

"HOW SHALL WE FIND HIM?"

In Vienna they came upon a pageant. In celebration of a century-past victory the Emperor drove in state and ceremony to attend at the great cathedral and to do honor to the ancient banners and laurel-wreathed statue of a long-dead soldier-prince. The broad pavements of the huge chief thoroughfare were crowded with a cheering populace watching the martial pomp and splendor as it passed by with marching feet, prancing horses, and glitter of scabbard and chain, which all seemed somehow part of music in triumphant bursts.

The Rat was enormously thrilled by the magnificence of the imperial place. Its immense spaces, the squares and gardens, reigned over by statues of emperors, and warriors, and queens made him feel that all things on earth were possible. The palaces and stately piles of architecture, whose surmounting equestrian bronzes ramped high in the air clear cut and beautiful against the sky, seemed to sweep out of his world all atmosphere but that of splendid cities down whose broad avenues emperors rode with waving banners, tramping, jangling soldiery before and behind, and golden trumpets blaring forth. It seemed as if it must always be like this--that lances and cavalry and emperors would never cease to ride by. "I should like to stay here a long time," he said almost as if he were in a dream. "I should like to see it all."

He leaned on his crutches in the crowd and watched the glitter of the passing pageant. Now and then he glanced at Marco, who watched also with a steady eye which, The Rat saw, nothing would escape: How absorbed he always was in the Game! How impossible it was for him to forget it or to remember it only as a boy would! Often it seemed that he was not a boy at all. And the Game, The Rat knew in these days, was a game no more but a thing of deep and deadly earnest--a thing which touched kings and thrones, and concerned the ruling and swaying of great countries. And they--two lads pushed about by the crowd as they stood and stared at the soldiers--carried with them that which was even now lighting the Lamp. The blood in The Rat's veins ran quickly and made him feel hot as he remembered certain thoughts which had forced themselves into his mind during the past weeks. As his brain had the trick of "working things out," it had, during the last fortnight at least, been following a wonderful even if rather fantastic and feverish fancy. A mere trifle had set it at work, but, its labor once begun, things which might have once seemed to be trifles appeared so no longer. When Marco was asleep, The Rat lay awake through thrilled and sometimes almost breathless midnight hours, looking backward and recalling every detail of their lives since they had known each other. Sometimes it seemed to him that almost everything he remembered--the Game from first to last above all--had pointed to but one thing. And then again he would all at once feel that he was a fool and had better keep his head steady. Marco, he knew, had no wild fancies. He had learned too much and his mind was too well balanced. He did not try to "work out things." He only thought of what

he was under orders to do.

"But," said The Rat more than once in these midnight hours, "if it ever comes to a draw whether he is to be saved or I am, he is the one that must come to no harm. Killing can't take long--and his father sent me with him."

This thought passed through his mind as the tramping feet went by. As a sudden splendid burst of approaching music broke upon his ear, a queer look twisted his face. He realized the contrast between this day and that first morning behind the churchyard, when he had sat on his platform among the Squad and looked up and saw Marco in the arch at the end of the passage. And because he had been good-looking and had held himself so well, he had thrown a stone at him. Yes--blind gutter-bred fool that he'd been:--his first greeting to Marco had been a stone, just because he was what he was. As they stood here in the crowd in this far-off foreign city, it did not seem as if it could be true that it was he who had done it.

He managed to work himself closer to Marco's side. "Isn't it splendid?" he said, "I wish I was an emperor myself. I'd have these fellows out like this every day." He said it only because he wanted to say something, to speak, as a reason for getting closer to him. He wanted to be near enough to touch him and feel that they were really together and that the whole thing was not a sort of magnificent dream from which he might awaken to find himself lying on his heap of rags in his corner of

the room in Bone Court.

The crowd swayed forward in its eagerness to see the principal feature of the pageant--the Emperor in his carriage. The Rat swayed forward with the rest to look as it passed.

