

Long Live the King

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OLD ADELBERT OF THE OPERA LOSES HIS JOB, AN EVENT WHICH STARTS A CHAIN OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

Synopsis.—The crown prince of Livonia, Ferdinand William Otto, ten years old, taken to the opera by his aunt, tires of the singing and slips away to the park, where he makes the acquaintance of Bobby Thorpe, a little American boy. Returning to the palace at night, he finds everything in an uproar as a result of the search which has been made for him. The same night the chancellor calls to consult the boy's grandfather, the old king, who is very ill. The chancellor suggests that to preserve the kingdom, the friendship of the neighboring kingdom of Karnia be secured by giving the Princess Hedwig in marriage to King Karl of that country. Countess Loschek, lady-in-waiting to Princess Annunziata, Hedwig's mother, is in love with King Karl and plots to prevent his marriage to Hedwig. Hedwig, who loves Nikky Larisch, Otto's aid de camp, is dismayed when told of the plans for her marriage. Countess Loschek sends a secret message to King Karl. The messenger is attacked by agents of the terrorists and a dummy letter substituted. Captain Larisch, unaware of the substitution, holds up Karl's chauffeur and secures the envelope. The captain impersonates Karl's chauffeur and exchanges the sheet within the envelope for some cigarette papers. On delivering the envelope to Karl, Larisch is made prisoner when the deception is discovered. Mettlich, chancellor of Livonia, goes to Karnia and arranges with Karl for his marriage to Hedwig. Karl thereupon releases Captain Larisch.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

The quays receded, red carpet and all. Only the glare of the band followed them, and with the persistence of sound over water, followed them for some time.

It was Hedwig who showed the most depression on the trip, after all. Early that morning she had attended mass in the royal chapel. All the household had been there, and the king had been wheeled in, and had sat in his box, high in the wall, the door of which opened from his private suite.

Looking up, Hedwig had seen his gray old face set and rigid. The court had worn black, and the chapel was draped in crepe. She had fallen on her knees and had tried dutifully to pray for the dead Hubert. But her whole soul was crying out for help for herself.

So now she sat very quiet, and wondered about things.

Prince Ferdinand William Otto sat by the rail and watched the green banks flying by.

When no one was looking, he broke a flower from the bouquet and flung it overboard. He pretended that it was a boat, and was going down to Karnia, filled with soldiers ready to fight.

But the thought of soldiers brought Nikky to his mind. His face clouded. "It's very strange about Nikky," he said. "He is away somewhere. I wish he had sent word he was going."

Hedwig looked out over the river. The archduchess glanced at Miss Braithwaite. "There is no news?" she asked, in an undertone.

"None," said Miss Braithwaite. A sudden suspicion rose in Hedwig's mind, and made her turn pale. What if they had sent him away? Perhaps they feared him enough for that! If that were true, she would never know. She knew the ways of the palace well enough for that. In a sort of terror she glanced around the group, so comfortably disposed. Her mother was looking out, with her cool, impassive gaze.

Miss Braithwaite knitted. The countess, however, met her eyes, and there was something strange in them—triumph and a bit of terror, too, had she but read them. For the countess had put in her plea for a holiday and had been refused.

The new fortress faced the high road some five miles from the Karnian border. It stood on a bluff over the river, and was, as the crown prince decided, not so unlike the desk, after all, except that it had a moat around it.

Hedwig and the countess went with the party around the fortifications. The archduchess and Miss Braithwaite had sought a fire. Only the countess, however, seemed really interested. Hedwig seemed more intent on the distant line of the border than on anything else. She stood on a rampart and stared out at it, looking very sad. Even the drill—when at a word all the great guns rose and peeped over the edge at the valley below, and then dropped backed again as if they had seen enough—even this failed to rouse her.

"I wish you would listen, Hedwig," said the crown prince, almost fretfully. "It's so interesting. The enemy's soldiers would come up the river in boats, and along that road on foot. And then we would raise the guns and shoot at them. And the guns would drop back again, before the enemy had time to aim at them."

But Hedwig's interest was so evidently assumed that he turned to the countess. The countess professed smiling terror, and stood a little way back from the guns, looking on. But Prince Ferdinand William Otto at last coaxed her to the top of the emplacement.

"There's a fine view up there," he urged. "And the guns won't hurt you. There's nothing in them."

