



## That Hundredth Chance

By RALPH ROEDER

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Pushing the documents away, the king rose as eagerly as a schoolboy given an opportunity to play truant, and with exactly the same feeling of trepidation tiptoed from his study out into the long corridor. The long corridor stretched, softly carpeted and dim, 600 feet or more, connecting the morning-room of the private apartments at one end to the blue salon of the state apartments at the other.

The king was alone for the first time, as he remembered it, in over two years. He felt a strange thrill.

Advancing a dozen steps into the long corridor, he glanced about. It was a dangerous adventure for the king to undertake, for the year had been one of unsurpassed republican activity. Unrest and revolt hung heavily in the air about the palace, and even in it. Peril lurked everywhere.

To him it was, if anything, a break in the great monotony.

Now he paused, undecided just what use to make of his short freedom. Whether to go to the blue salon and create consternation among the privy councillors and nobles waiting there for the morning audience, or to the morning room at the other end and surprise the queen and the three-year-old Prince of Lagenda in their post-breakfast play.

Being always very much more in love with the queen and the prince than with the affairs of state, the king turned toward the morning room.

Almost at the bedchamber corridor, which joins the long corridor and leads off from it to the queen's own rooms, the king in his progress became aware of another figure slipping along as furtively as himself and following him.

"Well, what do you want?" the king called quietly.

The figure paused in the shadows a moment, then advanced to where the king stood.

"I—I," he began. But his peasant tongue was too thick to furnish the glibly quick explanation needed for the critical moment.

Suddenly he realized that he had penetrated into the private apartments of the palace.

Tensely, trembling, he raised his left hand and held the four fingers straight upright, to indicate the dominant people, with the thumb crooked inward and bent, to represent the fallen king.

The king, still keeping gay and adventurous, and not knowing just what to do to keep up the pleasant game with this earnest man who amused him so much, held up his left hand, too, and quite deftly imitated the queer movements the man had made.

It was a great success.

"Ah, comrade!" he exclaimed in a low, ecstatic voice.

Gently but persistently withdrawing his hand from the gargantuan grip the king smiled boyishly.

The broad man quickly, eagerly, continued: "Ah, how the luck is with us. Without you I would have been lost. I am comrade Antonio. I am the one who drew the black lot in the great meeting at Navotas. Show me the king's room!"

Then the king knew that an assassin, a revolutionist of the great secret League of Liberty stood by his side.

The king thought quickly, with the boyish smile still lingering on his face, although his eyes were keen behind it. What methods of escape were open to him?

It would be useless to hope to match his slenderness against the broad peasant in grappling strength.

"Why do you hesitate, comrade?" the stranger was asking suspiciously. "Our oath binds us to help one another whenever called upon. Lead me to the ruler of our land!"

The chances were a hundred to one that the peasant's great strength would make the attempt only a means of hastening the assassination, but what if it did come to the worst, it would mean but little, for the king had clearly in his mind at that moment the image of the Prince of Lagenda, just beyond in the morning room, the brave little prince, to whom he had been so blithely hastening a moment before.

So, still smiling, the king began to draw back his slender right hand, ready for the blow—to take the hundredth chance.

Slowly, cautiously, imperceptibly, and easily his hand went back, poised for the attack, and it was quite to his hip when a pattering noise, sounding at the end of the long corridor from the direction of the morning-room, caused both men to look toward it.

One hundred feet ahead, a shaft of morning sunlight had fallen into the gloom of the long corridor. The door of the morning room was partly open, and outlined against it was the small, sturdy blond figure of the three-year-old Prince of Lagenda.

The square-faced man, staring in surprise at the advent of the child, glanced from the father to the son with recognition hovering in his slow eyes.

"Eh, comrade, who is this?" he asked wonderingly, in the patois of the peasant.

The king had taken the Prince of Lagenda by one chubby hand and smiled his famous, boyish, merry smile more winningly than ever. It was an instant for which regicides and revolutionists might have prayed for centuries. Not only the king, but the four-hundred-year-old Wepsburg dynasty could be wiped out by one stroke.

Now it was the king's turn to choose his only chance, as the peasant had chosen a minute before.