A handsome white-haired and mustached personage in splendid uniform decorated with jeweled orders and with a cascade of emerald-green plumes nodding in his military hat gravely saluted the shouting people on either side. By him sat a man uniformed, decorated, and emerald-plumed also, but many years younger.

Marco's arm touched The Rat's almost at the same moment that his own touched Marco. Under the nodding plumes each saw the rather tired and cynical pale face, a sketch of which was hidden in the slit in Marco's sleeve.

"Is the one who sits with the Emperor an Archduke?" Marco asked the man nearest to him in the crowd. The man answered amiably enough. No, he was not, but he was a certain Prince, a descendant of the one who was the hero of the day. He was a great favorite of the Emperor's and was also a great personage, whose palace contained pictures celebrated throughout Europe.

"He pretends it is only pictures he cares for," he went on, shrugging his shoulders and speaking to his wife, who had begun to listen, "but he

is a clever one, who amuses himself with things he professes not to concern himself about--big things. It's his way to look bored, and interested in nothing, but it's said he's a wizard for knowing dangerous secrets."

"Does he live at the Hofburg with the Emperor?" asked the woman, craning her neck to look after the imperial carriage.

"No, but he's often there. The Emperor is lonely and bored too, no doubt, and this one has ways of making him forget his troubles. It's been told me that now and then the two dress themselves roughly, like common men, and go out into the city to see what it's like to rub shoulders with the rest of the world. I daresay it's true. I should like to try it myself once in a while, if I had to sit on a throne and wear a crown."

The two boys followed the celebration to its end. They managed to get near enough to see the entrance to the church where the service was held and to get a view of the ceremonies at the banner-draped and laurel-wreathed statue. They saw the man with the pale face several times, but he was always so enclosed that it was not possible to get within yards of him. It happened once, however, that he looked through a temporary break in the crowding people and saw a dark strong-featured and remarkably intent boy's face, whose vivid scrutiny of him caught his eye. There was something in the fixedness of its attention which caused him to look at it curiously for a few seconds, and Marco met his gaze

squarely.

"Look at me! Look at me!" the boy was saying to him mentally. "I have a message for you. A message!"

The tired eyes in the pale face rested on him with a certain growing light of interest and curiosity, but the crowding people moved and the temporary break closed up, so that the two could see each other no more. Marco and The Rat were pushed backward by those taller and stronger than themselves until they were on the outskirts of the crowd.

"Let us go to the Hofburg," said Marco. "They will come back there, and we shall see him again even if we can't get near."

To the Hofburg they made their way through the less crowded streets, and there they waited as near to the great palace as they could get. They were there when, the ceremonies at an end, the imperial carriages returned, but, though they saw their man again, they were at some distance from him and he did not see them.

Then followed four singular days. They were singular days because they were full of tantalizing incidents. Nothing seemed easier than to hear talk of, and see the Emperor's favorite, but nothing was more impossible than to get near to him. He seemed rather a favorite with the populace, and the common people of the shopkeeping or laboring classes were given to talking freely of him--of where he was going and what he was doing.

To-night he would be sure to be at this great house or that, at this ball or that banquet. There was no difficulty in discovering that he would be sure to go to the opera, or the theatre, or to drive to Schönbrunn with his imperial master. Marco and The Rat heard casual speech of him again and again, and from one part of the city to the other they followed and waited for him. But it was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. He was evidently too brilliant and important a person to be allowed to move about alone. There were always people with him who seemed absorbed in his languid cynical talk. Marco thought that he never seemed to care much for his companions, though they on their part always seemed highly entertained by what he was saying. It was noticeable that they laughed a great deal, though he himself scarcely even smiled.

"He's one of those chaps with the trick of saying witty things as if he didn't see the fun in them himself," The Rat summed him up. "Chaps like that are always cleverer than the other kind."

"He's too high in favor and too rich not to be followed about," they heard a man in a shop say one day, "but he gets tired of it. Sometimes, when he's too bored to stand it any longer, he gives it out that he's gone into the mountains somewhere, and all the time he's shut up alone with his pictures in his own palace."

