[Davies]

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE KING

AND . .

THE ANARCHIST

By "Libertas."

"The unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a king and virtue."

Shelley.

"Our hope is in the aftermath—
Our hope is in heroic men,
Star-led to build the world again.
To this Event the ages ran:
Make way for Brotherhood—make way
for Man."

Edwin Markham.

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THE KING AND THE ANARCHIST.

A TALE OF THE TIMES.

By "LIBERTAS."

I.

"THERE," said the King as he signed the last of a pile of State documents, "so much for work—now for amusement!".

Nobody was looking. In an adjoining apartment, through a half-opened door draped with heavy *portières*, his two secretaries could be seen busily writing; so the King gaily wiped his royal pen on the tail of his royal coat—a trick retained from his youthful days, and for which the Queen fined him a gold piece if caught in the act—sprang from his chair, and went to the window.

He drummed idly on the panes for a moment, revolving what he should do. It was a beautiful day. The wind blew softly; the sky was clear, rain-washed, pure as the blue depths of an infant's eye; the tender green of early summer hung about the trees and mantled the hillsides; the air as it lifted the rich window-curtains was full of the song of birds, the perfume of flowers; and the river as it flowed through the magnificent park leaped, so it seemed, to meet the dancing sunshine.

The King ceased drumming.

"The papers are ready. I am off for a walk, gentlemen," he remarked cheerfully as he passed the draped doorway.

"If your majesty would first read the new treaty——" began the elder secretary, hastily.

"Damn the new treaty!" said the King lightly as he slipped through his private door and slammed it behind him.

It was reopened as quickly, and the spectacles of the secretary glittered over the King's shoulder.

"If you will pardon me, sir, but did your majesty sign the death-warrant?"

The King did not say "Damn!" this time. He paused in lighting a cigarette, and then answered courteously, yet with a certain tartness, as the bright sunshine beat against his breast, "My dear Count, I saw no such warrant. Stay—I believe some papers fluttered under the table."

The secretary hurried into the room; a moment later he emerged, a document in one hand, a pen newly dipped in ink in the other. "If you will be so good, sir——"

The King did less than read, he barely glanced at the ominous paper held towards him. Hastily taking it from his secretary, he laid it flush against the sunlit wall beside him, and in a trice had written the superscription "Karl R." in bold characters in the right-hand corner.

The name, moist and black, loomed large upon his eyeballs; then suddenly another, the name of the condemned, confronted him as solemnly out of the halo of golden sunbeams—Karl Stirn.

"Stirn, Stirn," repeated the King, as though trying to recollect something, as he returned the warrant to the waiting secretary.

"The workman, sir, who shot at the manager of the Vulcan Ironworks in the late strike. An example was to be made."

"True, true—serve him right; the fewer of such seditious spirits we have around us the better!" said the King, and he twirled his moustache fiercely.

The secretary bowed and retired. The King whistled to his wolfhound, took a felt hat from the antlers of a stuffed elk that stood by the castle entrance, placed it jauntily on his head, and was about to pass through the portal, when an equerry accosted him from behind.

"Shall I not accompany you, sir?"

"No, no, Colonel, thanks," and the King laughed. "I'm merely going for a stroll in the park, and Boris" (he pulled his dog's ear) "is as good as ten guards." With which words he passed through the doorway.

Like most monarchs of the day, Karl R. was prone to much pomp and ceremony when residing in his capital or entertaining neighbour potentates; but when he ruralised state trappings were flung aside, and he lived (in the estimation, that is, of royalty) quite simply. But although he curtailed his sentries, court officials, and the multitudinous retinue deemed necessary to the correct dignity of a regal household, there yet were certain personages he could not, or thought he could not, do without even in arcadian recesses, and at times these formed the one crumpled roseleaf of his existence. Apparently, as he quitted the castle door and set foot on the terrace beneath it no other human object was in sight save the hinder parts of a

gardener, who in the distance lazily scratched the gravel for weeds; but as the King turned sharply round the nearest angle of the building he all but collided against a young man with lantern jaws and a spotty face, who, much like an architect's assistant intent on some abstruse specification, or a caterpillar under the paralysing glare of a sparrow's hungry eye, was trying to efface himself by a process of agglutination against the castle wall.

"Now, then, what are you doing here? Get out of my sight!" cried the King impatiently. "You know what my orders are."

"Yes, sir—yes, your majesty," stammered the youth, pale with consternation; "but I was——"

"I don't care what orders other people give you; *my* orders are that you are not to be seen!" roared his majesty. And he walked on with a scowl and a muttered "Tut, tut! What it is to be a king."

However, his good humour soon returned. For on rounding the next angle there came a tinkle of bells, and away under the trees he descried his wife and her ladies, and the heir-apparent sucking his royal thumb as in charge of several attendants he took a morning airing in his little carriage drawn by cream-white goats. A smile of pleasure lighted the King's face; the ladies were very pretty and beautifully dressed. He waved his hand to them, stepped briskly in the opposite direction across the grass and under the trees, and then, in turning round a massive oak, bumped against a man in the green garb of a forester.

"Now this is too much," cried the King, striking the turf petulantly with his cane. "My orders from the first have been that you are never to be seen, never to be heard. This is the second encounter in the space of fifteen minutes. It's enough to shatter the nervous system of an iceberg this continual sense of your proximity. Can't you efface yourselves more?"

"We do our best, your majesty," protested the man, visibly disturbed at the King's anger; but being older and altogether a more experienced person than the youth who had primarily aroused the royal wrath, he continued, as he doffed his cap, "The Chief gave us strict orders to-day respecting your majesty, and if we have inadvertently overstepped the bounds of our sacred duty——"

"Your sacred duty may be to protect my sacred person, but I object to your sacred duty being in continual evidence," snapped the King. "You understand me, Matthias?"

"I understand, and will do my best to keep out of your majesty's sight," answered the man, bowing low. "If you

did not see me following you from the castle door, at least I succeeded so far, sir."

The King did not seem displeased at the speaker's frankness; he smiled as he pulled his moustache. "I did not see you, and where I don't see I accept this new penalty of my rank. But why am I to be specially guarded to-day?"

"From information received we are led to believe a dangerous Anarchist is in or near this neighbourhood, sir."

"Well, why don't you shadow the Anarchist instead of the King?"

"I regret to say we have lost sight of the man, your majesty. He was being watched across the frontier, but gave the officials the slip. We next heard of him yesterday as twenty miles only to the north of this; he seems to be making his way across country to the city—of course with a sinister design."

"Why 'of course'?"

"He is an Anarchist, sir."

"Well?"

"Therefore bent on crime."

"I don't see the logic."

"Why, sir, being an Anarchist it follows he must be bent on crime."

"Who says so?"

"*We* say so."

"Ah, to be sure! The sagacity of your office is proverbial—a wonderful institution!" returned the King. "I honour and esteem it as one of the noblest safeguards of justice, the social system, and my realm."

There was no irony in the remark; next to his army, the King loved his police force.

So he nodded in a friendly fashion to the seeming forester, and was about to resume his walk when the latter ventured deferentially, "It would be as well if your majesty did not wander outside the park unattended before we locate this scoundrel."

"Thank you," said the King. "If I meet the gentleman I fancy my hound will make short work with him. Meanwhile," he added significantly, "you will retrace your steps and leave me to my own devices." Then he strode away.

The detective looked after his royal master dubiously. "If he wasn't so free with his diamond pins," he mused, as he turned towards the castle, "I'd throw up the job. What between him and the Chief, it's hot water all the time. So I'm to go back to the nursemaids, am I, and lose my chance of promotion and extras? Not you, Matthias!" And he chuckled as he began to glide in and out among the trees.

