

French Crook Wants to Be King, So Gets Himself Elected Ruler of Russ Kingdom

Makes Americans 'Nobles' and Sets Up Former Shop Girl as Queen; He's in Jail, But No One Will Prosecute Him.

By STERLING HELLIG.
Nice, French Riviera, July 30.—A most astonishing alleged crook plot, which took in a number of American visitors to the Riviera as well as French and other Europeans of all classes, has been going on for months here before local police or French state department detectives learned a word about it.

And even now that Leon Laforge, Prince Vitalval—old-time usurper of noble titles and functions—is under arrest as king of Transcaucasia, his "nobles" have such a firm belief in the political secrets which he confided to them that there has not been a single complaint made against him. The police simply cannot obtain witnesses.

Constituted Monarchy.

Here is a man who not only constituted a monarchy under their noses, elaborated a constitution and made regular application for admission to the Society of Nations, but traced out the great economic questions which must occupy the skill of his nobles, ministers and state secretaries; and he had so captured their confidence in the roles they would be called upon to play that "not to compromise the cause," the faithful silence which, absolutely, every mother's son and daughter of them maintained, from three to six months past, is not yet broken!

King and Ministers were in Correspondence with the Chancellery of Europe.

Washington.—The State Department at Washington has had deposited models of the postage stamps of Transcaucasia with the Universal Postal Union at Berne.

Russ Ambassador Backer.

The king, in fact, could prove that he had the backing of the last regular representative of Russia in France, the Ambassador Malakoff. Transcaucasia-Vitanvalia is a country actually under the dominion of the soviets; and in view of a coming restoration millions of francs' worth of orders for robes, court mantles and diadems had been accepted by the well-known houses of Redfern and Mappen & Webb.

And neither the local police of Nice nor French state department detectives knew anything about it!

Leon Laforge, it must be admitted, is a wonderful man and a man of power—because he almost believes in himself!

Makes Self Conspicuous.

As early as 1901, in Paris, he had written about him, when he raised a veritable fortune in "chancellery dues" as Dom Leon, Prince Laforge de Vitalval, Roman prince and sovereign chief and grand master of the pontifical order of St. Leon and chevalier of the crown of Italy. For months, the chevaliers of his creation lit up the streets of Paris with their bits of colored ribbon. In gold-faced dress-coat of his own Heraldic academy, he made himself conspicuous, at the receptions of the French white house, even, not to mention the various ministries, shaking hands with resident Loubet, patronizing high functionaries, conducting ladies whom he did not know to the buffet, and offering his "protection" right and left. One day, President Loubet asked: "Who is that encumbering person?"

The question was passed on to the famous old prefect of police Lepine. A week later, the Prince de Vitalval was languishing in jail, six months, for swindling. It was those "chancellery dues" which he got out of people—not the calling of himself prince—which got him into trouble. In France, anyone can call himself prince—if he doesn't do himself on it!

Invited to Receptions.

A year later he was again about Paris, getting invited to receptions. (In France, anyone can get invited to receptions.) When invited officially to cease wearing the "diplomatic" costume of his own heraldic academy, he replied by letter to the foreign office, threatening to explain to the king of Italy, whom he called "my illustrious friend and august cousin."

They thought they had him, now; but Dom Leon slipped out of it, as he has always done. "I have a right to call the king of Italy so," he said. "The Italian protocol gives me the equivalent rank of a cardinal!"

And it was so! They could not contest his being a chevalier of the crown of Italy. It seems that, in his youth, he wrote a book on MacMahon. Having sent a copy of it to the emperor, he was pleased to find it speak so well of Italy, and, de motu proprio, dubbed his author chevalier.

Ceases to Be Chevalier.

But Dom Leon—so ready to collect chancellery dues from others—had not paid his own chancellery dues to Italy, which, in every land, is sine qua non to the clinch, perfect, hog-tie and definitively vest all such beautiful distinctions.

Shows Parchment.

Thus, the origin of the grand affair is as follows:

Laforge began, about a year ago, by writing a parchment written in English and authenticated by great seals, granting him the concession of certain petroleum fields in trans-Caucasian territory. Take note of this: It is claimed, hopes by these maneuvers to save her own bacon. According to Baron Pursell (of Kansas



Leon Laforge, Prince de Vitalval and King of Transcaucasia.



