

# When the King Awoke "The Nation's Pawn"

(CONCLUDED)

By Edwin L. Sabin

## CHAPTER XII.

## The King is Saved.

**S**OLITARY sat the king, his eyes closing not. The queen, wrapped in the cloak, stirred and murmured, and he started; but she was quiet again. In her troubled sleep the duchess uttered a broken sob; the jester, with chin upon chest, mildly snored; but the king's ear was pricked for only the one spot.

Heavier and heavier settled the night; the dew dripped, dripped, and the damp air seeped amidst the pines—soaking, saturating. Smoothly the moonlight arabesque slipped across the brown pine-needle carpet; circle, triangle and square succeeded by square, triangle and circle. Once out of the mystic region surrounding the little oasis came trotting a nimble, doggy shape, suddenly stopped, and stared; its eyes shone green in the duskiess. The king half arose, threateningly, and the shape vanished like a wraith.

**T**HROUGH the still hours sat the king, wide-eyed, scarcely winking, rarely moving, mechanically seeing, mechanically listening, ever numbly thinking. The queen fitfully murmured, the duchess moaned and shuddered, the jester breathed gutterally; steadily glided the night away.

The arabesque upon the matted brown needles grew thin and ghostly, and the moon, glimpsed through the branches overhead, was descending and half-way down the sky. A little breeze sighed amidst the tree tops. The moonlight pattern perceptibly faded, and around about the king the forest depths waned from black to gray. Birds twittered. The air, awakened by the little breeze, gently searched amongst the stately trunks, reaping out the darkness of the night and inviting in the freshness of the morning.

The king waited. The jester drew up his knees, moved his head, raised it, and blinked about him. His eyes were red, and his large features were coarsely mottled by the dampness and his constricted sleep. He caught the king's gaze, and yawning, interrogatively lifted his brows. The king wanly smiled.

"I am cold," complained the queen, from her wrapping.

The jester stiffly shifted, to arise; but quicker, the king sprang and knelt beside her.

"It is morning, pet," he said, eagerly. "You have had a fine sleep. Do you want to get up? Come; let me help you up, pet. The sun will warm you."

The queen turned her face away, and pouted.

"Not you," she said. "Where is that other man—the nice man with the funny nose?"

"Sir Hugo? He is here," replied the king, sadly; and he gave place.

"We must be starting," declared Sir Hugo. "Will the Lady Louise arise?"

The duchess was now sitting up, her face swollen, and was rearranging her hair. No one noticed her.

"I am hungry," asserted the queen.

"We have a short distance to go first," soothed the jester. "Then we will breakfast. Come."

**T**HE queen, too, sat up; and disengaged herself from the cloak, and throwing back the hood of her domino, surveyed her face in her hand-glass. She drew from her bosom a rouge-jar, and with many a little move and pose of the head proceeded to tint anew her cheeks. The others patiently bided—the duchess with a cold smile of disdain.

"Come!" said the jester, again, to the queen.

He lifted her to her feet; and stooping picked up the cloak.

"I will take it," spoke the king; and he did.

It was yet warm with her body, and he folded it lovingly. 'Twas a pitiful

substitute for what once he possessed, but he humbly accepted it, and in it found some comfort.

**T**HEY set forth; Sir Hugo leading off, without hesitation, through the trees, the queen, murmuring plaintive protests, her slippers already bursted and torn, essaying to keep by his side, and the duchess, her gown-draggling with damp, and clinging to her limbs, mutely trudging at the king's heels.

Beneath their tread the pine needles were soft and yielding. Their course was noiseless, save for the swishing of the duchess' wet skirt and the twitching of it as it bound her ankles; save for the swinging of some obtrusive branch, and the rasp of a hand upon bark.

The route was ever tending downward—short climbs being succeeded by long descents. The jester led confidently on. The sun began to pour his beams amongst the trees, and chill was ousted by humid warmth, as soaked earth and foliage rapidly dried.

The steadfast pace was merciless; but with only a bare pause, now and then, nervously to send a searching glance rearward, into some vale that they had just traversed, or athwart some slope, the jester pushed ahead. What upheld the straining queen, what upheld the plodding duchess, unless that latent strength of spirit which is woman's intrinsic heritage, who may tell; but the face of Sir Hugo was running water, and the throat of the king was narrowed and dry.

The party surmounted a little rise, and lo, before them was spread across their way a long valley; the hither flank, adown which the forest continued, sloping from beneath their feet to a stream below; the farther side rising steep and rocky, upon the crest of it the wall of a city, beyond the wall roof and spire and tower, here and there glinting in the morning sun; issuing from the wall, and flowing obliquely, gradually cutting lower, a yellow road, and paralleling the wall, upon either hand of the road, a long, thin camp—the hazy blue of curling smoke, the flutter of pennant, the occasional gleam of arms perfectly distinct. To the ears upon the hill-tops was wafted elfin shout, faint neigh, and far-off blows of a hammer.

