

# Long Live the King

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

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## COUNTESS LOSCHEK, STARTING ON WAY ACROSS BORDER, WARNED TO KEEP COMMITTEE'S PLANS SECRET.

Synopsis.—Prince Ferdinand William Otto, heir to the throne of Livonia, is unaware of plots of the terrorists to form a republic. His grandfather, the king, in order to preserve the kingdom, arranges for the marriage of Princess Hedwig, Otto's cousin, to King Karl of Karnia. Hedwig rebels because of an attachment she has formed for Captain Nikky Larisch, Prince Otto's personal attendant. Countess Loschek, attached to the message of Archduchess Annunciata, is in love with the king of Karnia, for whom she acts as spy. She is threatened by the committee of ten, leaders of the terrorists, unless she bows to the committee's will and helps to secrete the crown prince when the king, who is very ill, dies. Nikky is torn between love and a sense of duty and loyalty to his king. Without Karl's support the king's death would bring the terrorists into control. Illness of Prince Ferdinand William Otto's grandfather is discussed.

### CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

The candle was at last lighted. It burned fitfully, illuminating only a tiny zone in the darkness. "I need a lantern," Bobby observed. "There's a draft here. It comes from the other grating. Some time, when you have time, I'd like to see what's beyond it. I was kind of nervous about going alone." It was the old passage, then, of course. Old Adelbert stared as Bobby took the candle and held it toward a second grated door, like the first, but taller.

A close examination revealed to old Adelbert two things: First, that a brick-lined passage, apparently in good repair, led beyond the grating. Second, that it had been recently put in order. No unused passage this, but one kept in order and repair. For what? That evening Adelbert called to see his friend, the locksmith in the university place. He possessed, he said, a padlock of which he had lost the key, and which, being fastened to a chest, he was unable to bring with him. A large and heavy padlock, perhaps the size of his palm.

When he left, he carried with him a bundle of keys, tied in a brown paper. But he did not back to his chest. He went instead to the thicket around the old gate, which was still termed the "Gate of the Moon," and there, armed with a lantern, pursued his investigations during a portion of the night.

When he had finished, old Adelbert, veteran of many wars, one-time patriot and newly turned traitor, held in his shaking hands the fate of the kingdom. The Countess Loschek was on her way across the border. The arrangements were not of her making. Her plan, which had been to go afoot across the mountain to the town of Ar-on-Ar, and there to hire a motor, had been altered by the arrival at the castle, shortly after the permission was given, of a machine.

The matter of passports for the border is arranged, madame," Black Humbert told her. "I have my own passports," she said proudly. "They will not be necessary." "I will have this interview at my destination alone, or not at all."

He drew himself to his great height and regarded her with cold eyes. "As you wish," he said. "But it is probably not necessary to remind madame that, whatever is discussed at this meeting, no word must be mentioned of the committee, or its plans."

Although he made no threat, she had shivered. No, there must be no word of the committee, or of the terror that drove her to Karl. For, if the worst happened, if he failed her, and she must do the thing they had set her to do, Karl must never know. That card she must play alone.



Karl Left Her There at Last.

Everything hung on the result of her visit. If Karl persisted, if he would marry Hedwig in spite of the trouble it would precipitate, then indeed she was lost. If, on the other hand, he was inclined to peace, if her story of a tottering throne held his hand, she would defy the committee of ten. Karl himself would help her to escape, might indeed hide her. It would not be for long. Without Karl's support the king's death would bring the terrorists into control. They would have other things to do than to hunt her out. Their end would be gained without her. Let them steal the crown prince, then. Let Hedwig fight for her throne and lose it. Let the streets run deep with blood and all the pandemonium of hell break loose.

said, "a republic will be declared. The republic of Livonia! The crown prince will never reign." "So you came today to tell me this?" She glanced up, and catching his eyes, colored faintly. "These are things you should know."

He knew her very well. A jealous woman would go far. He knew now that she was jealous. When he spoke it was with calculating brutality. "You mean, in view of my impending marriage?"

So it was arranged! Finally arranged. Well, she had done her best. He knew the truth. She had told it fairly. If, knowing it, he persisted, it would be because her power over him was dead at last. "Yes, I do not know how far your arrangements have gone. You have at least been warned."