Still smiling very quietly and genially, with his eyes looking full into the other man's, his fingers grasping the prince's soft, moist ones just a trifle tighter, the king said clearly and softly:

"You asked me to lead you to the ruler of our country, did you not? Well, I will not have to, he has come to us. This is he."

He waited for the effect of his words on the blundered revolutionist, then he continued, still quietly and cordially:

"People call him the Prince of Lagenda, but he is the real ruler of the kingdom? Would you know how he rules? By the purity of his white skin, by the fearlessness of his blue eyes, by the gentleness of his curly hair, the king stopped to finger it lovingly, racked by the thought that it might be for the last time.

"Our country has been in sore need of one like him for many generations," he resumed. "There has been neither purity, nor fearlessness, nor gentleness. But God has given them all

to him. He will be a king who will be a king indeed, whether he shall have a kingdom or not.

"I, in my few years, have tried to keep and to better this old land for him, but the Wepsburgs have always bred in steps, one valley between two mountains, I am the valley, Fernando the Easy."

Then the revolutionist knew that it was the king, the man he had come to kill, who was talking. And more, that the crown prince, marked by the league as equally doomed, was within his reach.

He trembled and shook like a winter leaf with the agitation of it, but his right hand held tightly over the lump in his coat.

Imperceptibly his hand sank deeper into the pocket.

"I drew the black lot in the great meeting at Navotas," he declared coldly. "I came to kill."

"Yes, I know," the king replied, his face still smiling, but the foreboding of desperation in his eyes. "But why? Have you among your revolutionists one man like that?"

His free hand pointed to the prince.

"Your tongue shows that you are from the north provinces, from Bratun, perhaps; you breed steeds on your plains of Bratun for speed. This man-child has been bred to rule. The white plume that led on the bloody slopes of La Raza belonged to his great-grandfather. The sword that turned back the French legions at Brassy was held by his grandfather."

"He will make our land great and prosperous again, and I ask to live myself only that I may teach him and guide him. He alone can do it, he will be the mountain!"

"A child," grumbled the square-faced man gruffly.

"In only eighteen years he will be of age! What is eighteen years in the life of a nation? You and I may not enjoy the blessings of it, but our children will. You have children, have you not, Antonio?"

The republican's head shook grimly.

"There was no bread to feed them—why should I have them?"

The king's face paled until it held only the wan ghost of a smile. After all, he was but the valley, Fernando the Easy.

The revolutionist was growling some inarticulate words.

"I came to kill," he said with peasant obstinacy. "I drew the black lot in the great meeting at Navotas."

The big muscles of his right arm stiffened, and slowly his hand sunk deeper into the pocket. It reached the lump and grasped it.

Then the Prince of Lagenda, becoming suddenly impatient, pulled away from his father and pushed out with his small fist against the stranger's thick leg.

"Go away!" he ordered. "My father is to play with me. You are not a counsellor—go with the servants."

He lifted his face fearlessly to the man's brown one and his clear, blue eyes flashed with the indescribable sureness of four centuries of implicit command.

"Go!" he repeated.

The peasant's face suddenly went white as chalk, his thick, sturdy legs trembled, his long-bred peasant blood—the 400 years of obedience—was turning to water before the pleasure of that infant royal hand.

There was a hypnotic force enveloping him, the spell of the old Wepsburgs, the Wepsburgs of the white plumes and long swords. The instinct of submission gripped him. He fought it desperately, but the blood told.

His hands dropped limply to his sides.

"I—I go," he stammered. "Although it means death outside. They are waiting for me. It was decreed that if he who drew the black lot should not do his task within the week he should be marked for death himself. No, no," he noticed the king's agitation. "It will be useless to try to save me. And I am content."

He turned to go, but the king halted him, and reaching out his long, white hand, suddenly grasped the broad, brown one. His large, sad, whimsical eyes, more fitted for a poet or a dreamer than for a ruler, were brimming moist.

"Good-by—good-by, Comrade Antonio!" he said. "Sergeant of the guard!"

He clapped his hands and a guard hurried from a cross corridor.

"Safe escort to the palace gate!"

His Method.

"Why do you encourage your boy to send his verses to the magazines? Do you want him to be a poet?"

"No; merely want him to get the conceit knocked out of him."

## HELPED TO CREATE NATION

Men of the Pony Express and the Overland Stage Deserve Place on History's Page.