To get up it was necessary to climb an iron ladder. Hedwig was already there. About a dozen young officers had helped her up, and ruined as many pairs of white gloves, although Hedwig could climb like a cat, and

really needed no assistance whatever. "You go up," said the crown prince eagerly, turning to the countess. "I'll hold your bag, so you can climb."

He caught her handbag from her, and instantly something snapped in it. The countess was climbing up the ladder. Rather dismayed, Prince Ferdinand William Otto surveyed the bag. Something had broken, he feared. And in another moment he saw what it was. The little watch which was set in one side of it had slipped away, leaving a round black hole. His heart beat a trifle faster.

"I'm awfully worried," he called up to her, as he climbed. "I'm afraid I've broken your bag. Something clicked, and the watch is gone. It is not on the ground."

It was well for the countess that the colonel was talking to Hedwig. Well for her, too, that the other officers were standing behind with their eyes worshipfully on the princess. The countess turned gray white.

"Don't worry, highness," she said, with stiff lips. "The watch falls back sometimes. I must have it repaired."

But long after the tour of the ramparts was over, after ammunition rooms had been visited, with their long lines of waiting shells, after the switchboard which controlled the river mines had been inspected and explained, she was still trembling.

Prince Ferdinand William Otto, looking at the bag later on, saw the watch in place and drew a long breath of relief.

CHAPTER IX.

Old Adelbert.

Old Adelbert of the opera had lost his position. No longer, a sausage in his pocket for refreshment, did he leave his little room daily for the opera. A young man, who made ogling eyes at Olga, of the garde-robe, and who was not careful to keep the lenses clean, had taken his place.

He was hurt in his soldier's soul. There was no longer a place in the kingdom for those who had fought for it. The cry was for the young. And even in the first twenty-four hours a subtle change went on in him. His loyalty, on which he had built his creed of life, turned to bitterness.

The first day of his idleness he wandered into the back room of the cobbler's shop near by, where the butter seller from the corner, the maker of artificial flowers for graves, and the cobbler himself were gathered, and listened without protest to such talk as would have roused him once to white anger.

But the iron had not yet gone very deep, and one thing he would not permit. It was when, in the conversation, one of them attacked the king. Then indeed he was roused to fury.

Once upon a time a student named Haeckel had occasionally backed him up in his defense of the royal family. But for some reason or other Haeckel came no more, and old Adelbert missed him. He had inquired for him frequently.

"Where is the boy Haeckel?" he had asked one day. "I have not seen him lately."

No one had replied. But a sort of grim silence settled over the little room. Old Adelbert, however, was not discerning.

But, that first day of idleness, when he had left the cobbler's, he resolved not to return. They had not been unfriendly, but he had seen at once there was a difference. He was no longer old Adelbert of the opera. He was an old man only, and out of work.

He spent hours that first free afternoon repairing his frayed linen and his shabby uniform, with his wooden leg stretched out before him and his pipe clutched firmly in his teeth. Then, freshly shaved and brushed, he started on a painful search for work.

With no result. And, indeed, he was hopeless before he began. He was old and infirm. There was little that he had even the courage to apply for.

True, he had his small pension, but

it came only twice a year, and was sent, intact, to take care of an invalid daughter in the country. That was not his. He never used a penny of it. And he had saved a trifle, by living on air, as the concierge declared. But misfortunes come in threes, like fires and other calamities. The afternoon of that very day brought a letter, saying that the daughter was worse and must have an operation. Old Adelbert went to church and burned a candle for her recovery, and from there to the bank to send by registered mail the surgeon's fee.

He was bankrupt in twenty-four hours.

That evening in his extremity he did a reckless thing. He wrote a letter to the king. He spent hours over it, first composing it in pencil and then copying it with ink borrowed from the concierge. It began "Sire," as he had learned was the form, and went on to remind his majesty, first, of the hospital incident, which, having been forty years ago, might have slipped the royal memory. Then came the facts—his lost position, his daughter, the handicap of his wooden leg. It ended with a plea for reinstatement or, failing that, for any sort of work.

He sent it, unfolded, in a large flat envelope, which also he had learned was the correct thing with kings, who for some reason or other do not like folded communications. Then he waited. He considered that a few hours should bring a return.

No answer came. No answer ever came. For the king was ill, and secretaries carefully sifted the royal mail.