But she saw, by the very way he drew himself up and smiled, that he understood. More than that, he doubted her. He questioned what she had said. The very fact that she had told him only the truth added to her resentment. "You will see," she said sullenly. "Because he thought he already saw, and because she had given him a bad moment, Karl chose to be deliberately cruel. 'Perhaps!'" he said. "But you leave out of this discussion the one element that I consider important, Hedwig herself. If the Princess Hedwig were tomorrow to be without a country, I should still hope to marry her."

She had done well up to now, had kept her courage and her temper, had taken her cue from him and been quiet and poised. But more than his words, his cruel voice, silky with friendship, drove her to the breaking point. Bitterly, and with reckless passion, she flung at him Hedwig's infatuation for young Larisch, and prophesied his dishonor as a result of it. In the end she grew quiet and sat looking into the fire with eyes full of stony despair. She had tried and failed. There was one way left, only one, and even that would not bring him back to her. Let Hedwig escape and marry Nikky Larisch—still where she was? Let the terrorists strike their blow and steal the crown prince. Again—where was she?

Her emotions were deadened, all save one, and that was her hatred of Hedwig. The humiliation of that moment was due to her. Somehow, some day, she would be even with Hedwig. Karl left her there at last huddled in her chair, left full of resentment, the ashes of his old love cold and gray. There was little reminder of the girl of the mountains in the stony-eyed woman he had left sagged low by the fire.

Once out in the open air, the king of Karnia drew a long breath. The affair was over. It had been unpleasant. It was always unpleasant to break with a woman. But it was time. He neither loved her nor needed her. Friendly relations between the two countries were established, and soon, very soon, would be ratified by his marriage.

It was not of Olga Loschek, but of Hedwig that he thought, as his car climbed swiftly to the lodge.

CHAPTER XIV. The Crown Prince's Pilgrimage. The day when Olga Loschek should have returned to the city found her too ill to travel. No feigned sickness this, but real enough, a matter of fever and burning eyes, and of mutterings in troubled sleep.

Minna was alarmed. She was fond of her mistress, in spite of her occasional cruelties, and lately the countess had been strangely gentle. She required little attention, wished to be alone, and lay in her great bed, looking out steadily at the bleak mountain tops, to which spring never climbed.

Nevertheless, he left her well guarded. Even Minna, slipping off for an evening hour with a village sweetheart, was stealthily shadowed. Before this, fine ladies had changed garments with their maids and escaped from divers unpleasantnesses.

At the end of two days the countess was able to be up. She moved languidly about her room, still too weak to plan.

And on the fourth day came the crown prince of Livonia on a pilgrimage. The manner of his coming was this: There are more ways than one of reaching the hearts of an uneasy people. Remission of taxes is a bad one. It argues a mistake in the past, in exacting such tithes. Governments may make errors, but must not acknowledge them. There is the freeing of political prisoners, but that, too, is dangerous, when such prisoners breathe sedition to the very prison walls.

And there is the appeal to sentiment. The government, pinning all its hopes to one small boy, would further endear him to the people. Wily statesman that he was, the chancellor had hit on this to offset the rumors of Hedwig's marriage.

"A pilgrimage!" said the king, when the matter was broached to him. "For what? My recovery? Cannot you let your servant depart in peace?" "Pilgrimages," observed the chancellor, "have had marvelous results, sire. I do not insist that they perform miracles, as some believe,"—he smiled faintly—"but as a matter of public feeling and a remedy for discord, they are sometimes efficacious."

"I see," said the king. And lay still, looking at the ceiling. "Can it be done safely?" he asked at last.

"The maddest traitor would not threaten the crown prince on a pilgrimage. The people would tear him limb from limb."

"Nevertheless, I should take all precautions," said the king. "A madman might not recognize the—er—religious nature of the affair."

The same day the chancellor visited Prince Ferdinand William Otto, and found him returned from his drive and busy over Hedwig's photograph frame. "It is almost done," he said. "I slipped over in one or two places, but it is not very noticeable, is it?"

The chancellor observed it judicially, and decided that the slipping over was not noticeable at all. "Otto," said the chancellor gravely, "I want to talk to you very seriously about something I would like you to do. For your grandfather."