Princess Caria, the Mysterious 'Real Princess' of the Caucasus.

City), she will be the means of saving all, at need!

At Beaulieu-sur-Mer last autumn, Laforge got together a quantity of Georgian refugees, contract workingmen, disbanded soldiers from the Russian contingents, adventurers, and even petty nobles—by whom he had himself proclaimed emperor of a kingdom having practically the same boundaries as these oil concessions.

Asks Wrangel's Aid.

This done, Laforge demanded (through the intermediary of Ambassador Malakoff, still technical representative of Russia recognized by France) aid and protection from General Wrangel, not yet then beaten, to deliver his kingdom from the bolshevik domination!

Refuse to Ridicule.

A desk full of stuff from the League of Nations!

Wrangel, grasping reports from the city of a kingdom having practically the same boundaries as these oil concessions. (What did Wrangel know? The king was introduced to him by Malakoff.) And these encouraging reports from Wrangel served as basis to obtain new recognitions from parties knowing none too much about the business—or their own. And it was done by mail. Laforge, it must be remembered, has an erudition and a readiness in these things probably equal to that of the specialists of any chancellery of Europe!

Institutions Set Up.

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379. As I said at the beginning, Vitalval is a wonderful man. During six months, his newly-appointed nobles had such confidence in the political secrets which he whispered to them that not a word about the kingdom leaked out to the French police.

Witnesses Silent. "The Princess Caria," he said with reverence. "She is a born princess of the Caucasus. Behind her is the local pull. The territorial bosses trust her. Up in Paris she has got the pull of western capital to defend the little kingdom."

"Vitanvalia," I murmured. "Why not?" he snapped. "It's got to have a name. It's got to be marked off from all those crooks around its borders. And it needs a bunch of western boosters."

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Fremont Financier Donates War Memorial

Fremont, Neb., July 30.—(Special.)—L. M. Keene, banker and philanthropist, has donated to the city of Fremont, through the American Legion, a monument dedicated to the sons of Fremont who died in the world war. The memorial will cost \$5,000 and is to be dedicated on Armistice day, November 11. The monument will be 22 feet in height of highly polished marble, with tablets inscribed with the names of Fremont soldiers who died. The main shaft will be topped by an American eagle, standing with wings outstretched. The memorial will stand in the city park directly opposite the Lincoln statue dedicated last Memorial day to the Lincoln highway, donated to the city by L. D. Richards.

Pawnee City Churches Prepare for Revival

Pawnee City, Neb., July 30.—(Special.)—A series of prayer meetings to be held at the homes of church members have been planned as a preparatory program for the coming revival meetings here. The services will be union in character, all churches uniting, and will be held once a week.

Swimming Pool Is Built in Hildreth City Park

Hildreth, Neb., July 30.—(Special.)—A swimming pool, 100 feet long and 50 feet wide, is being constructed in the town park here. Work is being done by townspeople and farmers residing nearby. The money necessary was raised by selling tickets for \$5, entitling the holders to 20 swims.

Russians Agree To Release All U. S. Prisoners

Acceptance of Ultimatum of Hughes Contained in Reply to Offer to Aid Famine Sufferers.

(By The Associated Press.)
Riga, July 30.—The offer of Herbert Hoover to aid Russia in relieving suffering due to famine on condition that all Americans now held prisoner in Russia be released has been accepted by the Russian authorities, who suggest immediate negotiations in order to realize speedy assistance, according to a dispatch from the Rosta News agency of Moscow, received here today.

The text of the reply, made in the name of Leo Kamenef, head of the nonpartisan, nonpolitical famine relief committee, is as follows:

Want Aid Immediately.

"The Russian government considers it necessary to fix as soon as possible the exact conditions on which the immediate relations are to begin. Its humane intentions guarantee the feeding, medical aid and clothing of the million children and invalids. For this purpose the Russian government considers it useful that Director Brown or any other person authorized for the negotiations should immediately come to Moscow, Riga or Ravel."

