

LONG LIVE THE KING

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

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HEDWIG AND THE CROWN PRINCE WAIT IN VAIN FOR THE RETURN OF NIKKY.

Synopsis—The crown prince of Livonia, Ferdinand William Otto, ten years old, taken to the opera by his aunt, tress 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, which is threatened by plots of the terrorists to form a republic, 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 Anunciata, 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.

CHAPTER VI.

Two Prisoners.

Herman Spier had made his escape with the letter. He ran through tortuous byways of the old city, under arches into court yards, out again by doorways set in the walls, twisted, doubled like a rabbit. And all this with no pursuit, save the pricking one of terror.

But at last he halted, looked about, perceived that only his own guilty conscience accused him, and took breath. He made his way to the house in the shadow of the park until, an letter now buttoned inside his coat, and, finding the doors closed, lurked in the shadow of the park until an hour later, Black Humbert himself appeared.

He eyed his creature with cold anger. "It is a marvel," he sneered, "that such flight as yours has not brought the police in a pack at your heels."

"I had the letter," Herman replied quickly. "It was necessary to save it."

"You were to see where Niburg took the substitute."

But here Herman was the one to sneer. "Niburg?" he said. "You know well enough that he will take no substitute tonight, or any night. You strike hard, my friend."

The congerie growled, and together they entered the house across the street.

In the absence of Humbert, his niece, daughter of a milk seller near, kept the bureau, answered the bell, and after nine o'clock, when the doors were bolted, admitted the various occupants of the house and gave them the tiny tapers with which to light themselves upstairs. She was sewing and singing softly when they entered.

"All right, girl. You may go," said Humbert.

"Good night to you both," the girl said, and gave Herman Spier a nod. When she was gone, the congerie locked the door behind her.

"And now," he said, "for a look at the treasure."

He rubbed his hands together as Herman produced the letter. Heads close, they examined it under the lamp. "Then they glanced at each other.

"Old Adelbert, from the opera," he said. "He has lost his position, and would have spent the night airing his grievance. But I sent him off!"

Now, as between the two, Black Humbert furnished evil and strength, but it was the pallid clerk who furnished the cunning. And now he made a suggestion.

"It is possible," he said, "that he upstairs—could help."

"Adelbert? Are you mad?"

"The other. He knows codes. It was by means of one we caught him. I have heard that all these things have one basis, and a simple one."

The congerie considered. Then he rose.

"It is worth trying," he observed.

He thrust the letter into his pocket, and the two conspirators went out into the gloomy hall. There, on a ledge, lay white tapers, and one he lighted, shielding it from the draft in the hollow of his great hand. Then he led the way to the top of the house.

Here were three rooms. One, the best, was Herman Spier's, a poor thing at that. Next to it was old Adelbert's. At the extreme end of the narrow corridor, in a passage almost blocked by old furniture, was another room, a sort of attic, with a slanting roof.

Making sure that old Adelbert did not hear them, they went back to this door, which the congerie unlocked. Inside the room was dark. The taper showed little. As their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, the outlines of the attic stood revealed, a junk room, piled high with old trunks, and in one corner a bed.

Black Humbert, taper in hand, approached the bed. Herman remained near the door. Now, with the candle near, the bed revealed a man lying on it, and tied with knotted ropes; a young man, with sunken cheeks and weary, desperate eyes. Beside him, on a chair, were the fragments of a meal, a bit of broken bread, some cold soup, on which grease had formed a firm coating.

Lying there, sleeping and waking and sleeping again, young Haeckel, one time of his majesty's secret service and student in the university, had lost track of the days. He knew not how long he had been a prisoner, except that it had been centuries. Twice a day, morning and evening, came his jailer and loosened his bonds, brought food, of a sort, and allowed him, not out of mercy, but because it was the committee's pleasure that for a time he should live, to move about the room and bring blood again to his numbered limbs.

The congerie untied him, and stood back. "Now," he said.

But there was something about the story of the letter itself that bore the hall marks of truth.

"You see," finished Black Humbert cunningly, "this lady of the court—is plotting with some one, or so we suspect. If it is only a liaison—!" He spread his hands. "If, as is possible, she betrays us to Karnia, that we should find out. It is not," he added, "among our plans that Karnia should know too much of us."

The brandy was still working, but the spy's mind was clear. He asked for a pencil, and set to work. After all, if there was a spy of Karl's in the palace, it were well to know it. He tried complicated methods first, to find out the body of the letter, after all, was simple enough. By reading every tenth word, he got a consistent message, save that certain supplies, over which the congerie had ruled, were special code words for certain regiments. These he could not decipher.

"Whoever was to receive this," he said at last, "would have been in possession of complete data of the

"I should think," he protested once to his governess, "that he would have something better to do. He's the chancellor, isn't he?"

The king had passed a bad night, and Haeckel was still missing. The chancellor's heart was heavy.

The chancellor watched the crown prince, as he sat at the high desk, laboriously writing. It was in hour of English composition, and Prince Ferdinand William Otto was writing a theme.

"About dogs," he explained. "I've seen a great many, you know, and could do it better with a pencil. My pen sticks in the paper!"