Meanwhile the King pursued his way, at first with a frown. Fine fellows though he considered his police, it yet became monotonous to have one or a pair of them at one's elbow all day. But his annoyance quickly thawed under the genial influence of the beautiful morning. Who could harbour displeasure, much less resentment, when the world lay steeped in sunshine, when the birds piped on every tree, when the lush flowers raised their heads in pure ecstacy of adoration as the sunbeams kissed a way to their sweet hearts! The King drew deep breaths of the balmy air,—next to being a king, what a glorious thing it was to be alive! He grew quite sentimental, and stooped to gather a large field daisy that barred his path—his wife loved *marguerites*.

But she did not get that one. For as he bent over it, by some subtle trick of the imagination the sunshine seemed again to beat upon his breast, and there crept across the golden globe that is the heart of the flower a line of black characters, until the name "Karl Stirn" gazed solemnly back upon him as it had done from the sunlit surface of his castle wall.

The King with a blow of his cane swept off the head of the offending daisy. "Pshaw!" he muttered, striding on; "I'll never give in to false sentiment. The power of life and death is the King's prerogative—not to be relegated to his Home Secretary. All the same I should prefer that he signed death warrants on fine days."

He hurried on as though to get rid of an unpleasant thought, and presently came in sight of a low gate that at this point gave egress from the park into the highroad which bordered the royal demesne. Whistling to his dog, and determined to be gay, his pace quickened to a run; with a leap he was over the gate—and standing upon the ten toes of that immaculate person the Chief of his Secret Police.

From somewhere between the blue sky and green earth there issued a sound resembling muffled thunder. When the opposing forces had disentangled themselves and fallen apart, the growl resolved itself into words of mingled apology and explanation, profuse on the official's part, somewhat blunt on the King's.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, Steinkop," he protested, readjusting his hat which had come off with the force of the impact, "but how could I know you'd be on the wrong side of the hedge? You all seem on the prowl to-day."

The Chief of Police was a large, heavily-built individual of military appearance and bearing; from either side of his lips an iron-grey moustache curled upward into a sharp point; his

cold grey eyes had almost the sheen of knives in them as their keen, comprehensive glance dwelt on the insignificant-looking author of pain that for a moment had blanched his lips.

"I grieve to say we are forced to be on the prowl to-day, sir," he responded in a voice as soft as the mouth from whence it proceeded was hard; "nor shall I for one regret having proved an obstacle in your path if only it may prevail on you to go no farther."

"Stuff!" retorted the King; "I can't have my liberty of movement curtailed. With a stick and a dog I'm a match for any miscreant that bars my way."

"I admit it, sir. But when it is a question of Anarchists——"

"Well," laughed the King, "we all know our faithful Steinkop's detestation of that *canaille*. But surely these ruffians are more likely to attack you, their natural enemy, than me?"

"Not they, sir. Such arrant cowards never attack the police. They know we often carry arms, that Kings as a rule do not, *ergo*, shoot the King, but hands off the police. Pfaugh! there's no treatment too severe for the contemptible carrion. I wish your majesty would enact a law permitting us to shoot them at sight, the same as though they were mad dogs—which indeed they are; mad dogs ready to bury their envious fangs into every fellow-creature who happens to be a trifle better off than themselves, and who for all their babblers manage to keep their evil schemes so close that the police of the entire world are kept on the alert in the most unmerciful manner. Take Stirn for example."

"But he is no Anarchist."

"Your majesty, his brother is. It's the same thing. No doubt he has secretly imbibed some of the latter's seditious opinions. The virus runs in families. Who but an Anarchist would have had the heart to fire at that most worthy gentleman the manager of the iron works, and give as reason that though the mills were shut, the manager was drawing his thousands while Stirn and his like starved? Gentlemen must live though the poor starve. Where would the poor be if it were not for the gentlefolk? The workers always thought that way until over-education evolved the revolutionary element."

"Just so, just so," responded the King, thoughtfully. "You're a sensible man, Steinkop. But as regards Stirn he won't have the chance to shoot a second time at any manager; I signed his death warrant half-an-hour ago."

"That's good news indeed, sir. What the mob require is

an example. May I ask what your majesty's objective point is this morning?" he added softly.

"My objective point? I don't know. Boris and I are merely out for a stroll." He whistled to the dog, who bounded up to his master but snarled at the official.

"I beg of you, sir, not to go far. My men are scouring the country for a most dangerous person, no other, indeed, than this brother of Stirn's just mentioned, who, as a rabid Anarchist, is certain to be meditating some blow at society, as their jargon has it, for its crime of defending itself against a lawless workman. From information received he is somewhere in this neighbourhood. Although we are sure to track him, is it too much to suggest that your majesty would do well to keep on the right side of the hedge?" concluded the Chief, with the icy smile that with him passed for pleasantry.

"Matthias warned me about the fellow. If it comes to this, that even in the supposed security of my country home I cannot take a walk without the escort of aide-de-camps or a police posse, I shall begin to think of enacting some such law as you propose, Steinkop. I will not have the entire course of my existence marshalled to suit the whims of Anarchist reprobates. Where have you posted your men?"

"On all the main roads to the city. The country northward has also been beaten by the inch."

"Then to repay your anxiety as to my safety, I will ease your mind by strolling northward."

So saying the King passed through a gate on the opposite side of the road, and was soon lost to view in the green depths of a wood.

Whereupon the Chief resumed his way, anathematising Anarchists and committing *lèse-majesté* in the same breath as he hobbled along, throbs of pain surging at every step through his crushed toes.

II.

Now Karl R. had not yet been driven into a condition bordering on hysteria by the machinations of ministers hungering for larger supplies of secret service money from which to pilfer, the rank gossip of journalists eager to outlie fellow pressmen, or the schemes of police agents bent on an increase of pay by playing on their sovereign's fears. When, therefore, he had given Chief Steinkop time, as he supposed, to pass out of sight, he doubled straight back on his steps and returned to the high-road. He had an objective point and meant to reach it, police and Anarchists notwithstanding.

A mile along the highroad brought him to a rough track that bore sharply across country, to lead as it seemed nowhere. But the King followed it, knowing it would take him to a favourite haunt, a deserted mill lapped in green, a quiet stream where the trout lay thick. Through waste places and moist, over rock and bracken, strode the King, until finally the worn track dipped over a low hill, to broaden lower into a flowery path bordered by the flashing waters of the mill stream. Soon the old brown mill came into view, mantled with moss, its silent wheel buried in a bank of fern, a circle of ancient trees spreading gnarled arms around it, as though to shelter its desolation from desecrating eyes. But the stream ran past like a laughing child, and the King followed it, pausing in the still reaches to watch the trout, to throw a stone at a water rat, to listen to the rapture of a soaring lark.

Presently he saw Boris bound forward with a growl and disappear round a bend of the path. When he himself turned the corner he saw the dog with muzzle down and bristles up winding a very commonplace object, a man in fustian, who, seated at the edge of the stream, was laving his feet in its waters. The wolfhound was a fierce animal, the terror of strangers, but to his master's surprise this one showed no alarm as the dog stole upon him with ominous growls; instead he held out a friendly hand, at which Boris sniffed, and then to the King's astonishment he sat down with great dignity beside the wayfarer and thumped his tail.

"They must have met before," cogitated the King on seeing the man stroke the dog's head; "a farm hand maybe, or—" he started and flushed angrily as the thought occurred to him, "if it's another detective I declare I'll hit him."