The Russian soviet government expects a quick reply, stating the place and time for the negotiations. (Signed) "M. KAMENEFF."

The principal difficulty the relief association would encounter, Mr.

Maxim Gorky, and to the soviet mission in London for delivery to the local bolshevik legation.

Was No Surprise.

The acceptance by Russia of the demand for the release of the American prisoners did not come as a surprise to the local soviet authorities, notwithstanding the outspoken criticisms of the United States for raising the prisoner question in a time of famine. The soviet officials are understood to believe that their acceptance will not only bring the needed famine relief, but also open channels of future relations between Russia and America.

Can Begin at Once.

Washington, July 30.—American relief for starving Russian children could begin 48 hours after Americans imprisoned or detained in Russia were released and out of Russia, Secretary Hoover said today. There could be no assurance that the Americans had been released, he added, until they were out of Russia.

Mr. Hoover still was awaiting a detailed reply to his offer of aid, transmitted through Maxim Gorky and the State department had received no answer to Secretary Hughes' recent demand that the prisoners be released.

Handled From United States.

With the Americans out of Russia, Mr. Hoover said, the American Relief association would be willing to send a representative to Riga to take up with the Russian authorities details of food distribution. There are relief warehouses in Riga and Danzig, and it would only be a question of transportation for the supplies to start rolling into Russian famine areas. The relief organization has been at work continuously in Europe so that a sufficient personnel could be mobilized at Riga to handle the work on short notice, he said.

Famine relief in Russia, Mr. Hoover said, would be handled directly by the American Relief association through the co-operation of the Red Cross and other organizations would be sought.

The principal difficulty the relief association would encounter, Mr.

Hoover thought, would be a breakdown in the Russian transportation system. Food distributed would be limited to those areas to which transportation was available, he said.

Police Serve Warrants On 3 Men in Hospital

Police served warrants on the three young men convalescing in Methodist hospital as a result of the automobile accident on "death curve," in which Margie McWilliams, 504 North Twenty-fifth street, was fatally injured.

The warrants charge the three with joy riding, a state charge, which calls for three months in jail. The three, Fred Keitz, 3011 Underwood avenue; Robert Swan, 618 South Sixteenth street; and Cliff Russell, Fifth avenue and Cuming street, will be removed from the hospital to jail tomorrow, according to police.

They were driving the car of B. Pred at the time of the accident. The county attorney's office, announced yesterday that no inquest in the death of Miss McWilliams would be held.

R. B. Howell Asks Ticket to Europe on Public Business

R. B. Howell, general manager of the Metropolitan Utilities district, applied yesterday in federal court for passports for himself and his wife to Europe. He gave his reason for going as "public business."

Mr. Howell is going to Budapest, Hungary, to investigate operation of a wireless telephone system. He is interested in installation of such systems here. Mr. and Mrs. Howell will also visit other sections of Europe.

Small to Inspect State Highways

Illinois Governor to Transact Business From "Capitol on Wheels."

Chicago Tribune—Omaha Bee Leased Wire.
Chicago, July 30.—For an indefinite period Governor Small will maintain a "capitol on wheels." He will tour the state, inspecting the highways on which a \$60,000,000 bond issue is to be expended. According to friends, he plans to transact public business from the various county seats and a corps of traveling secretaries will journey back and forth from Springfield, carrying out the governor's orders on state business. Heads of various state departments will meet him at designated points on the tour and will consult him by long distance telephone when necessary.

The governor declares his tour of inspection has nothing whatever to do with his indictment. The governor's attorneys returned to their homes at various down state cities last night, but neither of the three would make any comment on the Chicago conference.

"There is nothing to do but wait," said Sheriff Mester, at Springfield. "We are in a hurry. We have until September to produce the governor in court and he is sure to return to the capital before then. I expect him to come in this week and give bond."

Prosecutor Mortimer says that if Governor Small surrenders to Chief of Police Fitzmorris of Chicago or to any other officer outside Sangamon county, he will order his release. Attorney General Brundage is also prepared to combat any effort of the governor to obtain a writ of habeas corpus before some friendly judge.

The seventh annual national exposition of chemical industries will be held in New York the week of September 12.

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