

LONG LIVE THE KING

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

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CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"Bobby," said his mother, with a catch in her voice, "haven't you something to suggest—as a toast?"

Bobby's eyes were on the cake; he came back with difficulty.

"Well," he meditated, "I guess—would 'home' be all right?"

"Home!" they all said, a little shakily, and drank to it.

Home! To the Thorpes, a little house on a shady street in America; to the Fraulein, a thatched cottage in the mountains of Germany and an old mother; to Pepy, the room in a tenement where she went at night; to Ferdinand William Otto, a formal suite of apartments in the palace, surrounded by pomp, ordered by rule and precedent, hardened by military discipline, and unsoftened by family love, save for the grim affection of the old king.

Home!

After all, Pepy's plan went astray, for the Fraulein got the china baby, and Ferdinand William Otto the Lincoln penny.

"That," said Bobby's father, "is a Lincoln penny, young man. It bears



"A Long Life, Full of Many Sorrows."

the portrait of Abraham Lincoln. Have you ever heard of him?"

The prince looked up. Did he not know the "Gettysburg address" by heart?

"Yes, sir," he said. "The—my grandfather thinks that President Lincoln was a very great man."

"One of the world's greatest, I hardly thought, over here—" Mr. Thorpe paused and looked speculatively at the boy. "You'd better keep that penny where you won't lose it," he said soberly. "It doesn't hurt us to try to be good. If you're in trouble, think of the difficulties Abraham Lincoln surmounted. If you want to be great think how great he was." He was a trifle ashamed of his own earnestness. "All that for a penny, young man!"

The festivities were taking a serious turn. There was a little racket at each plate, and now Bobby's mother reached over and opened hers.

"Oh!" she said, and exhibited a gaudy tissue paper bonnet. Everybody had one. Mr. Thorpe's was a dunce's cap, and Fraulein's a giddy Pierrette of black and white. Bobby had a military cap. With eager fingers Ferdinand William Otto opened his; he had never tasted this delicious paper cap joy before.

It was a crown, a sturdy bit of gold paper, cut into points and set with red paste jewels—a gem of a crown. He was charmed. He put it on his head, with the unconsciousness of childhood, and posed delightedly.

The Fraulein looked at Prince Ferdinand William Otto, and slowly the color left her lean face. She stared. It was he, then, and none other. Stupid, not to have known at the beginning! He, the crown prince, here in the home of these barbarous Americans, when, by every plan that had been made, he should now be in the hands of those who would dispose of him.

"I give you," said Mr. Thorpe, raising his glass toward his wife, "the giver of the feast. Boys, up with you!"

It was then that the Fraulein, making an excuse, slipped out of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The King Is Dead.

Now at last the old king's hour had come. Mostly he slept, as though his body, eager for its long rest, had already given up the struggle. Stimulants, given by his devoted physician, had no effect. Other physicians there were, a group of them, but it was Doc-

tor Weideman who stood by the bed and waited.

Father Gregory, his friend of many years, had come again from Etzel, and it was he who had administered the sacrament. The king had roused for it, and had smiled at the father.

"So!" he said, almost in a whisper. "You would send me clean! It is hard to scour an old kettle."

Doctor Weideman bent over the bed. "Majesty," he implored, "if there is anything we can do to make you comfortable—"

"Give me Hubert's picture," said the king. When his fingers refused to hold it, Annunciata came forward swiftly and held it before him. But his heavy eyes closed. With more intuition than might have been expected of her, the archduchess laid it on the white coverlet, and placed her father's hand on it.

The two sisters of mere stony beside the bed, and looked down at the quiet figure.

"I should wish to die so," whispered the elder. "A long life, filled with many deeds, and then to sleep away!"

"A long life, full of many sorrows!" observed the younger one, her eyes full of tears. "He has outlived all that he loved."

"Except the little Otto."

Their glances met, for even here there was a question.

As if their thought had penetrated the haze which is, perhaps, the mist that hides from us the gates of heaven, the old king opened his eyes.