But when, his steps deadened by the rank grass, he stood unperceived over the individual in question, he saw at once the stranger was no police agent. For the hand that rested on the hound's head was roughened by toil, the shoes at his side were patched and worn, and a cursory glance at his clothing revealed both stains of labour and the dust of recent travel. The King was puzzled, for the peaked cap lying on the grass was an artisan's cap, but the friendliness displayed by Boris betokened an outdoor worker well known to the animal. Just then the stranger lifted a foot from the water, and the King saw it was bleeding. He was quite affable for a person of so much consequence, and had always been ready to win his way to popularity by a few careless words thrown to such of the common herd as crossed his path; the words cost nothing, and the herd, when not clamouring for its so-called rights, could be quite amusing in its way. So as he stood over the stranger he said in a tone of good-humoured interest, "That seems a bad cut, my man."

Until the words were spoken the wayfarer had seemed unconscious of an intruder upon the scene. With his gaze fixed on the running water, he appeared lost in meditation, accepting even the advent of the great hound as a mere detail of his surroundings. But the instant the silence was broken by a human voice he lost his listless attitude; looking round with a quick movement, it seemed to the King that the face paled under its tan, that a gleam of mingled alertness and defiance sprang for a second to the eyes. Then he answered simply, as though too weary to question deeply into any matter, "Yes, it is a bad cut, but this cool water and a herb dressing will soon put all right."

"Where did you meet my dog before?" asked the King. Warm with his walk, and noting a convenient boulder, he seated himself and examined the stranger at leisure.

"Is it your dog? I did not know. I love animals and they seem to sense it."

"I have never seen the hound take so readily to a stranger; you are surely employed in the neighbourhood?"

"No," was the laconic answer, and the eyes of the two met. Those of the King wore a look of dubious inquiry, in those of the wayfarer there flashed something like a challenge.

"He does not know who I am," mused the King, quick to miss in the man's replies the respectful terms deemed due his exalted rank. "I suppose," and he sighed, "I don't look imposing out of my uniform and orders; but since he admits being a stranger——" And here a second, not to say a startling thought came to him: "What if he be——?" He pulled nervously at his moustache, the blood kindling within him, and then smiled as he scrutinised the man's worn features, worn with the hard labour and sorrow that is the lot of the poor, for there was nothing sinister in them. The blue eyes gazed back straight and fearlessly into his own, the mouth half hidden by a ragged beard was mobile if the jaw was stubborn, the brow serious; in all there was a look of thought and intelligence, mingled with an expression of calm strength and kindly simplicity about the face that did more than invite confidence, it forced attention. "Rugged, but honest!" soliloquised the King. Now no Anarchist could look honest. Had it not been dinned into his ears by ministers and police alike that these dread scourges bore the very brand of Cain upon their brow? Men who revelled in murder; who, lost to every moral sense spent their dissolute lives in gambling, swindling, robbing, refusing all honest labour; neurotic, epileptic dregs of the bottommost scourings of society; a sect impervious to reason, dead to reform, who, as his Chief of Police rightly suggested, should be shot at sight until extirminated? He had not dared to go that length yet, but he had permitted the police hand to fall heavily on every Anarchist suspect within his dominions. The police, he was informed casually by his Home Secretary, made life unpleasant for them. "Good," the King had retorted, "the more unpleasant the better—give them a dose of their own medicine!"

Remembering these things, he smiled to himself; a quiet smoke and talk with the humble stranger chance had cast in his path seemed neither out of place in so pleasant a spot, nor came amiss to one who from sheer satiety was ever seeking new sensations.

"Where are you working if not here?" demanded the King, resuming his questioning with the easy insolence of the upper class, which seldom concedes to the lower the right to resent curiosity.

The man turned his patient blue eyes on him. "I am out of work," he said simply.

"Ah! on the tramp, then. I suppose you are bound for the city?"

"I hope to reach it."

"What is your trade?"

"I am an iron worker."

"Then doubtless you will try for a post in the Vulcan works?"

"I think not," replied the stranger, looking first into the running water and then at the King with eyes in which a sombre fire seemed to have kindled.

"Most certainly you should try there," dictated the King; "the company are excellent employers; the sincere friends of every workman who couples obedience with industry. The shops are reopening after the late strike, new hands are needed to replace the old; go there, my friend."

"I think not," was again the response.

"Well, please yourself," said the King tersely, not being used to have his advice spurned. "But as one who knows, I tell you they are the only people in the district who need mechanics. It does not do for working men to be idle, believe me; not that you look a loafer," he graciously added.

"Thank you," was answered with grave politeness. "No," continued the speaker, laying his scarred hands palm upward on his knees, and glancing from them to the jewelled, soft-skinned fingers that held the cigarette, "they are less the hands of a loafer than yours, my noble gentleman."

Was there irony underlying the retort? Was that a flash of scorn in the tired blue eyes? Nothing of the kind, mere envy, mused the King, as the diamond on his little finger twinkled.

"That is the great mistake you workers make," he returned, blowing a wreath of smoke into the tranquil air. "Because our hands are soft it does not imply our heads are. Brain work is as indispensable as body work for the right ruling of this universe. I can assure you also," he added with impressive irrelevancy, "that the cares and sorrows of the rich are every whit as keen as those felt by the poor."

"That I question. The care swaddled in a manger may bear the same face as the care which nestles in a silken cradle. The sorrow which frets at the heart of the rich may be the same that gnaws at the soul of the poor. But see here: when your brain grows weary, you can rest, *none will starve* because you rest. When your heart breaks, you can flee, if so you will, to the ends of the earth until strength and the healing balm of

new thoughts, new scenes, new hopes, steal in to lull the pain. For us when grief comes how may we tame or kill it? By drink, by servile belief in the supernatural, by hard labour. Does the starved horse forget his hunger when given a heavier load to drag? What prayer yet brought back the bread-winner slain to raise factory dividends, or softened the heart of a tyrannous master? In his cups the worker may drown the troubles inseparable from his present lot, but in a few miserable hours they clamour again at his breast. Ah, no! never tell me that as men live to-day the cares and sorrows of poor and rich are identical. We may fathom your joy, you never can fathom our misery."

There was silence, and a lark began to sing.

"You speak bitterly, and again I say you are mistaken," resumed the King. "Never so much as to-day have the poor dwelt in the thoughts of the rich; we are for ever doing something for you. We build you homes, we educate you, heal you when sick——"

"Dissect and bury us when dead, and yet we are never satisfied!" suggested the wayfarer, with a humorous smile. "Nay, how can content come to us seeing that the homes are workhouses, the education dry husks that choke the hungry mind, the hospital but a prelude to the pauper's grave. Surely the wonder would be if we were content!"

"But what more can you need than what we strive to give you? Naturally in all struggles some fall by the way, life itself is a struggle."

"Just so! a struggle in which it is the poor who always fall by the way. Let a rich man stumble and a hundred hands reach forth to raise him, but a poor man—one less—let him lie!"

"My friend," returned the King blandly, "why speak with so much bitterness? Of what use to fight the will of Heaven? While the world lasts there will be rich and poor within it."

"Ah! that heaven-born dictum, the rod-in-pickle by which through dismal ages Church and State have combined to coerce humanity!" ejaculated the stranger flinging back his head derisively. "Tell me, when first our race was evolved, when first men, free and equal, began to live and labour upon this earth; tell me, was it Heaven which decreed that injustice and cruelty should for ever remorselessly follow in the wake of progress? Look across the stream at the board nailed against yonder tree, what says it? '*Crown lands. Trespassers*

beware!' Was it Heaven which ordained that a day should come when the poor should have every rod of earth filched from them; when it becomes a crime for a footsore man—myself, for instance—to cast his weary body upon the sweet grass, to pluck a bough for winter fuel, to snare the wild bird or beast when stung by hunger? Do you know what hunger means, you who can squander a hundred gold pieces on a hound or jewel? I saw my wife and children die of it—I loved them."