He wrote on, and Mettlich sat and watched. He caught Miss Braithwaite's glance, and he knew what was in her mind. For nine years now had come, once a year, the painful anniversary of the death of the late crown prince and his young wife. For nine years had the city mourned, with flags at half mast and the bronze statue of the old queen draped in black. And for nine years had the day of grief passed unnoticed by the lad on whom hung the destinies of the kingdom.

Now they confronted a new situation. The next day but one was the anniversary again. The boy was older, and observant. It would not be possible to conceal from him the significance of the procession marching through the streets with muffled drums.

"They could not continue to lie to the boy. Truthfulness had been one of the rules of his rigorous upbringing. And he was now of an age to remember. So the chancellor sat and waited, and fingered his heavy watch chain.

Prince Ferdinand William Otto put his attention to the theme, and finished it. Then, flushed with authorship, he looked up. "May I read you the last line of it?" he demanded of the chancellor.

"I shall be honored, highness," Nikky said. The chancellor said "Otto" or "my child."

Prince Ferdinand William Otto read aloud, with dancing eyes, his last line: "I should like to own a dog," I thought," he said wistfully, "that I might ask my grandfather for one."

"I see no reason why you should not have a dog," the chancellor observed.

"Not one to be kept at the stables," Otto explained. "One to stay with me all the time. One to sleep on the foot of the bed."

But here the chancellor threw up his hands. Instantly he visualized all the objections to dogs, from fleas to rabies. And he put the difficulties into words. No man speaker was the chancellor when so minded. He was a master of style, of arrangement of logic and reasoning. He spoke at length, ever and anon, rising and pacing a few steps up and down the room. But when he had concluded, when the dog, so to speak, had fled yelping to the country of dead hopes, Prince Ferdinand William Otto merely gulped, and said:

"Well, I wish I could have a dog!"

Here the drop of nicotine got in its deadly work. "I'm afraid he is ill," said Prince Ferdinand William Otto. "He said he smoked too many cigarettes, and—"

"Is Captain Larisch ill?" Hedwig looked at the governess, and lost some of her bright color.

Miss Braithwaite did not know, and said so. "At the very least," she went on, "he should have sent some word. I do not know what things are coming to. Since his majesty's illness, no one seems to have any responsibility, or to take any."

"But of course he would have sent word," said Hedwig, frowning. "The crowd lined up, and smiled and cheered. And Prince Ferdinand William Otto sat very straight, and bowed right and left, smiling.

Old Adelbert, limping across the park to the opera, paused and looked down. Then he shook his head. The country was indeed come to a strange pass, with only that boy and the feeble old king to stand between it and the things of which men whispered behind their hands. He went on, with his head down.

As they drew near the end of the park, where the land of desire towered, Prince Ferdinand William Otto searched it with eager eyes. How wonderful it was! How steep and high, and alluring! He glanced sideways at Miss Braithwaite, but it was clear that to her it was only a monstrous heap of

sheet iron and steel, adorned with deflected greenery that had manifestly been out too soon in the chill air of very early spring.

A wonderful possibility presented itself. "If I see Bobby," he asked, "may I stop the carriage and speak to him?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, may I call to him?"

"Think it over," suggested Miss Braithwaite. "Would your grandfather like to know that you had done anything so undignified?"

He turned to her a rather desperate pair of eyes. "But I could explain to him," he said. "I was in such a hurry when I left, that I'm afraid I forgot to thank him. I ought to thank him, really. He was very polite to me."

Miss Braithwaite sat still in her seat and said nothing, just then. But later on something occurred to her. "You must remember, Otto," she said, "that this—this American child dislikes kings, and our sort of government. It is possible, isn't it, that he would resent your being of the ruling family? Why not let things be as they are?"

"We were very friendly," said Prince Ferdinand William Otto in a small voice. "I don't think it would make any difference."

But the seed was sown in the fertile ground of his young mind, to bear quick fruit.

It was the crown prince who saw Bobby first. He was standing on a bench, peering over the shoulders of the crowd. Prince Ferdinand William Otto saw him, and bent forward. "There he is!" he said, in a tense tone. "There on the—"

"Set up straight," commanded Miss Braithwaite.

"May I just wave once? I—"

"Otto!" said Miss Braithwaite, in a terrible voice.

But a dreadful thing was happening. Bobby was looking directly at him, and making no sign. His mouth was a trifle open, but that was all. Otto had a momentary glimpse of him, of the small cap set far back, of the white sweater, of two coolly critical eyes. Then the crowd closed up, and the carriage moved on.

Prince Ferdinand William Otto sat back in his seat, very pale. Clearly Bobby had forgotten him, and now the American boy had learned his unfortunate position as one of the detested order, and would have none of him.

"You see," said Miss Braithwaite, with an air of relief, "he did not know you."

Upon the box the man beside Beppo kept his hand on the revolver. The

"I wish I might have a dog," observed Prince Ferdinand William Otto. Fortunately, at that moment, Hedwig came in. She came in a trifle defiantly, although that passed unnoticed, and she also came unannounced, as was her cousinly privilege. And she stood inside the door and stared at the prince. "Well!" she said. "Is there to be no riding lesson today?"