"Otto!" he said. "I—wish—"

Annunciata bent over him. "He is coming, father," she told him, with white lips.

She slipped to her knees beside the bed, and looked up to Doctor Weideman with appealing eyes.

"I am afraid," she whispered. "Can you not—?"

He shook his head. She had asked a question in her glance, and he had answered. The crown prince was gone. Perhaps the search would be successful. Could he not be held, then, until the boy was found? And Doctor Weideman had answered "No."

In the antechamber the council waited, standing and without speech. But in an armchair beside the door to the king's room the chancellor sat, his face buried in his hands. In spite of precautions, in spite of everything, the blow had fallen. The crown prince, to him at once son and sovereign, the little crown prince, was gone. And his old friend, his comrade of many years, lay at his last hour.

Now he waited for the king's death. Waited numbly. For, with the tolling of St. Stefan's bell would rise the cry for the new king.

And there was no king.

In the little room where the sisters kept their medicines, so useless now, Hedwig knelt at the prie-dieu and prayed.

The king roused again. "Mettlich?" he asked.

The elder sister tiptoed to the door and opened it. The council turned, dread on their faces. She placed a hand on the chancellor's shoulder.

"His majesty has asked for you."

When he looked up, dazed, she bent down and took his hand.

"Courage!" she said quietly.

The chancellor stood a second inside the door. Then he went to the side of the bed, and knelt, his lips to the cold, white hand on the counterpane.

"Sire!" he choked. "It is I—Mettlich."

The king looked at him, and placed his hand on the bowed gray head. Then his eyes turned to Annunciata and rested there. It was as if he saw her, not as the embittered woman of late years, but as the child of the woman he had loved.

"A good friend, and a good daughter," he said clearly. "Few men die so fortunate, and fewer sovereigns." His hand moved from Mettlich's head, and rested on the photograph.

The elder sister leaned forward and touched his wrist. "Doctor!" she said sharply.

Doctor Weideman came first, the others following. They grouped around the bed. Then the oldest of them, who had brought Annunciata into the world, touched her on the shoulder.

"Madame!" he said. "Madame, I—his majesty has passed away."

Mettlich staggered to his feet, and took a long look at the face of his old sovereign and king.

In the meantime, things had been happening in the room where the council waited. The council free of the restraint of the chancellor's presence, had fallen into low-voiced consultation. What was to be done? They knew already the rumors of the streets, and were helpless before them. They had done what they could. But the boy was gone, and the city rising. Already the garrison of the fortress had been ordered to the palace, but it could not arrive before midnight. Friese had questioned the wisdom of it, at that, and was for flight as soon as the king died. Bayerl, on the other hand, urged a stand, in the hope that the crown prince would be found.

Their voices, lowered at first, rose

acrimoniously; almost they penetrated to the silent room beyond. On to the discussion came Nikky Larisch, covered with dust and spotted with froth from his horse. He entered without ceremony, his boyish face drawn and white, his cap gone, his eyes staring.

"The chancellor?" he said.

Some one pointed to the room beyond.

Nikky hesitated. Then, being young and dramatic, even in tragedy, he unbuckled his sword belt and took it off, placing it on a table.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have come to surrender myself."

The council stared.

"For what reason?" demanded Marschall coldly.

"I believe it is called high treason," He closed his eyes for a moment. "It is because of my negligence that this thing has happened. He was in my charge, and I left him."

No one said anything. The council looked at a loss, rather like a flock of sheep confronting some strange animal.

"I would have shot myself," said Nikky Larisch, "but it was too easy."

Then, rather at a loss as to the exact etiquette of arresting one's self, he bowed slightly and waited.

The door into the king's bedchamber opened. The chancellor came through, his face working. It closed behind him.

"Gentlemen of the council," he said. "It is my duty—my duty—to announce—" His voice broke; his grizzled chin quivered; tears rolled down his cheeks. "Friends," he said pitifully, "our good king—my old comrade—is dead!"