"I'll do anything for him, sir." "We know that. This is the point. He has been ill for a long time. Very ill."

The boy watched him with a troubled face. "He looks very thin," he said. "I get quite worried when I see him."

"Exactly. You have heard of Etzel? Prince Ferdinand William Otto's religious instruction was of the best. He had, indeed, heard of Etzel. He knew the famous pilgrimages in order, and could say them rapidly, beginning, the year of Our Lord 915—the Emperor Otto and Adelheid, his spouse; the year of Our Lord 1100, Ulrich, Count of Riburg; and so on."

"When people are ill," he said slyly, "they go to Etzel to be cured." "Precisely. But when they cannot go they send some one else, to pray for them. And sometimes, if they have faith enough, the holy miracle happens and they are cured."

The chancellor was deeply religious, and although he had planned the pilgrimage for political reasons, for the moment, he lost sight of them. What if, after all, this clear-eyed, clean-hearted child could bring this miracle of the king's recovery? It was a famous shrine, and stranger things had been brought about by less worthy agencies.

"I'll try. I'm not very good. I do a good many things, you know."

Here, strangely enough, it was the chancellor who fumbled for his handkerchief. A vision had come to him of the two of them kneeling side by side at Etzel, the little lad who was "not very good," and he himself with his long years behind him of such things as fill a man's life. And because the open door was not so far ahead for him either, and because he believed implicitly in the great record within the gate, he shook his shaggy head.

So the pilgrimage was arranged. With due publicity, of course, and due precaution for safety. By train to the foot of the mountains, and then on foot for the ten miles to Etzel.

The crown prince went through his preparation in a sort of rapt solemnity. So must the boy crusaders have looked as, starting on their long journey, they faced south and east, toward the far distant Sepulcher of Our Lord. The king's council went, the chancellor, the mayor of the city, wearing the great gold chain of his office around his neck, and a handful of soldiers—a simple pilgrimage and the more affecting. There were no streaming banners, no magnificent vestments. The archbishop accompanied them, and a flag-bearer.

They went on foot to the railway station through lines of kneeling people, the boy still rapt, and looking straight ahead, the chancellor seemingly also absorbed, but keenly alive to the crowds. As he went on, his face relaxed. It was as if the miracle had already happened. Not the miracle



Death, to the Old, Is Not Terrible.

for which the boy would pray, but a greater one. Surely these kneeling people, gazing with moist and kindly eyes at the crown prince, could not, at the hot words of demagogues, turn into the mob he feared. But it had happened before. The people who had, one moment, adored the Dauphin of France on his balcony at Versailles, had lived to scream for his life.

The countess, standing on her balcony and staring down into the valley, beheld the pilgrimage and had thus her first knowledge of it. She was incredulous at first, and stood gazing, gripping the stone railing with tense hands. She watched, horror-stricken. The crown prince, himself, came to Etzel to pray! For his grandfather, of course. Then, indeed, must things be bad with the king, as bad as they could be.

The church doors closed behind them. Olga Loschek fell on her knees. She was shaking from head to foot. And because the religious training of her early life near the shrine had given her faith in miracles, she prayed for one. Rather, she made a bargain with God:

If any word came to her from Karl, any, no matter to what it pertained, she would take it for a sign, and attempt flight. If she was captured, she would kill herself.

But, if no word came from Karl by the hour of her departure the next morning, then she would do the thing she had set out to do, and let him beware! The king dead, there would be no king. Only over the dead bodies of the Livonians would they let him marry Hedwig and the throne. It would be war.

Curiously, while she was still on her knees, her bargain made, the plan came to her by which, when the time came, the terrorists were to rouse the people to even greater fury. Still kneeling, she turned it over in her mind. It was possible. More, it could be made plausible, with her assistance. And at the vision it evoked—Mettlich's horror and rage, Hedwig's pulling tears, her own triumph—she took a deep breath. Revenge with a vengeance, retaliation for old hurts and fresh injuries, these were what she found on her knees, while the bell in the valley commenced the mass, and a small boy, very rapt and very earnest, prayed for his grandfather's life.