There recently died in Los Angeles, William Gooding, reputed to be the last of the famous pony express riders. The present generation knows little about those pioneer times and the wonderful way news was carried across the continent during the ten years immediately prior to the building of the Union and Southern Pacific lines, which met at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1868. Mail and newspapers took from a month to fifty days to cross the continent prior to the establishment of the pony express, which began its service April 16, 1859, reducing the time to ten days. Relay stations with change of mounts were established at short distances, depending upon the topography of the country, and each rider would ride at top speed from one to the other, change horses in a trice and go on. Human endurance was pressed to the limit.

As an illustration of the speed made, the last message of President Buchanan to congress, in December, 1890, was carried to San Francisco in eight days and two hours. In 1863 the transcontinental telegraph line was completed and all news thereafter went by wire, except such as the papers on the coast clipped from eastern papers which arrived by mail. When the railroads were completed both the pony express and the later overland stage went into the discard, remaining, however, on short tributary routes for a number of years, some for many years. There are many tales told of the daring and nerve of those hardy and courageous drivers of the stages, passing, as they did, fearlessly through hostile Indian country and not infrequently suffering death at the hands of war parties, in spite of the efforts made by the government to give them military protection. These are of the same character of tales which mark the progress of American civilization, from Plymouth Rock to Seal Rocks, in subduing the wilderness and creating a great nation.

## Overheard at the Movies.

His wife had a severe headache, and was sadly in need of quiet, so husband said he would take their small daughter to the movies, and for her to retire early.

It was all one to him, as he had not consulted any program, and they entered the first theater in their path, an unfortunate selection, for it was one of the sex-problem plays, the principal characters uncongenial and seemingly with good grounds for divorce because of incompatibility.

The little maiden, after a time, caused a titter of laughter among the audience near her by saying in a shrill little treble: "She doesn't seem to like married life, does she, papa?"

The play proceeded and after an apparently violent outburst of temper on the part of the feminine star, the little girl's voice again rent the air with: "Mamma acts just that way sometimes, doesn't she, papa?"

He did not wait to see or hear more, but hastily left while the lights were subdued, and the next time he will select a comedy.—Indianapolis News.

## Question of Speed.

"Has the automobile revolutionized farm life?"

"It certainly has," replied Mr. Cobles, with a sigh.

"It has made farm work easier to do, I suppose."

"Yes, but harder to get done. After a hired man has discovered he can travel 50 miles an hour in a flivver you can't convince him that driving a tractor bears any resemblance to a joy ride."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

## Must Hire His Own Help.

A man who was house hunting discovered the kind of home he wanted. The door was opened by a pretty parlor maid. He asked her some questions nervously, for he was a timid man. Presently, remembering the servant problem, he said:

"And are you to be let with the house?"

"No," answered the maid; "if you please, sir, I am to be let alone."—London Tit-Bits.

## Would Be Time Wasted.

As one of the laboring class (Ye gods, how the money rolls in!) we are not keen personally for the idea expressed in the following lines even though we print them:

"I would like to get a few days off to get married, sir."

"Why didn't you get married during your vacation?"

"I didn't want to spoil my vacation in that way, sir."—Boston Transcript.

## JURORS AND TRIAL LAWYERS

Men Who Render the Verdict Said to Have a Distinct Influence Over the Counsel.

Juries differ widely. Charles Russell used to say, for instance, that there was all the difference in the world between English and Irish juries, remarks the Manchester (Eng.) Guardian. Irish juries enjoyed the fun and the drama of a trial; they entered into it all and appreciated the cut and thrust; whereas English juries were concerned more with wondering how soon they would be released.

But there is a characteristic common to all juries. They have quite as much influence, though in a different way, over counsel as counsel have over them. One of the greatest of advocates, Scarlett, Lord Abinger, declared that his success was due chiefly to the rule he made of selecting one particular jurymen, not necessarily the foreman, and addressing the argument as if to him personally. He would then work away till he felt that he had convinced this man and could rely on him when the verdict was being considered.

## African Seeds.

Sixteen hundred of seeds and plants of African fruits, vegetables, grains and flowers not common to this country have been sent to the United States Department of Agriculture for a test as to their adaptability to American soil as a result of a trip made by Dr. H. L. Shantz, an agricultural explorer. Dr. Shantz accompanied the Smithsonian-African expedition which made a tour of interior Africa from Cape Town to Cairo, penetrating the Orange Free State, the Transvaal, the Kongo, East Africa, the Sudan and Egypt, with side trips to other parts of the continent and adjacent islands.