The birthday supper was over. It had ended with an American ice cream, brought in carefully by Pepy, because of its expensiveness. They had cut the cake with "Bobby" on the top, and the crown prince had eaten far more than was good for him.

He sat, fingering the Lincoln penny and feeling extremely full and very contented.

Then, suddenly, from a far off church a deep-toned bell began to toll slowly.

Prince Ferdinand William Otto caught it. St. Stefan's bell! He sat up and listened. The sound was faint; one felt it rather than heard it, but the slow booming was unmistakable. He got up and pushed his chair back.

Other bells had taken it up, and now the whole city seemed alive with bells—bells that swung sadly from side to side, as if they said over and over: "Alas, alas!"

Something like panic seized Ferdinand William Otto. Some calamity had happened. Some one was—perhaps his grandfather.

He turned an appealing face to Mrs. Thorpe. "I must go," he said. "I do not wish to appear rude, but something is wrong. The bells—"

Pepy had been listening, too. Her broad face worked. "They mean one

thing, they mean one thing, they mean one thing," she said slowly. "I have heard it said many times. When St. Stefan's tolls like that, the king is dead!"

"No! No!" cried Ferdinand William Otto and ran nimbly out of the door.

White the birthday supper was at its height, in the bureau of the concierge sat old Adelbert, heavy and despairing. That very day had he learned to what use the committee would put the information he had given them, and his old heart was dead within him. "One may not be loyal for seventy years, and then easily become a traitor."

Then, at seven o'clock, something happened.

The concierge's niece had gone,

leaving the supper ready cooked on the back of the stove. Old Adelbert sat alone, and watched the red bars of the stove fade to black. By that time it was done, and he was of the damned. The crown prince, who was of an age with the American lad upstairs, the crown prince was in the hands of his enemies. He, old Adelbert, had done it.

And now it was forever too late. Terrible thoughts filled his mind. He could not live thus, yet he could not die. The daughter must have the pension. He must live, a traitor, he on whose breast the king himself had pinned a decoration.

He wore his new uniform, in honor of the day. Suddenly he felt that he could not wear it any longer. He had no right to any uniform. He who had sold his country was of no country.

He went slowly out and up the staircase, dragging his wooden leg painfully from step to step. He heard the concierge come in below, his heavy footsteps re-echoed through the building. Inside the door he called furiously to his niece. Old Adelbert heard him strike a match to light the gas.

In his room he sat down on a straight chair inside the door, and stared ahead. Then, slowly and mechanically, he took off his new uniform and donned the old one. He would have put on civilian clothes, had he possessed any. For by the deeds of that day he had forfeited the right to the king's garb.

It was there that Black Humbert, hurrying up, found him. The concierge was livid, his massive frame shook with excitement.

"Quick!" he said, and swore a great oath. "To the shop of the cobbler Heinz, and tell him this word. Here in the building is the boy."

"What boy?"

The concierge closed a great hand on the veteran's shoulder. "Who but the crown prince himself?" he said.

"But I thought—how can he be here?"

"Here is he, in our very hands. It is no time to ask questions."

"If he is here—"

"He is with the Americans," hissed the concierge, the veins on his forehead swollen with excitement. "Now, go, and quickly. I shall watch. Say that when I have secured the lad, I shall take him there. Let all be ready. An hour ago," he said, raising his great fists on high, "and everything lost. Now—hurry, old wooden leg. It is a great night."

"But—I cannot. Already I have done too much. I am damned. I have lost my soul. I who am soon to die—"

"You will go."

And, at last, he went, hobbling down the staircase recklessly, because the looming figure at the stairhead was listening. He reached the street. There, only a block away, was the cobbler's shop, lighted, but with the dirty curtains drawn across the window.

Old Adelbert gazed at it. Then he commended his soul to God, and turned toward the palace. Before it were packed dense throngs of silent people. Now and then a man put down a box, and rising on it, addressed the crowd, attempting to rouse them. Each time angry hands pulled him down, and hisses greeted him as he slunk away.