That night, in the concierge's bureau, he was treated to many incidents, all alike. The government took, but gave nothing. As well expect blood out of a stone. Instances were given, heartlessly piled on heartlessness, one sordid story on another.

And as he listened there died in old Adelbert's soul his flaming love for his sovereign and his belief in him. His eyes took on a hard and haunted look. That night he walked past the palace and shook his fist at it. He was greatly ashamed of that, however, and never repeated it. But his soul was now an open sore, ready for infection.

On the day of the excursion to the fortress old Adelbert decided to appeal to his fellow lodger, Herman Spier. Now and then, when he was affluent, he had paid small tribute to Herman by means of the camp cookery on which he prided himself.

"A soldier's mess!" he would say, and bring in a bowl of soup, or a slice of deer meat, broiled over hot coals in his tiny stove. "Eat it, man. These restaurants know nothing of food."

Herman could not help him. But he eyed the old soldier appraisingly. He guessed shrewdly the growing unbusiness behind Adelbert's brave front. If now one could enlist such a man for the cause, that would be worth doing. Among the veterans the old

man was influential, and by this new policy of substituting fresh blood for stale, the government had made many enemies among them.

The old man's bitterness had been increased by two things. First, although he had been dismissed without notice, in the middle of the week, he had been paid only up to the hour of leaving. That was a grievance. Second, being slow on his feet, one of the royal motor cars had almost run him down, and the police had cursed him roundly for being in the way.

At last he determined to find Haeckel, the student. He did not know his Christian name, nor where he lodged. But he knew the corps he belonged to, by his small gray cap with a red band.

He was very nervous when he made this final effort. Corps houses were curious places, he had heard, and full of secrets. Even the great professors from the university might not enter without invitation. And his experience had been that students paid small respect to uniforms or to age. In truth, he passed the building twice before he could summon courage to touch the great brass knocker. And the arrogance of its guards, when at last he rapped, startled him again. But here at least he need not have feared.

The student who was also doorkeeper eyed him kindly. "Well, comrade?" he said.

"I am seeking a student named Haeckel, of this corps," said old Adelbert stoutly.

"Haeckel?" repeated the doorkeeper. "I think—come in, comrade. I will inquire."

For the name of Haeckel was, just then, one curiously significant.

He disappeared, and old Adelbert waited. When the doorkeeper returned, it was to tell him to follow him, and to lead the way downstairs.

Two or three students came toward him at once. "You are seeking Haeckel?" one of them asked.

"I am. I knew him, but not well. Lately, however, I have thought—is he here?"

The students exchanged glances. "He is not here," one said. "Where did you know him?"

"He came frequently to a shop I know of—a cobbler's shop, a neighborhood meeting place. A fine lad, I liked him. But recently he has not come, and knowing his corps, I came here to find him."

"They had hoped to learn something from him, and he knew nothing. 'He has disappeared,' they told him. 'He is not at his lodging, and he has left his classes. He went away suddenly, leaving everything. That is all we know.'"

It sounded sinister. Old Adelbert, heavy hearted, turned away and climbed again to the street. That gateway was closed, too. And he felt a pang of uneasiness. What could have happened to the boy? Was the world, after all, only a place of trouble?

But now came good fortune, and, like evil, it came not singly. The operation was over, and his daughter on the mend. The fee was paid also. And the second followed on the heels of the first.

He did not like Americans. Too often, in better days, had he heard the merits of the American republic compared with the shortcomings of his own government. When, as happened now and then, he met the American family on the staircase, he drew sharply aside that no touch of republicanism might contaminate his uniform.

On that day, however, things changed.

First of all, he met the American lad in the hallway, and was pleased to see him doff his bit of a cap. Not many, nowadays, uncovered a head to him. The American lad was going down; Adelbert was climbing, one step at a time, and carrying a small basket of provisions.

The American boy, having passed, turned, hesitated, went back. "I'd like to carry that for you, if you don't mind."

"Carry it?"

"I am very strong," said the American boy stoutly.

So Adelbert gave up his basket, and the two went up. Four long flights of stone stairs led to Adelbert's room. The ascent took time and patience.

At the door Adelbert paused. Then, loneliness overcoming prejudice, "Come in," he said.

The bare little room appealed to the boy. "It's very nice, isn't it?" he said. "There's nothing to fall over."

"And but little to sit on," old Adelbert added dryly. "However, two people require but two chairs. Here is one."