His voice sank away; in the silence the song of the lark throbbed upon the King's ear; a trout leaped in the stream.

"How did that happen?" he asked. But to himself he muttered, "Drink, unthriftiness!"

"Listen. When first my wife and I made a home together, all went well. I was strong, industrious—they said clever—at my trade. For years I worked for one firm, giving them all I had to give, the labour of two willing hands, the craft of an able brain; in return I received a wage that, with my wife's thrift and my own frugality, just enabled us to live. Then one day, without a word of warning, I was given a week's notice. There had been a change in the partnership; a young manager was introduced who said he could double the shareholders' profits by reducing the number of workmen. With a score of others I found myself discharged. Appeal on the ground of long and faithful service was fruitless. It chanced to be a time of depression in the labour market; for months I tramped the country in search of work, while bit by bit the home was sold to feed the children. My wife—brave heart!—entered a factory, where, bending over the looms from early morning till night, she spent her frail strength in vain effort to keep the wolf from the door. The pittance she received would not have fed your dog for a year. Now and again I came on a stray day's labour; but we were falling by the way, our poverty-stricken neighbours suffered even as we did, who could help us? Yes, I know what you would say, there was the workhouse. *Workhouse?* State Charnel House for the dead courage of the poor! that brands with shame every broken soul whom injustice or despair drives for shelter within its walls! that thrusts a man's head down on his breast, so that never again may he raise it with the glad words—"At least I never touched the bread of charity!" For who prouder than the poor? Better death on the kerb than the grudged dole of a parish! But we were tempted, the children—Well, no matter. One day, maddened by their pitiful tears, I went to the market place, and there from amid the plenty strewn around I took a morsel of meat. The act was seen; I

was seized and dragged before a magistrate. A man of wealth and position, what cared he for Poverty outside of Charity Organisation Societies? *'Hunger is no excuse for theft,'* said he; *'two months.'* So for two months I toiled at useless labour for the State. When it was over and I crept back to the bare room we called our home, one child lay dead. Prison-branded, of what use now to seek for work? Did I but pass the market place the police like hounds were on my track—was I not a thief? One night (the stranger leaned heavily on his hand and turned to look the King in the eyes), one winter's night my wife came home from the factory. I see her now, see the door thrust feebly open from without, see her faltering steps across the floor, see her sink at my feet till her head lay on my knees. Pale as the snow clinging to her hair and cloak was the brave face I loved so well. *'Husband,'* she gasped, *'the mill and the hunger have gripped my heart—have killed me.'* And so it was. I would have given my heart's blood to save that dear life, but want of food, the unceasing toil, her long sorrowing over her babes and myself, had done their work. Before I could raise her lips to mine, she was dead."

The narrator's voice broke, but with his eyes still fixed on the King he quickly resumed. "I know not what followed. When, weak and shattered, I was dismissed from the hospital where for weeks I had lain, they told me I was childless. Who, I ask, was the murderer of my wife and children, for murdered they surely were? Your *will of Heaven?* Never! They were done to death by the system that Kings and Governments, Church and State, devised of old and will maintain, if so they dare, to eternity—the system that gives to the rich more than he needs and takes from the poor the little that he hath. Murdered by the will of the rich, the strong, we die that he—*you*—may live."

The stern indictment, spoken in tones of fierce conviction, vibrated on the air; then with a hard sigh the speaker turned his face again to the water, and was silent.

The King, who had long since flung away his cigarette, tapped his foot thoughtfully with his stick as he studied the stranger's profile. It was the first time he had met fustian in the raw. Many a chat in field and factory had he had with royal retainers and workmen, but he had never met the like of this frank-spoken individual before. The workmen singled out for royal attention usually wore their best clothes, and always their very best manners; sleek servitors who gazed upon him awestruck, and looked servile enough to lick the ground he trod on. Decidedly he had never yet spoken to a man of this calibre.

Despite the bitterness with which he railed against his superiors, after all might it not be due less to envy than because he seemed a man of much independence of spirit? "Poor devil," mused the King. And thinking of his own wife, he began absently to pluck the delicate blossoms that starred the turf at his feet; the Queen liked wild flowers. Presently he said:

"My friend, your story is a moving but I fear a not uncommon one in these days of commercial competition. I should be unsympathetic indeed did I not feel for you. Believe me the rich are not all ogres; as an observant man, you must admit there are exceptions to every rule. Yet you spoke truly when you said the system you cavil at was devised of old. Now the world goes round much slower than some people are willing to think; old systems, long-established customs, cannot be done away with in a day; the machinery that controls our existence is too complicated for rapid alteration. *Go slow* is the only safe motto in the affairs of this world, even when it is a question of deleting an abuse. Be tolerant; the rich are far more ready to help the poor than the latter choose to believe."

The stranger looked at the King with the humorous smile again on his lips. Pointing to the tree displaying the notice-board on the opposite bank, he asked: "Supposing this land were yours, are you ready to remove that restriction, or the one I noted a mile up stream, *'This water is strictly preserved. Fishing prohibited under severe penalties'*?"

"No," said the King, shortly, "for in that case land and water would be private, perhaps inherited property."

"Aye, private property! In other words, the land and water that have been filched from *us*. What one thing that you have stolen from the people are you, the rich, ready to return?"

The conversation, novel though it might be, was growing embarrasing. "My friend," said the King, irritably, "you feel things too intensely, and speak of the rich with so much rancour, that although misfortune may have tended to sour your spirit, one is led to infer you have also listened to the false counsel of some misguided labour demagogue, the malicious raving of some unprincipled Socialist agitator."

"I have listened to the voice of but one agitator, and he the most convincing of all," responded the stranger, "the agitator Hunger, who leads some to death, some to madness, and some, like myself, to Anarchism."

"Anarchism!" The King's brow darkened as the word

leapt to his lips; from his startled hand the Queen's flowers dropped unheeded.

"Yes. I am an Anarchist," said the stranger, much as though he said, *I am a Man.*

There was a brief pause, then the King said shortly, "That settles it!" He did not say what it settled, addressing as it were some invisible abstraction, perhaps the pity that had been slowly gripping his breast. Then he sprang to his feet. "Your name?" he demanded sternly.

"Michael Stirn," answered the Anarchist gravely.

And he rose and looked the King in the eyes.

III.

The King had the courage of the average man. His first impulse, therefore, as his gaze fixed the other's, was to knock him down, especially as in spite of his being much the bigger of the two the Anarchist looked so dog-weary that it seemed no formidable task to throw him and then rid his pockets of such concealed weapons as they held. But prudence quickly got the better of valour, and he decided instead to hasten to the Castle and put his police on the alert. As his excitement subsided, however, and their eyes still met, another thought came to the King. "This," he mused, "is the first Anarchist I have met and the police will take care he is the last. Strange that in spite of his bloody creed I note no symptom of the violence claimed for his kind! Scores of such calm faces do I see daily among the law-abiding section of my worker subjects, none too many, if truth be told, quite so intelligent. I might do worse than improve the occasion and teach him loyalty—if indeed he is Stirn the Anarchist. They say these wretches worship notoriety. Surely he meets my eye too frankly to be the arch villain my police are hounding. A minor star, maybe, of the Anarchist firmament aping a greater. Let us see."