Had old Adelbert been alive to anything but his mission, he would have seen that this was no mob of revolutionists, but a throng of grieving people, awaiting the great bell of St. Stefan's with its dire news.

Then, above their heads, it rang out, slow, ominous, terrible. A sob ran through the crowd. In groups, and at last as a whole, the throng knelt. Men uncovered and women wept.

The bell rang on. At its first notes old Adelbert stopped, staggered, almost fell. Then he uncovered his head.

"Gone!" he said. "The old king! My old king!"

His face twitched. But the horror behind him drove him on through the kneeling crowd. Where it refused to yield, he drove the iron point of his wooden leg into yielding flesh, and so made his way. Some one raised a cry and others took it up.

"The king!" they cried. "Show us the little king!"

But the balcony outside the dead king's apartments remained empty. The curtains at the long windows were drawn, save at one, opened for air. The breeze shook its curtains to and fro, but no small, childish figure emerged. The cries kept up, but there was a snarl in the note now.

"The king! Long live the king! Where is he?"

A man in a red costume, near old Adelbert, leaped on a box and lighted a flaming torch. "Aye!" he yelled, "call for the little king. Where is he? What have they done with him?"

Old Adelbert pushed on. The voice of the revolutionist died behind him, in a chorus of fury. From nowhere, apparently, came lighted box banners proclaiming the chancellor's treason, and demanding a republic. Some of them instructed the people to gather around the parliament where, it was stated, leading citizens were already forming a republic. Some, more violent, suggested an advance on the palace.

The crowd at first ignored them, but

as time went on, it grew ugly. By all precedent, the new king should be now before them. What, then, if this rumor was true? Where was the little king?

Revolution, now, in the making. A flame ready to blaze. Hastily, on the outskirts of the throng, a delegation formed to visit the palace, and learn the truth.

Drums were now beating steadily, filling the air with their throbbing, almost drowning out the solemn tolling of the bell. Around them were rally-



"Make—Haste," He Said, and Stiffly to the Ground.

ing angry groups. As the groups grew large, each drum led its followers toward the government house, where, on the steps, the revolutionary party harangued the crowd. Bonfires sprang up, built of no one knew what, in the public squares. Red fire burned. The drums throbbed.

The city had not yet risen. It was large and slow to move. Slow, too, to believe in treason, or that it had no king. But it was a matter of moments now, not of hours.

The noise penetrated into the very wards of the hospital. Red fires bathed pale faces on their pillows in a feverish glow. Nurses gathered at the windows, their uniforms and faces alike scarlet in the glare, and whispered together.

One such group gathered near the bedside of the student Haeckel, still in his lethargy. His body had gained strength, so that he was clothed at times, to wander aimlessly about the ward. But he had remained dazed. Now and then the curtain of the past lifted, but for a moment only. He had forgotten his name. He spent long hours struggling to pierce the mist.

But mostly he lay, or sat, as now, beside his bed, a bandage still on his head, clad in shirt and trousers, bare feet thrust into worn hospital slippers. The red glare had not roused him, nor yet the beat of the drums. But a word or two that one of the nurses spoke caught his ear and held him. He looked up, and slowly rose to his feet. Unsteadily he made his way to a window, holding to the sill to steady himself.

Old Adelbert had been working his way impatiently. The temper of the mob was growing ugly. It was suspicious, frightened, potentially dangerous. The cry of "To the palace!" greeted his ears as he finally emerged breathless from the throng.

He stepped boldly to the old stone archway, and faced a line of soldiers there. "I would see the chancellor!" he gasped, and saluted.

The captain of the guard stepped out. "What is it you want?" he demanded.

"The chancellor," he lowered his voice. "I have news of the crown prince."

Magic words, indeed. Doors opened swiftly before them. But time was flying, too. In his confusion the old man had only one thought, to reach the chancellor. It would have been better to have told his news at once. The climbing of stairs takes time when one is old and fatigued, and has but one leg.

However, at last it was done, and old Adelbert stamped to the door of the room where the council sat debating and the chancellor paced the floor.