But the boy would not sit down. He ranged the room, frankly curious, exclaimed at the pair of ring doves which he listened to its history, the politeness with which he ignored his host's infirmity, all won the old man's heart.

These Americans downstairs were not all bad, then. They were too rich, of course. No one should have meat three times a day, as the meat seller reported they did. And they were paying double rent for the apartment below. But that, of course, they could not avoid, not knowing the real charge.

The boy was frankly delighted. And when old Adelbert brought forth from his basket a sausage and, boiling it lightly, served him a slice between two pieces of bread, an odd friendship was begun that was to have unforeseen consequences. They had broken bread together.

Gradually, over the meal, and the pigeons, and what not, old Adelbert unbursed his heart. He told of his years at the opera, where he had kept his glasses clean and listened to the music until he knew by heart even the most difficult passages. He told of the crown prince, who always wished opera glasses, not because he needed them, but because he liked to turn them wrong end before, and thus make the audience appear at a great distance. And then he told of the loss of his position.

The American lad listened politely, but his mind was on the crown prince. "Does he wear a crown?" he demanded. "I saw him once in a carriage, but I think he had a hat. When will he be a king?"

"When the old king dies. He is

very old now. I was in a hospital once, after a battle. And he came in. He put his hand on my shoulder, like this"—he illustrated it on the child's small one—"and said—" Considering that old Adelbert no longer loved his king, it is strange to record that his voice broke.

"Will he die soon?" Bobby put in. He found kings as much of a novelty as to Prince Ferdinand William Otto they were the usual thing.

"Who knows? But when he dies, the city will learn at once. The great bell of the cathedral, which never rings save at such times, will toll. They say it is a sound never to be forgotten. I, of course, have never heard it. When it tolls, all in the city will fall on their knees and pray. It is the custom."

Bobby, reared to strict Presbyterianism and accustomed to kneeling but once a day, and that at night beside his bed, in the strict privacy of his own apartment, looked rather startled. "What will they pray for?" he said.

And old Adelbert, with a new bitterness, replied that the sons of kings needed much prayer. Sometimes they were hard and did cruel things.

"And then the crown prince will be a king," Bobby reflected. "If I were a king, I'd make people stand around."

Late that evening, old Adelbert's problem having been solved, Peppy the maid and Bobby had a long talk. Peppy sat in a low chair by the tiled stove in the kitchen, and knitted a stocking with a very large foot.

"What I want to know is this," said Bobby, swinging his legs on the table: "What are the terrorists?"

Peppy dropped her knitting, and stared with open mouth. "What know you of such things?" she demanded. "Well, terrorists killed the crown prince's father, and—"

Quite suddenly Peppy leaped from her chair, and covered Bobby's mouth with her hand. "Hush!" she said, and stared about her with frightened eyes. Then, in a whisper: "They are everywhere. No one knows who they are, nor where they meet. I myself," she went on impressively, "crossing the place one night late, after spending the evening with a friend, saw a line of cats moving in the shadows. One of them stopped and looked at me." Peppy crossed herself. "It had a face like the Fraulein in there."

Bobby stared with interest through the doorway. The governess did look like a cat. "Maybe she's one of them," he reflected aloud.

"Oh, for God's sake, hush!" cried Peppy, and fell to knitting rapidly. Nor could Bobby elicit anything further from her. But that night, in his sleep, he saw a crown prince, dressed in velvet and ermine, being surrounded and attacked by an army of cats, and went, shivering, to crawl into his mother's bed.

CHAPTER X.

The Committee of Ten.

On the evening of the annual day of mourning, the party returned from the fortress. The archduchess slept. The crown prince talked, mostly to Hedwig, and even she said little. After a time the silence affected the boy's high spirits. He leaned back in his chair on the deck of the launch, and watched the flying landscape.

It was almost dark when the launch arrived at the quay. The red carpet was still there, and another crowd. Had Prince Ferdinand William Otto been less taken up with finding one of his kid gloves, which he had lost, he would have noticed that there was a scuffle going on at the very edge of the red carpet, and that the beggar of the morning was being led away, between two policemen, while a third, running up the river bank, gingerly deposited a small round object in the water, and stood back. It was merely one of the small incidents of a royal outing, and was never published in the papers. But Father Gregory, whose old eyes were far sighted, had seen it all. His hand—the hand of the church—was on the shoulder of the crown prince as they landed.