Among the many new crops, one that is viewed with interest is a gourd two feet long, which contains two gallons of succulent seed about the size of an almond. The meat of these seeds resembles that of the butternut in taste, and, in addition to their possibilities as a nut substitute, they are rich in oil. Many new kaffir corns and sorghums, as well as grasses, suitable for the semiarid West, as well as the pine lands of the South, some excellent new mangoes, a number of oil plants, some dry-land rice, and a large number of grains and grasses are among the specimens. The department has found that several crops which flourish in central Africa are adapted to the southern parts of the southwestern United States. The American-Egyptian cotton and Sudan grass are among the noteworthy acquisitions as a result of previous expeditions.

## Giant Eels.

It is said there are eels no one can land. Some years ago a giant eel was caught in shallow water off the shores of England. It measured 8 feet 8 inches in length and weighed 145 pounds. Congers half that size have been known to bite a man's hand in two and to have driven their teeth through the blade of an axe.

In 1913 Kakunamaki, the champion swimmer of Honolulu, was attacked by a giant eel, which dragged him under water, and held him there for nearly two minutes. He escaped at last, but at the cost of a finger from his right hand.

Eels attain an immense size in the rivers of New Zealand and have been known to attack bathers. In fact, many cases of drowning have been proven to be where eels have dragged the bathers beneath the surface of the water.

## SCENE OF MAJESTIC BEAUTY

Table Mountain, for Many Reasons, Is Superior to Any of the Earth's Great Peaks.

I have seen many flat-topped kopjes in Africa. I have seen the bare and golden Atlas range drop away into the golden sands of Mogador, but I have never seen anything resembling its mighty mass which is the dominant, the royal fact of the Cape Peninsula. . . . It is by virtue of its mass and the colossal buttressed cliffs which form its walls that Table mountain is majestic, as also by the abruptness of its rise from the visible sea-level. The height of inland mountains is a matter of faith rather than sight; but this mountain, like Etna and the Peak of Teneriffe and others whose roots are in the sea, announces its stature at once to the eye. It rises more immediately from the sea than either of these, yet not so immediately as it appears to do when seen from the bay. It throws out toward the ocean low spurs of mingled rock and green banks. In spring these grassy banks are all set with flowers. Among them is a pretty white flower, about the size of a narcissus, though different in shape, of which I have seen a bouquet in England, many weeks after it had been gathered at the Cape, standing in a vase without water and still quite fresh. . . . —Margaret L. Woods.

## NEED FOR BALANCE WHEEL

Courage Is, of Course, a Magnificent Thing, But Should Be Regulated by Prudence.

Courage is an indispensable quality in our success; but if it is not balanced and regulated by prudence it will run away with us and lead us into all sorts of foolhardy things. Boldness is a great quality when it is held in check by proper cautiousness and guided by good judgment.

I know a man whose courage is very much over-developed and his faculty of caution is very deficient. He does not know what fear means, and he plunges into all sorts of foolish operations which do not turn out well, and he is always trying to get out of things which he had gone into hastily. If his prudence had been equally developed with his courage, with his boldness, he would have made a very strong man.

Futile endeavors, half-hearted efforts never accomplish anything. It takes the fire of determination, energy, push, and good judgment to accomplish that which counts. It is the well-balanced enthusiastic man with fire in his blood, and ginger in his brain, who makes things move and achieves the seemingly impossible. —Denver Catholic Register.

## Transgression.

The youthful Softleigh seemed so depressed that his friend Moreleigh was moved to ask the reason.

"Alice has broken our engagement," said he of the downcast look.

"Sorry to hear that," said the friend. "Why did she break it?"

"Because I stole a kiss."

"What! A fiancée object to her fellow stealing a kiss from her?"

"The trouble was," Softleigh explained, "I didn't steal it from her."

## Information Bureau.

A man sent his bumptious son to college and in a month or so wrote inquiring how he was getting along in the grind of knowledge. He got this characteristic reply:

"Fine. Write often and ask me anything that puzzles you."—Everybody's Magazine.

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