And at once he demanded abruptly, irrelevantly as it seemed, "You are aware that this road is private property—that you are trespassing?"

"Quite so," answered the Anarchist with a candid assurance that confounded the King. "*Crown lands. Trespassers beware!*" (with a gesture he indicated the notice-board). "I stumbled upon that by chance, but as Anarchist and Man its threat means little to me. The land belongs to the people, not only to the King. When I do not demolish such symbols of illegal ownership, I ignore them. Besides," and he sighed heavily, "grass is pleasanter to walk on than the highroad when, dead-weary, one has to drag a wounded foot."

"You said you were making for the city; we stand here miles from the direct route."

"That is not my fault."

"Whose then?"

"The King's."

"The King's?"

"Aye. Over yonder lies his country palace, where he is now in residence. His laws against Anarchists are none too gentle, those of his police, if unwritten, still less so. Did I follow the main road, and, being near the castle, chance upon his bodyguard, advance would be hindered by my certain arrest."

"That is possible. What then?"

The sunken blue eyes seemed to probe the King's. "I have no wish to be hindered. For days I have been hurrying to the city, and can only reach it by stealth. Because I believe in Liberty, because I robbed a wealthy citizen of half-a-pound of meat to still the cries of my famished children, I am banished the country. What matter that I had already paid the penalty of my so-called *crime?* What matter that go where I would the police were ever at my elbow, preventing my obtaining work by sinister whispers to would-be employers? Forced into idleness, closely watched as a man secretly devising mischief, they next expel me to run the gauntlet in a strange land. And yet, as I stand under the blue sky, I am guiltless of other offence than that named, while the mischief I devise is but to teach my fellows that they are *men*, not slaves to be eternally priest-ridden, labour-ridden, police-ridden. My present mission compelled me to re-cross the frontier. By night I hurry forward, by day, as now, I seek a hidden corner in which to rest. Broken with fatigue and suspense, nearing my journey's end, will you bar my way?"

"That depends on why without a police permit you have dared to re-enter the country."

"That is soon told." The Anarchist paused, looked at the sunlit water as though he found some subtle comfort in its dimpled face, then rested his eyes again on the King's. "My brother lies in prison. We grew up side by side. He——"

Something seemed to choke the speaker; his head sank forward suddenly, and in the silence that followed a little snake slid out from between some broken stones beside the King and fixed a bright eye on the two men. But neither of them saw it.

"The judges" (the voice seemed strangled) "have condemned him to death. He is my only brother—he lay in my arms as a babe, we played together, struggled for daily bread, rejoiced and sorrowed together—and so I go to him. *Not* that he will die"—the bowed head was raised, and once again patient eyes searched the King's—"but they may imprison him long years. The King has the last word in questions of life and death; he will spare the father of three motherless children, let alone an innocent man."

The King, as has been said, was no coward. Few Kings are, they have too much self-conceit. Though his eyes fell before those others into which a slow agony seemed creeping, and he furtively watched a strong right hand where it hung clenched and rigid within striking distance, he answered: "If you mean Karl Stirn, the man condemned to death for attempting the life of the manager of the Vulcan Works, a most worthy citizen and gentleman——"

"The same—Karl Stirn—my brother!"

"His death-warrant was signed this morning."

Silence. Boris snapped at a fly. The little snake wriggling about the pinnacle of stones laid its ugly flat head on the topmost, where it basked in the sun and made forked lightning. A breath of soft sweet air stole along the stream, wrinkling its waters as it passed, then died away like a sigh. From somewhere high up in the ether liquid notes came dropping, for larks sing on though human hearts are breaking. But the King still watched the strong right hand; it never moved though its muscles tightened.

All at once a bitter cry shattered the harmony around.

"You dare not—you dare not!" said the Anarchist, turning so fiercely upon him that the King's meagre form seemed to shrivel as a fly's might before the white-heat of a blast-furnace. Until now human suffering in the raw had been as unknown to him as human fustian. It was not pleasant to look upon.

Though secretly congratulating himself on the *finesse* by which he had unmasked the real Michael Stirn, the villain "wanted" by his police, he yet drew back a step.

"What have I to do with it?" he demanded, and whistled to Boris. But the dog seemed deaf.

With a quick movement the Anarchist thrust his hand into a frayed pocket. The King watched with a sudden in-drawing of his breath. Why had he not ordered every Anarchist to be shot at sight? Surely now the hidden revolver that would end his reign—Ha! what was that? On the open palm of the hand which the Anarchist was holding towards him lay a brown coin.

"Not a bad likeness," he commented. And though his eyes shone like red coals, the strangely humorous smile was again on his lips.

"So! you knew me?"

"How not? If the King's land be private property, his countenance at least is not."

The King, astonished and crestfallen, was silent. The tables seemed turned. All the gracious affability with which he had begun and carried on the conversation was as pearls cast before—no, he could not say "swine," as he looked up into that grief-stricken face—but at least it was disconcerting that an Anarchist of all men should have had the better of him.

"You are the King, the people's symbol of Justice and Equity—why desecrate your office by condemning men—in this case an innocent man—to death?" went on the voice, troubled yet stern.

"It was his judges, not I, who condemned him," answered the King, shirking responsibility like a true son of Father Adam; "neither is he innocent, and you know it."

"He is innocent, and if the judges condemned, you endorse."

"I cannot argue the point," returned the King. "Your brother was arrested red-handed after firing two shots at an estimable gentleman."

"The shots went past the estimable gentleman, whose self-esteem alone was wounded. Think of the fearful provocation—the weeks of slow starvation, the refusal of the owners to treat with their men, of the manager to discuss their wrongs, while flaunting in their eyes the wealth gained by their labour. I say that my brother stands guiltless of any crime, least of all of one that merits death—that in your heart you know it."

Kings have consciences like other men, and under all its State trappings that of Karl R. winced. He knew well that when he signed the warrant he had barely cast a thought at its purport, nor until reminded of it by his secretary remembered even the offence for which he sent a man to death.

"I will never give in to false sentiment," he mused, as once before that morning. But the position was becoming so strained that he felt the time had come to end it. And this he would at once have done by retracing his steps, but for the knowledge that in so doing he would turn his back to the enemy, which no good soldier must ever do. As for that idiot of a dog——

Almost as though divining his thought the Anarchist resumed quietly, "You need fear nothing, I am not armed."

"What matter if you were?" retorted the King with ill-concealed mortification; "you would gain nothing by my death."

"Believe me, I never desired it."

"Pshaw! you and the breed of malcontents from which you spring batten on blood! Your one ideal is murder, and since to attack the police too probably means a bullet through your own skins, murder of the highest, which at least brings notoriety."

"Who says so?"

The calm judicial question affronted the King. "The whole world!" he scoffed angrily.

"You mean of journalists and police, professions which when not paid to lie usually find it convenient to do so. You imply it is cowardice that keeps our hands off a strong and prejudiced enemy. Is it, then, safer to attack a King, whose assailant faces instant death or capture by those around? Again, the police in the main act under a sense, if a mistaken one, of duty; few Kings but disregard theirs. Are we miscreants, notoriety-mongers, cowardly assassins who batten on blood, whose ideal is murder? Press words, police phrases. I have told you the story of my life—do I look like a man who battens on blood?"

The King, meeting the clear, steadfast eyes in the gaunt, hunger-bitten frame before him, shifted his gaze uneasily.