The boy looked around for the little girl of the bouquet. He took an immense interest in little girls, partly because he seldom saw any. But she was gone.

When the motor which had taken them from the quay reached the palace, Hedwig roused the archduchess, whose head had dropped forward on her chest. "Here we are, mother," she said. "You have had a nice sleep."

But Annunziata muttered something about being glad the wretched day was over, and every one save Prince Ferdinand William Otto seemed glad to get back. The boy was depressed. He felt, somehow, that they should have enjoyed it, and that, having merely endured it, they had failed him again.

The countess, having left her royal mistress in the hands of her maids, went to her own apartment. She was not surprised, on looking into her mirror, to find herself haggard and worn. It had been a terrible day. Only a second had separated that gaping lens in her bag from the eyes of the officers about. Never, in an adventurous life, had she felt so near to death. Even now its cold breath chilled her.

However, that was over, well over. She had done well, too. A dozen pictures of the fortress, of its guns, of even its mine chart as it hung on a wall, were in the bag. Its secrets, so securely held, were hers, and would be Karl's.

It was a cunningly devised scheme. Two bags, exactly alike as to appearance, had been made. One, which she carried daily, was what it appeared to be. The other contained a camera, tiny but accurate, with a fine lens. When a knob of the fastening was pressed, the watch slid aside and the shutter snapped. The pictures when enlarged had proved themselves perfect.

Pleading fatigue, she dismissed her maid and locked the doors. Then she opened the sliding panel, and unfastened the safe. The roll of film was in her hand, ready to be deposited under the false bottom of her jewel case.

Within the security of her room, the countess felt at ease. She even sang a little, a bit of a ballad from her native mountains.

Still singing, she carried the jewel case to her table, and sat down before it. Then she put a hand to her throat.

The lock had been forced.

Countess Loschek is summoned to appear before the Committee of Ten, leaders of the terrorists, where she is confronted with a terrifying demand. The next installment tells of this startling development.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Mrs. Despard, a sister of General French, is said to have refused more than 500 applications for newspaper interviews after her return from visiting her brother at the front.



"If I Were a King I'd Make People Stand Around."

But has the crown prince only a grandfather, and no father?"

"He died—the boy's father. He was murdered, and the princess his mother also."

Bobby's eyes opened wide. "Who did it?"

"Terrorists," said old Adelbert. And would not be persuaded to say more. That night at dinner Bobby Thorpe delivered himself of quite a speech. He sat at the table, and now and then, when the sour-faced governess looked at her plate, he slipped a bit of food to his dog, which waited beside him.

"There's a very nice old man upstairs," he said. "He has a fine sword, and ring doves, and a wooden leg. And he used to rent opera glasses to the crown prince, only he turned them around. I'm going to try that with yours, mother. We had sausage together, and he has lost his position, and he's never been on the scenic railway, father. I'd like some tickets for him. He would like riding. I'm sure, because walking must be pretty hard. And what I want to know is this: Why can't you give him a job, father?"

"What sort of a job, son? A man with one leg?"

"He doesn't need legs to chop tickets with."

The governess listened. She did not like Americans. Barbarians they were, and these were of the middle class, being in trade. For a scenic railway is trade, naturally. Except that they paid a fat salary, with an extra month at Christmas, she would not be there.

"He means the old soldier upstairs," said Bobby's mother softly. She was a gentle person. Her eyes were wide and childlike, and it was a sort of religion of the family to keep them full of happiness.

This also the governess could not understand.

"So the old soldier is out of work," mused the head of the family. Head, thought the governess! When they would him about their fingers! She liked men of sterner stuff. In her mountain country the men did as they wished, and sometimes beat their wives by way of showing their authority. Under no circumstances, she felt, would this young man ever beat his wife. He was a weakling.

The weakling smiled across the table at the wife with the soft eyes. "How about it, mother?" he asked. "Shall the firm of 'Bobby and I' offer him a job?"

"I would like it very much," said the weakling's wife, dropping her eyes to hide the pride in them.

"Suppose," said the weakling, "that you run up after dinner, Bob, and bring him down. Now sit still, young man, and finish. There's no such hurry as that."

And in this fashion did old Adelbert become ticket chopper of the American Scenic Railway.

And in this fashion, too, commenced that odd friendship between him and the American lad that was to have so vital an effect on the very life itself of the Crown Prince Ferdinand William Otto of Livonia.

"When the old king dies. He is