"I don't know. Nikky has not come."

"Where is he?"

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

By MARY GRAHAM BONNER

THE TOAD'S WISH.

"I would like to own an automobile," said Harvey Hop Toad.

"You don't want a great deal, do you," said Teddy Tree Toad.

"No," said Harvey, "not such a great deal. I might want several automobiles."

"True," said Teddy, "or you might want a few sailing boats and a castle or two, and perhaps six dozen and a half pages in blue velvet to wait upon you."

"I wouldn't care at all whether they were blue velvet or not," said Harvey.

"That's mighty good of you," said Teddy, "with a funny little squeak and a grin."

"It shows I don't want everything," said Harvey.

"No, I don't suppose you do. In fact, I don't suppose there is anyone who can't find a few things they don't want, as well as hundreds they do. But I've never heard them talk about the things they didn't want—only about what they do."

"I've heard children chatting, and they have said: 'Oh, for a new engine, and a new express wagon, or a doll or a picture book. Or even a baseball bat or a tennis racket!'"

"They have never said: 'I don't want a balloon, or an ocean ship, or the railway tracks, or the moon.'"

"Well," said Harvey, "it's not nearly so interesting to talk about what you don't want as about what you do."

"I judge not," said Teddy.

"Now come, be honest, wouldn't you like to own an automobile?" asked Harvey.

"What would I do with an automobile?" asked Teddy. "I've often sat under my tree, reading a leaf, and I have heard a Toot-Toot-Toot, and a Honk-Honk-Honk, and I have thought to myself that there was a great deal of noise and dust and fuss about an automobile."

"Ah," said Harvey, "but think of the way it would carry you along."

"I don't want to be carried along," said Teddy.

"Why not?" asked Harvey.

"Because," said Teddy, "my business isn't to explore the world. I'm not Christopher Columbus. I'm Teddy, the Tree Toad. And if I were carried off, where would I want to go? Only to another tree—and then it wouldn't be the same. It wouldn't be home. No, an automobile would mean nothing, nothing to me!"

"Why?" asked Teddy.

"Because you don't want an automobile, of course."

"I don't see any 'of course' about it."

"Every one wants an automobile," said Harvey.

"Do they, indeed?" asked Teddy.

"I want one, too," said Harvey, "because it would be so nice not to hop everywhere I went. I could trot a horn and say 'Get-up-auto'—and along I'd go."

"You'd have to run it yourself, or else get a chauffeur," said Teddy, "and there aren't any such things as chauffeurs—I mean Toad chauffeurs. And I'm sure it would be quite beneath the dignity of a boy to be to a chauffeur for a toad. I feel quite sure of that."

"Oh, dear," said Harvey, "but how nice it would be if I didn't have to hop any more."

"Would you like to be injured so you couldn't?"

"Oh, no," said Harvey. "Perish the thought! Never could I endure such a thing."

"Well, be thankful, then, that you can hop. Half of us aren't nearly thankful enough that we can crawl or hop or walk or jump. And, too, Harvey, did you ever think how expensive it would be? You'd always be worrying yourself thin and pale over whether you could sell enough bugs to buy new tires, and so forth. Ah, my dear toad, be a toad, and don't try to copy a lot of people you see. And I'll tell you a secret. I believe that half the creatures who ride in automobiles are more worried about hurting them than they are happy over riding in them. They're always so afraid they won't be able to buy the next tire."

"Wish for good health, bugs, the strength to hop, but don't wish for automobiles. They're not everything in the world. No, indeed! Suppose the sun decided never to shine again. That would be a sorrow. And Harvey, agreed that Teddy was right."

A la Don Quixote.

"Mamma, may we have a plate?"

"What do you want with a plate?"

"We want to play knights, and they svs to have breast-plates."



He Crumpled Up in a Heap.



"Alpher," said the Congerie Shortly. "It Tells Nothing."

That blond devil interferes, and now his letter speaks but of blankets and slaves!"

The bell rang, and taking care to brush the letter out of sight, the congerie disappeared. Then ensued, in a ball, a short colloquy, followed by thumping on the staircase. The

doors returned.



"There He Is!" He Said.

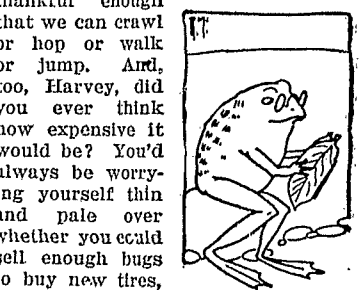
carriage turned back toward the palace.

Late that afternoon the chancellor had a visitor. Old Mathilde, his servant and housekeeper, showed some curiosity but little excitement over it. She was, in fact, faintly resentful. The chancellor had eaten little all day, and now, when she had an omelet ready to turn smoking out of the pan, must come the Princess Hedwig on foot like the common people, and demand to see him.

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Stone Church Without Mortar. Although built early in the Christian era without mortar, a stone church in Ireland still is in excellent condition.



Reading a Leaf.

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