"If," resumed the Anarchist, "Society is so constituted that the rich have no incentive to crime, the poor every incentive, then Society itself becomes the factor of criminals, and Anarchists the men who refuse to become what Society would make them. It suits the ruling class to divide mankind into servitors and the served. Yet from of old the served, the 'masters,' have felt the injustice of this division. To ease their guilt they coined another on whom to lay the blame. So they tell us it is by *God's* will we labour for life in sweat and sorrow, nor ever taste of the fruit of this labour; by *God's* will perish in shoals in workshop and mine; by *God's* will our sons become food for powder, our daughters drift on the street; by *God's* will the poor are harried, while the idle rich wallow in peace. Though to us you prate of the honour and glory of labour, how many among you are willing to share in that honour and glory, to fling off broadcloth, bend your necks to the yoke, and labour as we labour, day in, day out, ill or well, Necessity the task-master, Hunger the whip?"

"Well, well, those are questions for theologians and economists to settle," answered the King impatiently; "sensible men must take the world as they find it; we cannot all be masters. I was born a King, you an artisan—you would like to change places?"

The Anarchist smiled. "No, in spite of the press charge of envy, that is a pitch, to you of honour, to us of dishonour, to which none of my 'breed' aspire. For Kings reign no longer by virtue of the people's love, but through the dread inspired by the massed forces behind the throne. When a man seeks to be free, to live as his conscience and not as the State dictates, the police, who typify the Law, the soldier Compulsion in arms, the priest Superstition rampant, these three, the powers behind the throne, pounce upon that man, and if they cannot quench the spirit of revolt they slay him. So through the ages millions of men and women have suffered or died for Liberty and Conscience, their brothers, hypnotised by State and Church, applauding or in helpless silence passing on. But to-day the eyes of men are opening. Myriads from force of habit still submit to abuses and wrongs, but they no longer say 'these are right, therefore must be borne.' The Church still storms, the State enslaves, but men ask of each other, 'What *is* this Church? What *is* this State?' There is an uplifting of souls, a groping of hand for hand, clods fall from heavy feet, hope springs to tear-dimmed eyes; Liberty, moulding her song to the throb of every heart, breathes life into dead bones, and to none does her call ring home with such force as to her foster-children the Anarchists. They it is who when danger threatens are the first to spring to her aid, the first to confront tyranny and oppression, the first to preach revolt, the last to submit to despotism. Hail to thee, Anarchism, thou Fighting element in

the spirit of Discontent! Hail to thee, whose touch on man's soul, if intangible, once felt is ineffaceable, beating down the false, lifting up the true; strong in death, defiant in life; whose watchword is Brotherhood, whose battle-cry Freedom!"

As the impassioned words rang out the Anarchist appeared to the King transfigured. Like a wrestler exulting in strength that presaged victory, his form seemed to expand; there was noble dignity in the uplifted head, the light of a great purpose, of supreme courage, shone in the steadfast eyes that looked beyond the King to the hills behind which the world lay.

The scoffing serenity of the monarch became visibly disturbed. His Chief of Police had called these men "arrant cowards," "contemptible carrion." How reconcile such epithets with the words and bearing of Michael Stirn, Anarchist? Yet, would a distinguished police official lie, and lie to his Sovereign? Could there be smoke without fire? Nay, the cloven foot must show itself; a clever, plausible rogue might fool others, but not Karl Rex.

"Strange," he therefore observed, a fine smile of irony restoring his equanimity, "that you should outrage two such noble sentiments as Freedom and Brotherhood by deeds which make humanity shudder; that in your efforts to reform the universe the cowardly bomb and pitiless dagger should be your weapons; that with such you strike impartially at rich and poor, innocent and guilty alike!"

"Sad it may be, but not strange," answered the Anarchist, a look of pain in the eyes he withdrew from the hills to fix once more on the King. "If sensible men (I use your phrase) are to take the world as they find it, what of those who wish to leave it better than they find it, and of those who rather than see it bettered rise in their strength to impede all efforts at betterment? What is the position to-day? On one hand we find a small community of men who not only through fraud and force have possessed themselves of every rod of ground, of all the economic wealth of the world, but who control the actual means, the opportunity, the tools, that go to produce that wealth. On the other, an inert mass of semi-conscious humanity, a dense multitude of ignorant toilers exploited till death for the price of a crust of bread. Now, what if a man, of a sudden awakening to the full comprehension of these things, becomes also conscious of their injustice, of the rights due himself and fellows as *men?* 'Are we not worth more than the crust of bread so hardly won?' he ponders. He looks around. On every side his brothers are struggling, agonising, dying for that pitiful crust, the very sum of life to them—and

there within reach lies plenty for all. But the plenty has a ring of steel round it, and a fence of bludgeons, and is shrouded by the King's mantle, the Church's robe. He stretches forth a hand—and is torn to pieces. Well, but say that his death-cry at length rings home, and one and yet another rises until Discontent, twin-sister to Progress, has seized on the multitude? Then, only *then*, is it, when a wall of desperate and menacing faces confronts those serried forces, that crumbs from that plenty are doled out by its guardians, yet so slowly, so grudgingly, that the world lies white with the bones of the millions who perished while they waited. So much for Yesterday. But To-day the hewer of wood and stone, the despised of the ages, has risen through the bitter stress of struggle and failure to a fuller conception of his powers and manhood. Why wait when he can at least assert if not emancipate himself? To-day you dare not slay as often as of old when we stretch out a hand, since our death-rattle disquiets the world. We are learning to drive home our protests against wrongs that except for forcible protest, you refuse to admit. It is War—guerilla warfare if you choose—but the arms are with you, and we have but the weapons our own hands can fashion. And I say that the State soldier who at the word of command fires into a throng of unarmed strikers, heedless of the women and children in its midst, is a thousand times more accurst than the man who, maddened by unjust suffering, fires the home or casts a bomb at the resorts of the rich. The first, wantonly obedient, aims at his brothers; the second at a pitiless enemy. The innocent victims of our reprisals are bitterly mourned, and at best have been few. Who shall sum up the lives you have sacrificed on the altar of your lusts, your ambitions, your cupidity? Bid the soldier fire a second time on a throng whose only weapon is a stone, and he does it. Bid the police clear the streets; are they tender of young or old, of those they trample or beat to death in the process? Yet the sight of one torn woman or child for ever paralyses the hand of the militant Anarchist. He fights not to take but to save life, not to enslave but to liberate, not to foster abuses but to ensure reforms. If he teaches resistance it is because bitter experience has taught him that a menacing front, a threat to retaliate—by his forefathers in the past, by himself in the present—alone forces attention to his pressing needs or just demands, alone opens the wilfully blind eyes of the 'classes' to the iniquitous system on which they only thrive. All, all has been taken from us, and when never so peacefully we urge our claims, with your laws you muzzle the press, the meetings, the lips of the worker. If, justly resenting, he resists, you 'make an example' of him. Is

it then strange if on occasion the desire creeps into the mind of some desperately tried and wronged man to make an example of his oppressors? Conceive what your thoughts might have been had you, like myself, seen your wife sink at your feet dead of starvation and overwork through the callous act of a capitalist. Or what your own hand might have done if, like my brother, your brain had been fired by a long course of reduced wages, culminating on the brink of winter in the bread being torn from your own and children's mouths through the petty spite and rapacity of the man who closed the works. But no! you cannot understand these things. As I said, we may fathom your joy, but you can never fathom our misery."

