

"My Lord, my Lord..... Mercy..... I ....."

Finding resistance of no use, he emptied the bottle to his mouth, the Duke watching him closely the while.

After it was done, the magician sank into his chair.

The Duke laughed softly, put his gown on and walked towards the curtains that covered the door.

"Sleep easily the great magician", he said with infinite mockery, "I shall not fail you." So saying the Duke bade him good night.

QUESTIONS

1. Why was the magician struck dumb?
2. How was the visitor dressed?
3. Who was the visitor?
4. When did the magician recognise his visitor?
5. Was it a cordial visit? State reasons for your answer.
6. What was the meaning of the Duke's smile?
7. Why was the magician angry with his attendant?
8. Did the magician offer a seat to the Duke? Why?
9. How did the Duke disclose the object of his visit?

10. Why did the magician feel uneasy?
11. Did the magician have presence of mind ? State your answer with reasons.
12. What was the mockery in the Duke's statement that the medicine was prepared from the brain of some rare bird of Africa ?
13. What medicine did the magician give to the Duke ?
14. How was the medicine to be applied ?
15. Is the medicine always powerful ? Why?
16. What was the rumour in Italy about the magician ?
17. What was the second medicine that the magician brought to the Duke ?
18. When was the magician perplexed ? Why ?
19. Why should not the magician fear to take in that fateful medicine ?
20. How did the Duke punish the magician?
21. What was the effect of the medicine on the magician ?



CHAPTER III

The Flight

As soon as the Duke had gone, the magician got up, and called his attendant to his aid. It was with that hope that he had taken the medicine. At the thought of it he was overcome with rage and humiliation that he cursed the Duke all the while. He did not feel any pain or any kind of unusual feeling in any part of his body, even though he had taken in the fatal medicine. He was quite normal. Yet he was not without fear. Suppose the second medicine fails to act. Then what would become of him? He was too young and too full of life. He had seen death, but it had been the death of others. Never until now had it seemed to him that death was a thing that very much concerned himself. Yet he had felt a certain confidence that it was not for him to die.

But the trouble did not end here. If he was found alive, the Duke would take his vengeance on him. He sighed wearily and sought to find a more secure position. He thought of many things—of his past life, of early boyhood, of his mother, of his companions .....and the tricks of magic that he had displayed. The moment he thought of death, his imagination refused to picture it. He covered his face with both hands as children sometimes do to clear away any horrible picture from their minds.

Then his thought shifted to his gold which he might perhaps never see again. Quick as lightning he sprang to his shelves, put the gold in a bag, packed some clothes and emptied the shelves of the medicine, lest any one should test it. He summoned his attendant and sent him for a cab to be brought within no time. It was midnight and courage lent him speed in his actions. He surveyed the whole house and made himself sure

that he had not left anything valuable to him except a few pieces of very damaged furniture.

He said to himself, "Whither should I go? It should be anywhere far away from the arms of the Duke. Would he not send his men to guard my house? A gallant Duke as he is, he is sure to take all precautions". His thought could go no farther. At this, the attendant announced the arrival of the cab. The master gave him some instructions, locked his room, kept the key safe in his pocket and gave his faithful servant a bag of gold.

The man was informed that his master was going to a far off place. But he did not mention the name of the place as he himself was not sure of where he was going to. But his attendant must keep it a secret. If questioned by the Duke's men, he should say that the master was away one night as was usual form hi and did not

return yet. The attendant, greatly satisfied with the reward, followed the master to the cab and waited in front of his house, till the cab disappeared.

QUESTIONS

1. Had the medicine any immediate effect on the magician ? Did he know it before?
2. With what hope did he take in the medicine ?
3. Why was he afraid ?
4. Why did he cover his face with both hands ?
5. What preparations did he make ?
6. What was his object in making such preparations ?
7. What instructions did he give to his attendant about his departure ?
8. How did the magician reward his attendant ?

CHAPTER IV

The Climb

The cab stopped before an inn, far away from the noisy roads and in the outskirts of a village. It was almost night. A man got out of the cab, paid the cab-man his due and walked in. A few men were at table, spread with dishes of very moderate kind. Completely exhausted as he was, the man did not look around until he had a heavy meal.

He gathered some useful information about the whereabouts of the place, its people, and about the Duke of Alva's territory where he was going to seek shelter. The Duke of Alva and the Duke of Valentine had been long long rivals. And it was quite natural that the cunning and vile magician decided to serve his Duke's enemy.

He knew from the men that a rocky hill separated that territory from the Duke of Alva's territory. By hook or crook he decided to cross it. It was not a difficult thing for him. But not so easy as he had not practised it in the recent years. Yet he would try, for his life would be safe only if he reached there. His ride took a night and a day. It was the second night after his leaving home. He thought sleep would give him better plans, perhaps the wisest the next morning. Soon he fell asleep.

In the morning he was awakened by the serving boy who continued to knock at the door. A shout from his bed silenced the boy. The magician dressed himself and opened the door. His watch showed half past seven. After breakfast he set out on his expedition to meet the Duke of Alva.