Small ceremony now. Led by soldiers, who retired and left him to enter alone, old Adelbert stumbled into the room. He was out of breath and dizzy; his heart beat to suffocation. There was not air enough in all the world to breathe. He clutched at the velvet hangings of the door, and swayed, but he saw the chancellor.

"The crown prince," he said thickly, "is at the home of the Americans."

He stared about him. Strange that the room should suddenly be filled with a mist. "But there he those—who wait—there—to capture him."

He caught desperately at the curtains, with their royal arms embroidered in blue and gold. Shameful, in such company, to stagger so!

"Make—haste," he said, and slid stiffly to the ground. He lay without moving.

The council roused then. Mettlich was the first to get to him. But it was too late.

Old Adelbert had followed the mist to the gates it concealed. More than that, sham traitor that he was, he had followed his king.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the Road of the Good Children.

Haeckel crept to a window and looked out. Bonfires were springing up in the open square in front of the government house. Mixed with the red glare came leaping yellow flames. The wooden benches were piled together and fired, and by each such pyre stood a gesticulating, shouting red demon.

Guns were appearing now. Wagons loaded with them drove into the square, to be surrounded by a howling mob. The percentage of sober citizens was growing—sober citizens no longer. For the little king had not been shown to them. Obviously he could not be shown to them. Therefore rumor was right, and the boy was gone.

Against the palace, therefore, their rage was turned. The shouts for the little king turned to threats. The archbishop had come out on the balcony accompanied by Father Gregory. The archbishop had raised his hands but had not obtained silence. Instead, to his horror and dismay, a few stones had been thrown.

He retired, breathing hard. But Father Gregory had remained, facing the crowd fearlessly, his arms not raised in benediction, but folded across his chest. Stones rattled about him, but he did not flinch, and at last he gained the ears of the crowd. His great voice, stern and fearless, held them.

"My friends," he said, "there is work to be done, and you lose time. We cannot show you the king, because he is not here. While you stand there shrieking, his enemies have their will of him. The little king has been stolen from the palace."

He might have swayed them, even then. He tried to move them to a search of the city. But a pallid man, sweating with excitement, climbed on the shoulders of two companions, and faced the crowd.

"Aye, he is stolen," he cried. "But who stole him? Not the city. We are loyal. Ask the palace where he is. Ask those who have allied themselves with Karnia. Ask Mettlich."

There was more, of course. The cries of "To the palace!" increased. Those behind pushed forward, shoving the ones ahead toward the archway, where a line of soldiers with fixed bayonets stood waiting.

The archduchess and Hilda, with a handful of women, had fled to the roof, and from there saw the advance of the mob. Hedwig had laughingly refused to go.

At the hospital, Haeckel, the student, stood by his window, and little by little the veil lifted. His slow blood stirred first. The beating of drums, the shrieks of the crowd, the fires, all played their part. Another patient joined him, and together they looked out.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Warship Repairs.

Over and above the great activity of the British yards in building new warships, particularly destroyers, and the construction of merchant ships, an enormous amount of time and labor has to be devoted to repairs. In a recent speech Sir Eric Geddes said: "During one month the number of war vessels which needed repairs was nearly 1,000—that is, in addition to the 1,100 merchant ships—and that was by no means an abnormal month. Since the beginning of the war 31,000 war vessels, including patrol craft and mine sweepers, have been docked or placed on the ways, and these figures do not include repair work done to the vessels of our allies."

Add to this the arming of the vast fleet of British merchant vessels, and we have some conception of the enormous task of shipbuilding, equipping and repairing carried on by the British admiralty.

Silos in New South Wales.

Recently the New South Wales government department of agriculture announced that funds would be provided for assisting farmers in the erection of silos and numerous inquiries have been received, especially from dairy farmers. Many of the applicants have signified their willingness to pay much larger deposits than was anticipated. Owing to the abundance of rainfall in many districts silos will greatly benefit dairy farmers by enabling them to conserve the fodder harvested during the rainy season.