A perplexed look had wiped out the truculency on the King's features. For the first time in his life he was thinking. Thinking so deeply that he noted no more than the Anarchist, whose gaze of sad inquiry still rested on him, that, as though a deep note of human sorrow had pierced the sky, the little brown bird had ceased to sing and dropped like a stone to earth, or that low, sullen growls came from where the wolf-hound lay, his watchful eyes fixed across the stream.

For some minutes the King had been reseated, and as if appraising the meagre form opposite him, the eyes of Michael Stirn travelled slowly from the insignificant features that spoke to conduct moulded only on impulse, till they reached the small, delicate feet, and there they paused, rivetted. For round one of the slender ankles on which the King prided himself was twisted what seemed a coil of dull yellow ribbon, but above the coil hovered an ugly flat head, its bright eyes fixed greedily on a patch of flesh that showed through a rent made in the silken sock as the wearer sped across country.

Lost in problems that he had considered fit only for economists and theologians, the King was oblivious to sight and sound. He did not feel the slowly tightening grip of the snake, nor note the change that had co me over the man facing him, a fateful change had he known it.

Gone was the calm strength, the proud patience, the self-control, and every other sign of the finer instincts governing his being. Once more red fire had leapt to the eyes, to flame like an angry torch; but more than all there had settled on the features, like some devilish mask, an expression of such fierce and concentrated hatred, such vindictive malice, as truly seemed a heritage bequeathed from those long ages of suffering,

humiliation and injustice with which until now the "classes" have burdened the "masses."

The would-be murderer of his brother, the hereditary arch-enemy of the individual rights of men, the head of a despotic State, was at the Anarchist's mercy. One involuntary contraction of a muscle, and venom would be coursing through the King's veins that meant death to one of his weak fibre.

But the King thought on and saw nothing of the silent struggle that blanched the face and clenched the hands of the man opposite, nor noted the proud toss of the head that, as if finally disposing of the matter, drowned the lust of revenge in the sweet waters of Mercy. All passed unheeded. Only when the silence was suddenly broken by a low tense voice that seemed to fall from afar, such was its commanding tone that he instinctively obeyed.

"Do not stir! A poisonous snake is about to strike your foot—I can kill it. So!"

Dimly as in a waking dream the King saw a hand flash through the air. The next instant, as something seemed wrenched from his ankle, came three short, sharp reports from across the stream, and a man writhed in helpless agony at his feet.

So rapidly did this and what followed occur, that dazed with bewilderment the startled King sat motionless. Before he could spring from his seat the sound of men dashing through water was heard, of swift orders spoken in a familiar voice, and on the writhing form three others had cast themselves, two with their knees crushing the ribs, a third pounding the feebly moving head on the flints beneath it.

Then the King came to himself. Refusing to become a victim to false sentiment, he had ridden over a battle-field still reeking of powder, had seen disembowelled horses and mangled men by the score, but nothing there had sickened him as did this onslaught on a stricken man.

"Off from him, brutes!" he shouted, hot with shame and rage. "Pierced through throat and back the man is powerless. Call your men off, Steinkop! Before Heaven this thing is horrible."

"He deserves all we can give him," returned the Chief of Police calmly. "You may thank Heaven, sir, as I do," he added piously, "that we thought fit to track your steps this morning; another moment and you would have been stabbed to the heart. We would have shot him ten minutes ago but for fear of harming you."

"Stab me? He has no arms. He has saved my life—see!" And the King pointed to the limp body of the throttled reptile lying where it had been flung across some stones.

The police official smiled with pitiful indulgence. "I think we know our business, sir. The man at your feet is Stirn, the desperate Anarchist of whom we warned you. From information received, he designed to assassinate your majesty."

"Lies!" ejaculated the King, as with a gesture of despair he threw himself against the massive bodies that were crushing out the life under them. He might as well have tried to move mountains.

"Leave him to us. Stand back, sir; these devils are up to tricks even in their death-throes!" expostulated the Chief of Police, his voice, if deferential, harsh; for no man, were he twenty times a King must interfere with the police in the execution of their duty.

The King raved and swore in his impotency, but only when they thought they had pounded and choked it enough did Matthias and his fellows rise from the prostrate form to look upon their handiwork. It was a sight meet for savage eyes. Blood lay on the flints on which the head had been battered, ran from a gaping wound in the neck, stained the little flowers blooming around, trickled, a growing stream, about their roots. But a convulsive gasp for breath showed life lingered, and shuddering the King stooped.

"Bring water!" he commanded.

What? Fetch drink to a dying Anarchist? That was hangman's work.

The King noted the hesitancy. In a moment, tearing the hat off his head, he had dashed to the stream, and was back to sprinkle the ashen face with reviving drops.

"Stirn," he murmured brokenly, in such sorrow and shame as he had never thought to feel, "Stirn, it was not my fault—only believe me."

Would those eyes never open? Would this fresh victim of a false system die cursing him, as he had right to do?

There was a flicker of the eyelids; for the last time dim blue eyes probed his; then, as the King bent lower, the lips parted, and a faint whisper reached his ear.

"I understand. Yet—*as head of the System—the King—is—responsible.*"

Thus, by an Anarchist's last words, and not by his knife, was this King stabbed to the heart.

A moment more, and with what seemed the shadow of the humorous smile again hovering over his lips, Michael Stirn turned his face to the sky and died.

There was a knell for the passing soul.

"*One less!*" muttered the Chief of Police, his steely eyes glittering.

EPILOGUE.

Within three hours jubilation reigned in the city. Bells were ringing, *Te Deums* being sung in the churches, newspaper offices and taverns besieged by hurrahing crowds bent on news, or tipsiness cloaked under the loyal phrase "Here's to the King!" As the ministers and courtiers hurried towards the Castle the streets grew white with posters. On every hand one read: "Attempted Assassination of the King! Horrible Anarchist Plot! Saved by Chief Steinkop! Desperate Struggle of Police with Assassin! His Confession and Suicide!" The royal apartments were littered with congratulatory telegrams, and these the King read with a set face and eyes that still saw nothing but a dead man lying by a sunny stream. He had found it impossible to stem the tide. Police and press lies were already ahead of him by the time he had retraced his steps to the Castle and sick at heart sought the

privacy of his apartments. Chief Steinkop had not initiated a bicycle brigade for nothing.

But one thing the King could do—he could cancel that death warrant. It had added a keener edge to his distress that Stirn had died before he could be told that this injustice should at least be righted. So the Home Secretary was sent for.

"Karl Stirn is not to die," said this other Karl briefly, after telling his tale.

"But, sir——" began the amazed Home Secretary.

"Further, I wish him to be liberated to-night."

"Dear, dear," thought the minister, shaking his bald head, "the shock has turned his majesty's brain." For he had long since been telephoned the police report, and on the strength of it ordered the Governor of the prison to keep the condemned man in strictest seclusion prior to examination by a police tribunal. For of course he was implicated in the plot. Wonderful indeed were the ways of Providence, that saved kings and capitalists and fell foul of vermin like Anarchists! After this pious reflection he answered the King soothingly.

"Very good, sir; but since you liberate him it will be unnecessary to cancel the warrant." And a smile of faint irony played about his lips.

"How so?"

"As the brother of your would-be assassin, your loyal subjects will tear him to pieces in five minutes."

"Well," mused the King, inwardly fuming as he paced the floor, "I can at least respite him."

"That, certainly. In any case I should have counselled such a course. We must get to the bottom of this affair in order to protect ourselves against the Anarchist danger, against a sect whose fundamental principle is terror and murder."

"Am I to be believed, or only the police?" suddenly stormed the King, as the merry music of bells floated through the window.

But he did not wait for an answer. Laughing harshly, he hurried to the Queen. "You still believe the story as I told it, my dear?" he suggested.