He was all in black. Arming himself as a soldier and with the serving boy leading the way, the magician continued his expedition. Not long after-

wards they were at the foot of the hill. Now you may wonder why this man chose this course of difficult journey. If he followed the direct route, it was impossible for him to escape the notice of his Duke. The route he followed was of shorter distance though of greater troubles. He dismissed the boy and continued the ascent. He was armed with sword and dagger. This had been carefully and firmly adjusted upon him, so that it should not hamper his movements.

It was a fine and clear morning, rendering the landscape visible for miles. This was well for the earlier part of the climb. He hoped to reach the summit before noon. At first the ascent was easy and he was able to go forward easily. Soon the path became narrow, the hill grew vertical and he was compelled to move with great caution. Every little projection of the cliff, every foothold, every gap to be overcome, he knew before he reached it.

At the end of an hour he had covered about one third of the ascent. The most difficult part of it was yet to come. He sat down upon a meadow, unusually spacious, and there he rested and recovered his breath. Above him stood up the grey cliff. Surveying it with his calm blue eyes, he realised that the worst danger he had to face was the danger of that climb. By comparison, the rest was easy, safe and simple. Down the hill on the other side was the castle of the Duke of Alva surrounded by a fortress. A sentry or two kept watch there. But a false step or movement of giddiness might plunge him down into instant death.

Straight up he went for twenty feet. A jump over to a tree would save him cross the most difficult part of the climb. Fearing lest his sword should endanger him, he cast it away. He did it with regret, but he could not help it. Then he took a deep breath and jumped across. With arms and legs he clung to the tree like an ape. Had its hold given

way under his weight, it would have been the end of him. Fortunately it did not fail him and he went on.

At length, towards noon, he found himself on a roomy platform at the foot of the castle's southern wall. He lay himself down there at full length to rest a while before entering the fortress. When at length he rose up, he did not feel the fierce heat of the sun. It was evening. He moved forward very swiftly, yet very cautiously. He came to a flight of stone steps. Going up, he reached the path leading to the outer gate of the fortress. Immediately he heard a man's voice coming from the guard-room on his right. The door was pulled open from within and five soldiers appeared before him.

"Who are you to enter the fortress without permission?" one soldier said. The man was puzzled. Yet without any hesitation spoke, "I am a messenger from the Duke of Valentine. I have a message to be delivered personally to the Duke. Take me to your

Duke". As he spoke with a note of authority, he was taken before the Duke of Alva. The new comer gave the Duke a lofty salutation.

"You are from the Duke of Valentine?"

"I am Sir,"

"What is your name?"

"Lorenzo, Sir."

"What tidings you carry from your Lord?"

The visitor looked puzzled. The Duke could very well see the uneasiness of the man which he was trying to hide. After a pause he said,

"None, Sir, consider the danger of my carrying such letters....."

The Duke's face grew red. He sprang up.

"Eh! you say that you bring me certain orders from your lord! And you talk of danger to yourself in bearing such orders in a letter. At least you'll bear some sign by which I am

to know that you are your Lord's messenger ?

"I bear none," was the proud answer.

"How came you to enter the fortress?"

"I climbed the rocky hill on the southern side. In my boyhood I have climbed these parts. It was for this reason that the Duke chose me."

The Duke turned sharply to his men and enquired, "where did you find him ? "

The five soldiers stepped forward and told him how they came across him in the fortress. It was beyond proof that the man entered the fortress climbing the wall, unnoticed by the sentry. The Duke's manner changed and turning to his men commanded, "seize and search him." They made a thorough search But it yielded nothing. "No matter," said the Duke, "make him safe for the night. He

shall go down the cliff again in the morning, and he shall go down faster than he came up." Thus the matter was decided and the man was locked up in the guard-house.

The fatal morning dawned for the magician to retrace his steps. Accompanied by the guards the man was taken to the front of the fortress which he had to leave in no time. He found resistance hopeless. Leaving himself in the hands of fate and praying God he continued his retreat. The guards waited there till the man was out of sight and no man knew what became of him and his vast science.

QUESTIONS

1. Where did the magician camp for the night ?
2. Where did he propose to go ?
3. What useful information did the magician gather from the inn ?
4. How could he reach the Duke of Alva's territory?
5. When did he set out for the journey ?
6. How was he armed for the expedition?
7. How was the first part of the climb ?
8. Why was he able to see everything in the cliff before he reached it ?
9. Which was the most difficult part of the climb ? Why ?
10. Where was the castle of the Duke of Alva situated ?
11. How did he cover the most difficult part of the climb ?
12. How long did the magician lie on the platform at the foot of the Castle's wall?
13. Why was the magician taken before the Duke of Alva without any further questioning ?
14. Why did the Duke of Alva get angry with the magician ?

15. How did the magician get into the Duke of Alva's territory?
16. How did the Duke of Alva punish the magician for entering his territory without permission?
17. What do you think of the end of the magician?

WORD LIST

intruder
plague
baldness
enchantment
reduce
huddled
stumbling
lantern
convinced
ceiling
chamber
grinned
hesitated
splendid
ducats
gleamed
wizard
keenly
testify
restore
alternative
fortnight
concerned
confidence
vengeance
precaution
outskirts
exhausted
expedition
hamper
sentry
summon
cliff
spacious
giddiness
fortress
tidings
retrace



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