That very night The Rat came in to their attic looking pale and disappointed. He had been out to buy some food after a long and arduous day in which they had covered much ground, had seen their man three

times, and each time under circumstances which made him more inaccessible than ever. They had come back to their poor quarters both tired and ravenously hungry.

The Rat threw his purchase on to the table and himself into a chair.

"He's gone to Budapest," he said. "Now how shall we find him?"

Marco was rather pale also, and for a moment he looked paler. The day had been a hard one, and in their haste to reach places at a long distance from each other they had forgotten their need of food.

They sat silent for a few moments because there seemed to be nothing to say. "We are too tired and hungry to be able to think well," Marco said at last. "Let us eat our supper and then go to sleep. Until we've had a rest, we must 'let go.'"

"Yes. There's no good in talking when you're tired," The Rat answered a trifle gloomily. "You don't reason straight. We must 'let go.'"

Their meal was simple but they ate well and without words.

Even when they had finished and undressed for the night, they said very little.

"Where do our thoughts go when we are asleep," The Rat inquired casually



after he was stretched out in the darkness. "They must go somewhere. Let's send them to find out what to do next."

"It's not as still as it was on the Gaisberg. You can hear the city roaring," said Marco drowsily from his dark corner. "We must make a ledge--for ourselves."

Sleep made it for them--deep, restful, healthy sleep. If they had been more resentful of their ill luck and lost labor, it would have come less easily and have been less natural. In their talks of strange things they had learned that one great secret of strength and unflagging courage is to know how to "let go"--to cease thinking over an anxiety until the right moment comes. It was their habit to "let go" for hours sometimes, and wander about looking at places and things--galleries, museums, palaces, giving themselves up with boyish pleasure and eagerness to all they saw. Marco was too intimate with the things worth seeing, and The Rat too curious and feverishly wide-awake to allow of their missing much.

The Rat's image of the world had grown until it seemed to know no boundaries which could hold its wealth of wonders. He wanted to go on and on and see them all.

When Marco opened his eyes in the morning, he found The Rat lying looking at him. Then they both sat up in bed at the same time.

"I believe we are both thinking the same thing," Marco said.

They frequently discovered that they were thinking the same things.

"So do I," answered The Rat. "It shows how tired we were that we didn't think of it last night."

"Yes, we are thinking the same thing," said Marco. "We have both remembered what we heard about his shutting himself up alone with his pictures and making people believe he had gone away."

"He's in his palace now," The Rat announced.

"Do you feel sure of that, too?" asked Marco. "Did you wake up and feel sure of it the first thing?"

"Yes," answered The Rat. "As sure as if I'd heard him say it himself."

"So did I," said Marco.

"That's what our thoughts brought back to us," said The Rat, "when we 'let go' and sent them off last night." He sat up hugging his knees and looking straight before him for some time after this, and Marco did not interrupt his meditations.

The day was a brilliant one, and, though their attic had only one

window, the sun shone in through it as they ate their breakfast. After it, they leaned on the window's ledge and talked about the Prince's garden. They talked about it because it was a place open to the public and they had walked round it more than once. The palace, which was not a large one, stood in the midst of it. The Prince was good-natured enough to allow quiet and well-behaved people to saunter through. It was not a fashionable promenade but a pleasant retreat for people who sometimes took their work or books and sat on the seats placed here and there among the shrubs and flowers.

"When we were there the first time, I noticed two things," Marco said.

"There is a stone balcony which juts out from the side of the palace which looks on the Fountain Garden. That day there were chairs on it as if the Prince and his visitors sometimes sat there. Near it, there was a very large evergreen shrub and I saw that there was a hollow place inside it. If some one wanted to stay in the gardens all night to watch the windows when they were lighted and see if any one came out alone upon the balcony, he could hide himself in the hollow place and stay there until the morning."

"Is there room for two inside the shrub?" The Rat asked.

"No. I must go alone," said Marco.