The Queen looked pained, but she returned quite frankly: "No, Karl, I cannot. That man hypnotised you. A thing quite possible, for, as the dear Archbishop said the other day, Anarchists are in league with Hell and the Devil." (She crossed herself.) "You *thought* you saw a snake in this wretch's hand—it was really a knife. I have just seen our good Steinkop——"

Then the King gave it up.

Like all impulsive persons he was of a loquacious nature; but he became silent and morose, strolling about his great park like an unquiet spirit, his dog at his heels. Still, on the day of the national thanksgiving he went submissively to church, though he shocked the Court by a droll laugh when the Archbishop, tears of emotion trickling down his nose, extolled his courage in the supreme hour of danger; and fumbled at his throat as if choked on allusion being made to his noble if mistaken clemency towards the assassin's brother, now respited, —mistaken (and here the venerable prelate's voice pealed through the cathedral) "because humanity is thrown away upon Anarchists; the mob fears nothing so much as the police and the hangman, and the surest way to cow Anarchism is to raise the gallows on high and make an example of its votaries."

Karl Stirn faced his brother's accusers boldly; there was no getting to the bottom of the affair. As Steinkop, with well-simulated wrath, informed the Home Secretary, "these scoundrels either tell everything or shut their mouths like oysters." Karl Stirn told his tormentors in the plain unvarnished tongue of the worker, the tongue that accompanied by a flashing eye and a clenched hand is understood of all, that they lied. That in common with every true Anarchist his brother held human life in passionate sanctity; that though he might fight for his own and his fellows' rights and liberties to the death, he struck at systems and not defenceless men; that for one act by an Anarchist driven desperate by injustice or want there were twenty by desperate non-Anarchist workers like himself. Further, that if he died, he died; but that if he lived (for they had offered life as a bait) he would carry the fiery torch of Anarchism himself into every home were misery and discontent nested. They were abashed by the sturdy vehemence of the man they had meant to bully, and one more irreconcilable he was hurried to his cell.

Later, the death sentence was annulled. It was rumoured, as in every such case, that he had gone into penal servitude. But, as the King thought to himself, what is the use of being a King if one cannot do as one chooses? So he interviewed the proprietors of the Vulcan Works, of whom the manager was one. These gentlemen, albeit wondering at the royal whim, were so honoured by the distinction conferred on them that they incontinently repudiated any vindictive feeling towards their late employee. The bullets had gone wide of their mark; he had been six months in solitary confinement, had, so to speak, felt the noose about his neck; and though, as the manager snarled, the only way to handle workmen in these

democratic days was to slap them in the face when they threatened revolt, a show of leniency on special occasions was not amiss to keep them in good temper. Profuse in expressions of loyalty, the "estimable gentleman" then bowed and with his colleagues withdrew.

The King lost no time in carrying out his design. He sent word to the Home Secretary that he would be visiting the city the following day, and desired that the prisoner should be released and brought before him.

But the two Karls did not meet. True, the liberation had taken place, but, through a "clerical error," in quite another manner to that intended by his majesty. For the prisoner was roused at midnight, escorted by police to the frontier, and there released under threat of severe penalties did he ever return. Had Steinkop, too, thought what is the use of being head of the Secret Police if one cannot do as one chooses?

The King knew that any endeavour to place the blame was useless; each official would screen the other. He said nothing as the Home Secretary dilated on the unconscionable impudence of present-day clerks, but his thoughts reverted to another "error" of which he might never have heard but for a chance remark of the Court Physician.

He had given instructions that the body of Michael Stirn should receive immediate and decent burial. Instead—well, for months hot controversy raged in the medical schools over the analysis of an Anarchist. For, to the wrathful dismay of every doctor and physiologist, there was no symptom of disease in the brain. Not only was it absolutely healthy, but of a size and weight that indicated unusual mental capacity. Nor was there a trace of alcoholism in the body. These facts combined upset all their theories on the vicious habits, imbecile delusions and insanity of Anarchists, and kept the medical faculty and criminologists in what threatened to become an interminable turmoil of bitter wrangling and dispute.

Some months later Chief of Police Steinkop retired.

The press said the increasing strain of his anxious position, coupled with the shock sustained by the attempt on the King's life, had undermined his health. The King read these comments and smiled. Slowly his eyes had begun to open, police lies to stick in his throat. In his sleeping as in his waking dreams he still heard the bark of those three revolvers, witnessed again that savage yet so-called legal assault on a dying "suspect"; perpetual contact with its perpetrators depressed now that new feelings and emotions stirred his breast. But

for the Queen he would have dispensed altogether with police functionaries about his person, only she nearly swooned at the suggestion. To her mind the Anarchist, instigated by his noisome father the Devil, was ever on the prowl to snatch her infant from her arms, her husband off his throne; prayer might weaken the Devil's snares, but who save the police could protect their dear anatomies?

He yielded to her terror, but neglected "our good Steinkop," much to that gentleman's amazement and disgust. For every police official, be he chief or constable, has so exalted an opinion of his own dignity and worth that to be treated with less respect than the profession demands becomes an unpardonable offence. His royal master no longer sought out the Chief for pleasant little chats or counsel—that was a slight. His pay for the exceptional service rendered the State was not increased with the decoration pinned on his breast—palpable outrage. His three subordinates, if promoted, had against his wishes been transferred to other spheres—insult not to be borne. So he resigned. And perhaps no man was more astounded than himself when he found his resignation accepted.

Still, there were compensations.

There was the State pension, not to mention royal gifts and handsome cheques tendered by bankers and financiers. The principal tradesmen presented him with his portrait painted by the Court artist; innumerable pieces of plate, jewellery and gold-topped walking-sticks were showered upon him by admiring colleagues and aristocrats; but for another "clerical error" his statue would have been erected in his native town. Unfortunately for the success of this scheme, projected by Stock Exchange clerks, the young treasurer of the fund emulating certain of his superiors on 'Change, waited until the sum in his charge had swelled to goodly proportions—when both vanished. Last, but not least, the Church sent him its blessing—the Church is always too poor to make gifts. So "Death on Anarchists," as with fond familiarity he was called by his staff (for all great men have their *sobriquets*), retired. He would not die in the workhouse. Only soldiers who give their life to King and country do that; the guardians of Capital and Private Property, the harassers of weak and poor banned by the law, do not.

On the anniversary of the bright summer morning on which the Anarchist had died, the King presented a new and beautiful park to the people. It comprised all the picturesquely wild tract across which he had wandered a year agone, that and much more; and the day being proclaimed a holiday, instantly beside every flower that bloomed along the stream's rim there

seemed to grow a child. There was no counting these, the children. They danced round the bonfire in which all the "*Trespassers Beware*" boards now flamed heavenwards, waded into the water regardless of the indignity offered once royal trout, climbed those old trees that for generations had never felt the hollow of a child's foot, made the rafters of the ancient mill tremble under their happy shouts. Everywhere they sported like their play-fellows the butterflies.

But the aged folk, and the toilers who with deep sighs of contentment stretched their weary limbs upon the sunlit grass, these gazed with puzzled, wondering eyes at a strange thing that rose on the edge of the stream beside them. This was a large natural boulder of granite resting on a polished plinth of the same material. To some it recalled the early monuments of their race, that enduring still were strewn about the waste places of the country. So in those old days did their forefathers commemorate a battle won, thus honour a hero dead.

Perhaps what puzzled them most as they lay and listened to the soaring larks was the inscription—

"TO THE MAN WHO MADE A KING THINK."