Yet the bargain came very close to being made the other way that day, and by Karl himself. On the day of the pilgrimage Karl found himself strangely restless and uneasy. Olga Loschek haunted him, her face when he had told her about the letter, her sagging figure when he had left her. Something like remorse stirred in him. She had taken great risks for

him. Of all the women he had known, she had most truly and unselfishly loved him.

Very nearly did he swing the scale in which Olga Loschek had hung her bargain with God—so nearly that in the intervals of affixing his sprawling signature to various documents, he drew a sheet of note paper toward him. Then, with a shrug, he pushed it away. So Olga Loschek lost her bargain.

At dawn the next morning the countess, still pale with illness and burning with fever, went back to the city.

"Thus," said the concierge, frying onions over his stove—"thus have they always done. But you have been blind. Rather, you would not see."

Old Adelbert stirred uneasily. "So long as I accept my pension—"

"Why should you not accept your pension? A trifle in exchange for what you gave. For them, who now ill use you, you have done through life but half a man. But one use they have for us, you and me, my friend—to tax us."

"The taxes are not heavy," quoth old Adelbert.

"There are some who find them so." The concierge heaped his guest's plate with onions.

Old Adelbert played with his steel fork. "I was a good patriot," he observed nervously, "until they made me otherwise."

"I will make you a better. A patriot is one who is zealous for his country and its welfare. That means much. It means that when the established order is had for a country, it must be changed. Not that you and I may benefit. God knows, we may not live to benefit. But that Livonia may free her neck from the foot of the oppression and raise her head among nations."

From which it may be seen that old Adelbert had at last joined the revolutionary party, an uneasy and unhappy recruit. It is true, but—a recruit. "If only some half measure would suffice," he said, giving up all pretense of eating. "This talk of rousing the mob, of rioting and violence, I do not like them."

"Then has age turned the blood in your veins to water!" said the concierge contemptuously. "Half measures! Since when has a half measure been useful? Did half measures win in your boasted battles? And what half measures would you propose?"

Old Adelbert sat silent. Now and then, because his mouth was dry, he took a sip of beer from his tankard. The concierge ate, taking huge mouthfuls of onions and bread, and surveying his feeble-hearted recruit with appraising eyes. To win him would mean honor, for old Adelbert, decorated for many braveries, was a power among the veterans. Where he led, others would follow.

"Make no mistake," said Black Humbert cunningly. "We aim at no bloodshed. A peaceful revolution, if possible. The king, being dead, will suffer not even humiliation. Let the royal family scavenge where it will. We have no designs on women. The chancellor, however, must die."

"I make no plea for him," said old Adelbert bitterly. "I wrote to him also, when I lost my position, and received no reply. We passed through the same campaigns, as I reminded him, but he did nothing."

"As for the crown prince," observed the concierge, eyeing the old man over the edge of his tankard, "you know our plan for him. He will be cared for as my own child, until we get him beyond the boundaries. Then he will be safely delivered to those who know nothing of his birth. A private fund of the republic will support and educate him."

Old Adelbert's hands twitched. "He is but a child," he said, "but already he knows his rank."

"It will be wise for him to forget it." His tone was ominous. Adelbert glanced up quickly, but the terrorist had seen his error, and masked it with a grin. "Children forget easily," he said, "and by this secret knowledge of yours, old comrade, all can be peacefully done. Until you brought it to me, we were, I confess, fearful that force would be necessary. To admit the rabble to the palace would be dangerous. Mobs go mad at such moments. But now it may be effected with all decency and order!"

"And the plan?" "I may tell you this." The concierge shoved his plate away and bent over the table. "We have set the day as that of the carnival. On that day all the people are on the streets. Processions are forbidden, but the usual costuming with their corps colors as pompons is allowed. Here and there will be one of us clad in red, a devil, wearing the colors of his satanic majesty. Those will be of our forces, leaders and speech makers. When we secure the crown prince, he will be put into costume until he can be concealed. They will seek, if there be time, the Prince Ferdinand William Otto. Who will suspect a child, wearing some fantastic garb of the carnival?"

"But the king?" Inquired old Adelbert in a shaking voice. "How can you set a day, when the king may rally? I thought all hung on the king's death."

King Karl becomes acquainted with the troubled state of the country in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Japanese are planning to link two of their islands with a railroad tunnel, 4,000 feet of which will be under the sea.