Long Live The King

By

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CHAPTER III.

At the Riding School.

His royal highness the Crown Prince Ferdinand William Otto was in disgrace.

He had risen at six, bathed, dressed, and gone to mass, in disgrace. He had breakfasted at seven-thirty on fruit, cereal, and one egg, in disgrace. He had gone to his study at eight o'clock for lessons, in disgrace. A long line of tutors came and went all morning, and he worked diligently, but he was still in disgrace. All morning long and in the intervals between tutors he had tried to catch Miss Braithwaite's eye.

Except for the most ordinary civilities, she had refused to look in his direction.

The French tutor was standing near a photograph of Hedwig, and pretending not to look at it. Prince Ferdinand William Otto had a suspicion that the tutor was in love with Hedwig.

Prince Ferdinand William Otto did not like the French tutor.

He also found the sun unsettling. Besides, he hated verbs. Nouns were different. One could do something with nouns, although even they had a way of having genders. Into his head popped a recollection of a delightful pastime of the day before—nothing more nor less than flipping paper wads at the guard on the scenic railway as the car went past him.

Prince Ferdinand William Otto tore off the corner of a piece of paper, chewed it deliberately, rounded and hardened it with his royal fingers, and aimed it at M. Puaux. It struck him in the eye.

Instantly things happened. M. Puaux yelled, and clapped a hand to his eye. Miss Braithwaite rose. His royal highness wrote a rather shaky French verb, with the wrong termination. And on to this scene came Nikky for the riding lesson.

Nikky surveyed the scene. He had, of course, bowed inside the door, and all that sort of thing. But Nikky was an informal person, and was quite apt to bow deeply before his future sovereign, and then poke him in the chest.

"Well?" said Nikky.

"Good morning," said Prince Ferdinand William Otto, in a small and nervous voice.

"Nothing wrong, is there?" demanded Nikky.

M. Puaux got out his handkerchief and said nothing violently.

"Otto!" said Miss Braithwaite. "What did you do?"

"Nothing." He looked about. He was quite convinced that M. Puaux was what Bobby would have termed a poor sport, and had not played the game fairly. The guard at the railway, he felt, would not have yelled and wept. "Oh, well, I threw a piece of paper. That's all. I didn't think it would hurt."

Miss Braithwaite rose and glanced at the carpet. But Nikky was quick. Quick and understanding. He put his shiny foot over the paper wad.

"Paper!" said Miss Braithwaite. "Why did you throw paper? And at M. Puaux?"

"I—just felt like throwing something," explained his royal highness. "I guess it's the sun, or something."

Nikky dropped his glove, and miraculously, when he had picked it up the little wad was gone.

"For throwing paper, five marks," said Miss Braithwaite, and put it down in the book she carried in her pocket. It was rather an awful book. On Saturdays the king looked it over, and demanded explanations: "For untidy nails, five marks! A gentleman never has untidy nails, Otto. For objecting to winter flannels, two marks. Humph! For pocketing sugar from the tea tray, ten marks! Humph! For lack of attention during religious instruction, five marks. Ten off for the sugar, and only five for inattention to religious instruction! What have you to say, sir?"

Prince Ferdinand William Otto looked at Nikky and Nikky looked back. Then Ferdinand William Otto's left eyelid drooped. Nikky was astounded. How was he to know the treasury of strange things that the crown prince had tapped the previous afternoon? But, after a glance around the room, Nikky's eyelid drooped also. He slid the paper wad into his pocket.

"I am afraid his royal highness has hurt your eye, M. Puaux," said Miss Braithwaite.

"Not at all," said the unhappy young man, testing the eye to discover if he could see through it. "I am sure his royal highness meant no harm." M. Puaux went out, with his handkerchief to his eye.

While Oskar, his valet, put the crown prince into riding clothes, Nikky and Miss Braithwaite had a talk. It began by Nikky's stating that she was likely to see him a great deal now, and he hoped she would not find him in the way. He had been made aide-de-camp to the crown prince, vice Count Lussin, who had resigned on account of illness, having been roused at day-break out of a healthy sleep to do it.

Not that Nikky said just that. What he really observed was: "The king sent for me last night, Miss Braithwaite, and—and asked me to hang around."

Thus Nikky, of his sacred trust. None the less sacred to him, either that he spoke lightly. He glanced up at the crossed swords, and his eyes were hard.

And Miss Braithwaite knew. She reached over and put a hand on his arm. "You and I," she said. "Out of all the people in this palace, only you and I! The archduchess hates him. I see it in her eyes. She can never forgive him for keeping the throne from Hedwig. The very

As He Passed Men Lifted Their Hats and Women Bowed.

guards down below, the sentries at our doors, how do we know they are loyal?"

"The people love him," said Nikky doggedly.

"The people! Sheep. I do not trust the people. I do not trust any one. I watch, but what can I do? The very food we eat—"

"He is coming," said Nikky softly. And fell to whistling under his breath.

Together Nikky and Prince Ferdinand William Otto went out and down the great marble staircase. Sentries saluted. Two flunkies in scarlet and gold threw open the doors. A stray dog that had wandered into the court yard watched them gravely.

"I wish," said Prince Ferdinand William Otto, "that I might have a dog. Yesterday I met a boy who has a dog. It sleeps on his bed at night."

Nikky looked back. Although it had been the boast of the royal family for a century that it could go about unattended, that its only danger was from the overzeal of the people in showing their loyalty, not since the death of Prince Hubert had this been true in fact. No guards or soldiers accompanied them, but the secret police were always near at hand. So Nikky looked, made sure that a man in civilian clothing was close at their heels, and led the way across the square to the riding school.

A small crowd lined up and watched the passing of the little prince. As he passed, men lifted their hats and women bowed.

"I have a great many friends," he said with a sigh of content, as they neared the riding school. "I suppose I don't really need a dog."

"Look here," said Nikky, after a pause. "Look here, highness, you didn't treat your friends very well yesterday."

"I know," said Prince Ferdinand William Otto meekly. But Prince Ferdinand William Otto had thought out a defense. "I got back all right didn't I?" He considered. "It was worth it. A policeman shook me!"

"Which policeman?" demanded Nikky in a terrible tone, and in his fury quite forgot the ragging he had prepared for Otto.

"I think I'll not tell you, if you don't mind."

(To be continued)

Many a lawyer politician has at last realized his ambition to "serve his country." Those questionnaires have kept them going at a lively clip.