At the brink of the stream, below, horsemen were watering their steeds.

**O**VER all was the intense blue of the beautiful Stecsin sky. Flat against it, above the city, was Stecsin's great red osprey—banner.

"Thesau!" breathed the king.

"And beleaguered—mark the camp?" said Sir Hugo.

"True," muttered the king. His eyes flashed. "By St. Jude," he exclaimed, "they shall beleaguer in vain!"

"Is it there where we get breakfast?" inquired the queen, mildly. "It is so far!"

"Ah!" cried the king. "See! A sortie! St. Jude for Stecsin!"

His chest heaved and his breath expanded his nostrils. A gate in the wall had magically opened, and out into the road was streaming headlong, with gleam of steel, puff of powder, rearing of horse and jostling of shoulder against shoulder, an eruption of hornets from Thesau's angry hive.

In the camp was hasty mounting of steed, scampering to and fro, drawing of blade and puff answering puff. The men at the water's edge went galloping upward, spurring and belaboring.

For a few seconds the confusion was all in pantomime. Then burst upon the ears of the watchers on the hill-top the belated, pent-up tidings—medley of trumpet-note and shot and shout and cheer, subdued but fierce; the clamor of deadly conflict. In a mass the battle covered the road, and surged along, sweeping either side.

# "The Nation's Pawn"

This Great Serial Story from the pen of Roy Norton will start in the Literary Magazine May 16.

**J**UST now we are doing a lot of talking about the great Roy Norton serial story which we have purchased for our Literary Magazine, but in another two or three weeks you and everybody else who reads the Literary Magazine will be doing it. Without question the story is the most interesting romance that has appeared in this country in a decade and its publication will create talk wherever good stories are read.

"The Nation's Pawn" makes a far stronger appeal to the real men and women of America than did even that other great Norton story, "The Vanishing Fleets," because it is intensely American. It tells of a bitterly contested presidential election like the famous Hayes-Tilden imbroglio; of the exciting race of the Alaskan contesting electors to Washington; of two vast armed forces gathered at the capitol city in grim determination to fight rather than submit to any unfavorable decision; of the forcible abduction of one of the presidential candidates and the mysterious removal of the other from a limited train traveling at full speed; of the strange part in this great national drama played by "The Nation's Pawn," a man of immense wealth and strange power to control great commercial and political affairs; of the final happy settlement of the whole trouble through the mysterious activities of "The Nation's Pawn," and the happy marriage of the hero and heroine whose destinies are terribly complicated by those of the two candidates.

In a brief way, that is the outline of Roy Norton's newest story. It is impossible to do justice to it in that space, but it may serve to indicate to you that our praise of the novel is not in the least exaggeration.

**Y**OU will have to wait only two weeks more for the opening installment of this great story, for it starts in the issue of May the 16th.

Here's more good news for you—the instalments will be liberal. There will be enough of the story in every issue to satisfy you and yet leave you craving for more.

Moreover, we expect to have high grade illustrations for every installment.

**U**NTIL the opening of "The Nation's Pawn" we are giving you a strong three part story by Campbell MacCulloch, "The Sacrifice," which starts in this issue. Campbell MacCulloch has made several big hits recently, notably with his humorous story, "The Fourth Dimension." He is collaborating with O. Henry in "The Open Door," a play, and his story, "The Sacrifice," is also to be dramatized.

"Look! Behind us!" exclaimed the jester, abruptly.

All whirled, so urgent was his tone. Swiftly scuttling down, from pine to pine on through the glade that they had just left, some three hundred yards to their rear, neared hot upon their trail a man's squat, uncouth figure. He shook his arm at them.

"The cricket!" bade Sir Hugo. "Better the prince than Del Oro."

He grasped the queen and dragged her into instant flight. Down the slope, through the scattered trees, they sped, the four of them—stumbling, lunging, sliding, their need precipitous. Behind them the Cricket was toiling up the rise. He topped it,

and they heard his hoarse shout as he sighted them again. The king glanced rearward, and glimpsed his apish bulk bowling down with gigantic strides, eating up the space.

The queen's knees gave way under her, she sank, and the mirror went glancing from her nerveless hand; but Sir Hugo passed his arm about her, and with closed eyes she hung in his clutch as he bore her onward. The king looked to the duchess, panting at his shoulder; his lips formed an unuttered offer of assistance, but she only bravely smiled, from her white face, and shook her head.

They were almost to the river, and

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