

Heroic Deeds of Royalties

There are many brave feats to the credit of Royalty.

It is not many years, since, when driving in his capital, the King of Portugal saw a burly highwayman in the act of robbing and knifing a wayfarer. Before the rascal had time to escape the King had jumped from his carriage, struck him to the ground with his stick, and pinned him there while his coachman and footman secured his hands and feet. On another occasion King Carlos, who is a magnificent swimmer, jumped into the River Alcantara, rescued a drowning man just as he was sinking for the last time, and brought him safely ashore; and, again, when he was witnessing a bull-fight, he leaped into the ring and at the risk of his life distracted the attention of a fierce bull just as he was about to gore a fallen toreador.

Not less brave is King Carlos's beautiful Queen, who has probably saved more lives than any other Royal lady in Europe. Once she plunged into the Tagus and, battling with the strong current, rescued two children from drowning; and on a more recent occasion she saved a fisherman who was drowning in a rough sea of Cascaes—a feat which nearly cost her her own life, and in recognition of which the Kaiser presented her with the German medal for saving life.

Curiously enough it was near the same spot that Carlos himself was rescued when a boy. Near the fortress of Cascaes, on the Atlantic coast, is a chasm known as Hell's Mouth, in which the waters of the Atlantic form seething whirlpools. Just beyond the chasm the young Carlos and his brother were bathing one day when they were caught by a wave which would certainly have swept them into the chasm had it not been for the presence of mind and daring of Queen Maria Pia, their mother, who rushed into the sea and saved her sons from destruction.

Another Royal life-saver is King Oscar of Sweden, a man of enormous strength and absolutely fearless. His Majesty was walking in the streets of Stockholm one day when he saw a couple of runaway horses, attached to a carriage in which were a lady and her daughter, racing madly in his direction. The coachman had lost all control of the maddened animals and a terrible catastrophe seemed inevitable. As the horses drew near the King walked towards them and, with a leap, flung himself at their heads, seized the reins, and, after being dragged some distance, brought them, trembling and subdued, to a standstill. For this deed of heroism he received the medal of the French Humane Society.

The late King of Denmark performed a similar heroic act, to which there was an amusing sequel, by stopping a runaway cab-horse in the suburbs of Copenhagen. When the cabman realised that the danger was passed he turned to his rescuer and said, 'I don't know who you are, sir; but I shall be proud to drive you home for nothing.' Thank you, my friend, was the smiling answer, I think I had rather walk.

Twice at least the Dowager Empress of Russia saved her husband's life. Once, it is said, she saw a strange jewel-case on the Emperor's dressing-table, and on picking it up found that it was unaccountably heavy. Her suspicion was aroused, and carrying it into her own room she placed it in a basin of water and sent for the Prefect of Police. An examination of the case proved that it was a most ingenious infernal machine of terrible power.

One evening when entering her husband's study the Empress heard a slight noise which she could not explain. With remarkable presence of mind she asked the Emperor to come with her to the nursery to say good-night to the children, and as he left the room she locked the door. She communicated her suspicions to the Captain of the Palace Guard; the room was entered, and it was discovered that the lurking assassin had made his escape through the window.

It was to the presence of mind and to the brawny arm of Prince George of Greece that the present Czar undoubtedly owed his life fifteen years ago. The Czarevitch (as he then was) was riding in a jinricksha at Kyoto, in Japan, when a fanatical native policeman attacked him furiously with a sword. The Czarevitch jumped down and tried to escape, but his assailant pursued him, and was on the point of dispatching him when Prince George, who had rushed to his rescue, felled the would-be assassin with a crushing blow of his stick.

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