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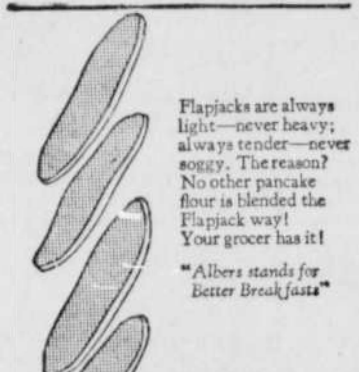
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W. N. D. Salt Lake City, No. 42-1928

# King Tommy

BY GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

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## CHAPTER XIX—Continued

"And I think," I said, "that you scarcely do justice to the courage which our younger clergy undoubtedly possess. A man who would face a Mothers' union two days in a week and would take charge of a Girls' Friendly society for an outing in the country, must be daring enough for any adventure."

"No curate," said Cable sullenly, "would venture to marry a princess."

"Do you happen to know our patriarch?" said the king. "No, I thought not. You wouldn't talk that way about curates if you did. I assure you, Mr. Cable, that our patriarch would do anything. Wouldn't he, Casimir?"

"He dares do all that may become a man," said Casimir. "Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear, the armed rhinoceros, or—"

"Your patriarch," said Cable, "isn't a curate."

"But he was once," said the king. "He must have been, though before my time, of course. They all begin by being curates. And I assure you he wouldn't have hesitated—except for moral reasons, of course—to marry two or three princesses, and their mothers, who would be queens, if he'd wanted to. When I tell you that our patriarch has often gone for me without a sign of nervousness, and used language you'd scarcely believe over some trumpery little affair about a girl—and that was when I was a king, an absolute monarch, remember, with an army and all that sort of thing. No, there's no use saying that the clergy aren't do things."

The discussion was degenerating into a wrangle of purely academic interest. It was Troyte who brought us all back to the business on hand.

"The real question," he said, "is not what a curate or a bishop might do, but what has actually happened since the—er—the fugitives reached Lystria. I sent a telegram to the patriarch saying that the man was an impostor. He surely wouldn't go on with the marriage after that."

"Curate or no," said Cable, "I hope the patriarch has shot him."

"He lies," said Casimir, "in durance vile. This very morning I received from the patriarch a telegram—"

He produced it from his pocket. The king translated it for us. It told us that Tommy had been put under arrest.

"That is perhaps the best thing which could have happened," said Troyte.

But it was, even on his showing, a very bad best. The situation in Lystria was extremely critical. A revolution, carefully planned and organized, had actually taken place. The patriarch and the nobles, the only people who counted in Lystria, were perfectly determined to have a king of their own seated on the historic throne of Wladislaws the Hunter, the founder of the Lystrian dynasty, famous a thousand years ago for his skill in killing bears. They wanted to place on somebody's head the silver-gilt fillet which that monarch had bequeathed to his successors. But if they did anything of the sort every Balkan state would mobilize at once and nothing could avert a war unless England recognized the new king and declared herself ready to support him. That, and the benevolent neutrality of France, might save the situation. But how could England recognize a revolution which had either put no king on the throne or set up some impossible person like Emily's curate?

Troyte explained all that to us, slowly and carefully.

"But I thought," said Cable, "that you'd squared the League of Nations and all that lot."

Troyte objected to the word "squared." I dare say the League of Nations would have objected to it too. What he had done, so he said, was to create an atmosphere favorable to the consideration of the claims of an English king to the Lystrian throne.

"Meaning Lord Norheys?" said Cable.

Troyte nodded. He certainly had not meant his "atmosphere" to envelop Emily's curate.

"In my opinion," said the king, "the best thing for us to do is to leave things as they are."

"Surely," I said, "not exactly as they are. That curate belongs more or less to my sister Emily and she's bent on finding him. There'll be a frightful row if she discovers him lying in a dungeon in Lystria."

"Nobody need ever know," said Cable.

"The English lady who accompanied them," said the king, "must be aware of the facts, and if I judge her character correctly, she will certainly tell what she knows."

"What English lady?" said Cable.

"Her name," said the king, "is

Church, Miss Church, and unless I'm mistaken about her—"

"If Janet Church is there," I said, "she's certain to have telegraphed to every ambassador in Europe and also to the prime minister and the leader of the Labor party and all the different Liberal parties there are, demanding the instant release of Emily's curate."

"What I want to know," said Cable, "is what's going to happen about my oil concession?"

Nobody could give him any information about that. It had not been granted by the Megalian government. Indeed, it had not been granted by anybody. All Cable really had in writing was a promise that it would be granted by the king of Lystria when he was safe on the throne.

"That," said King Wladislaws, "is why I say that things had better be left as they are."

"But they can't," I said. "Emily's curate can't be left in prison. You don't know my sister Emily or you wouldn't suggest it. Besides, there's Janet Church to be reckoned with."

"I think," said the king, "that by this time the young man has probably been released, perhaps married, possibly even crowned."

"Good G—d!" said Troyte. "You don't mean to say you actually think—"

The king waved his hand cheerfully. "The patriarch," he said, "is a man of unbounded patriotism, devoted to the cause of Lystrian independence."



"He Lies," said Casimir, "in Durance Vile. This Very Morning I Received From the Patriarch a Telegram."

And he dislikes, intensely dislikes, the archimandrite of Megalia. The Lystrian nobility wish for a king, an English king, a sportsman."

"Emily's curate seems to be that," I said.

"My daughter—" said the king. "I am now speaking very confidentially—my daughter rather liked that young man. I liked him myself. Casimir liked him. Everyone liked him. My daughter's only objection to marrying him was the existence of a certain Miss Temple. Now it appears that in his case there is no Miss Temple. It is likely—I do not say certain, but very likely—that Calypso will insist on the patriarch releasing him. She may even suggest that the marriage should take place at once."

Then Norheys slid back the door which divided the compartment from the corridor.

"Thought I'd look in," he said, "just to see how you're getting on. Viola has dropped off into a doze, and I was feeling a bit hipped with no one to talk to."

He looked around with an amiable smile, as if he were sure of a warm welcome. He got nothing of the sort. Troyte and Cable scowled at him. The king regarded him as an inconvenient outsider. I looked the other way. Casimir was the only one who spoke. He quoted Shakespeare in allusion to Lady Norheys' doze:

Sleep that knits up the ravel'd sleeve of care.

"Hit it in one," said Norheys, settling down between Cable and the king. "Well, Uncle Ned, settled up the affairs of eastern Europe?"

"No," said Troyte.

"Well," said Norheys. "I don't want to chip in, don't you know. I hate fellows who shove their ears in when not asked. Still, what I always say is this: An ordinary sort of fellow with no particular brains and that kind of thing often gets there, though you don't expect him to. That's why I'm offering to help. It seems to me the position is this—you'll pick me up if I'm wrong about facts, won't you?"

Uncle Ned? I'm often a bit weak on facts."

"Facts in this case," I said, "are much more like fancies."

"That's just where I come in," said Norheys. "A fact might have knocked me out, but when it comes to fancies, I'm there all the time. Well now, these Lystrian Johnnies seem to want a king. Don't see why they do myself; but there it is. They've got a princess, but that doesn't satisfy them."

"It doesn't satisfy the League of Nations," said the king, "or the Entente powers. That's where the trouble is. The Lystrians would be quite satisfied with Calypso. In fact, they'd be very glad to have me back again, all of them except the patriarch. But the Entente powers simply won't stand me."

"That comes to exactly the same thing as what I said," said Norheys. "Well, along comes some fellow we don't know, dropping like what-d-you-call-him from the thing-a-me-bob. What?"

"A deus ex machina," I suggested.

"That's not what I meant," said Norheys. "I meant a jolly old bolt from the blue. But whatever we call him, thunderbolt or little tin god, there he is, quite ready to take on the job, princess and all. That's the way things stand, isn't it, Uncle Ned?"

Troyte was looking out of the window. Casimir murmured something about a Daniel coming to judgment. Norheys went on:

"Well, then, why not let him? That's what I always say: If there's a fellow who'll buck in where wanted, then let him buck in; so long as he doesn't interfere with us."

"Unfortunately," said Troyte coldly, "you've left out of consideration the League of Nations and the treaty of Versailles, and the policy of the Allied Powers."

"What I say about all that," said Norheys, "is this: What did we fight the war for? I don't know, of course, not so to speak out of my own inside. I just fought because all the other fellows I knew did too. But I do know what you said at the time, Uncle Ned, and it's no use your saying you didn't, for you did. What we fought for was the self-determination of small nationalities. Well, there you are, and you can't go back on it now. Lystria is a small nationality, isn't it?"

"Two and a half millions before the war," said the king. "Probably about two millions now."

"Couldn't possibly have a smaller nationality," said Norheys, "and what I always say is this, Uncle Ned: If you've said a thing, you've jolly well got to stick to it, even if you wish you'd said something else, which of course everybody generally does."

I felt quite sorry for Troyte. He really did talk about small nationalities and self-determination several times during the later years of the war. I dare say he deserved to be twitted with it. But I felt I must speak a word for him.

"You forget," I said to Norheys, "that you also fought to make the world safe for democracy. Setting up an absolute monarch in Lystria is not democracy."

"When I talk about democracy," said Norheys, "or rather when other fellows like you, Uncle Bill, talk about democracy—for it's a thing I never mention myself either in a club or anywhere else—I always say that the first thing is to settle: What is democracy?"

We all felt, I think, that Norheys had better be left to answer his own question. Troyte, I know, distrusts the American formula—"By, with, for, to, at, in, the people." None of the rest of us had a formula at all.

"Democracy," said Norheys, "simply means being able to try. You go to h—I to any fellow who tries to come it over on you. That's my idea of democracy, and you may say what you like, Uncle Ned, that's what most of us jolly well fought for. Though what I always say is this: We were rather let down in the end. Still there is, don't you know, a sacred principle and all that, the sort of thing no decent fellow ever goes back on."

"The Lystrians," I said, "are evidently out-and-out democrats. 'You go to h—I' seems exactly to describe their attitude toward the rest of Europe."

"Well, then, there you are," said Norheys. "And if you're there, what's the use of worrying?"

The attendant from the restaurant came along and told us that luncheon was served. Norheys rushed off to waken Viola. The rest of us staggered along the swaying corridor. Troyte's forehead was lined with a deep frown, always a sign that he was engaged in serious thought. I remembered exactly the same wrinkles when he was bothered over the writing of Greek lambics at school, which were considered in our day a necessary part of the education of an English gentleman.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**Scholars on Strike**

Strikes are not a modern trouble. One of the earliest and oddest strikes on record is that which took place in Oxford, England, in 1209, when, in consequence of a peculiarly outrageous aggression of town upon gown, masters and scholars to the number of 3,000 "downed tools" and retired in high dudgeon to adjacent centers of learning. The schools were closed, the city was laid under an interdict, and the trouble only ended five years later—in the complete humiliation of the erring burghesses, who were compelled to do public penance and to accord large privileges to the university. When the offended clerks finally condescended to return, these "blackleg" who had continued to lecture in defiance of the will of the majority were punished by three years' suspension.



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