

Friday, October 26, 1906

By E. Phillips Oppenheim
Author of
A Prince of Sinners

The Duke folded his hands and bowed. He looked away from

clared, "very difficult indeed. There has been more than a friend to von. He has been his benefactor. course he will deny this thing to tempt. Let me think it out, I mean all means your Grace."

"The Duke shook his head slowly. "It is impossible," he said. "Your Grace is the best judge."

"He probably has accomplished," answered. "Besides, how do we know he was not here?"

"Even if he were," the Duke, raising his head, "how could he have known the cipher?"

"I made no answer at all. It is useless to argue with a man who has evidently made up his mind not to be convinced."

"Have you mentioned this to any one?" the Duke asked.

"To Colonel Ray only, your I answered.

"Ray!" The Duke was silent a moment. He was looking steadily at the fire. "You told Ray what I told me?"

"In substance, yes, your Grace in detail, perhaps not so fully."

"And he?"

"He did not doubt my story, Grace. I said quietly.

The Duke frowned across at the
"Neither do I, Ducaïne," he
"It is not a question of veracity.
It is a question of construction.
young, and these things are all
you. The Prince might have been
near, or something which you
near or have forgotten might
different light upon his actions.
question. I beg that you will
matter entirely in my hands."
I abandoned the subject that
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"Can you spare me a few dollars?" he asked. "I am at your service, Lord's Willing," I answered.

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he wall. He seated himself a
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Several minutes he remained
twisting a cigarette with thin
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Every now and then he glanc
ively around. I waited for
peak. He was Lady Angela's
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"I should have thought," I said, "that your immediate departure was in-

"That is just where you are," Blenavon interrupted eagerly. "You were mistaken, entirely mistaken. I laughed, a little impolitely afraid, considering that this was of my employer."

"You know the circumstances," he asked.

"The Prince has explained to me. It was altogether a misunderstanding. He felt his foot a little cramped, and he was looking for something to read until you returned. He turned over your manuscript and at that moment you entered."

"Most inopportunistly, I am afraid," answered, with an unwilling smile, "I am sorry, Lord Blenbov, that I cannot accept this explanation of your behavior. I am compelled to take you at your word, and I am sorry that Lord Blenbov sucked at his cane so fiercely for a minute, threw it down, and commenced to roll another."

"It's a rot!" he exclaimed, "I wouldn't do a mean action, and besides, what on earth has he to do? He is a fanatical Royalist. He even on speaking terms with the Government of France today."

"I perceive," I remarked, looking closely, "that you are familiar with the nature of my secretarial work." He returned my glance, and it seemed to me that there was some hidden meaning in his eyes which I failed to catch.

"I am in my father's confidence," he said, "and I am not a

"Am I to take it, Mr. Ducaigne," she said at last, "that you decide to apologize to the Prince?"

"I have nothing to apologize," he answered calmly. "The Prince is attempting to obtain information in an illicit manner by the removal of

Blenavon rose slowly to his feet. The ladies' eyes were fixed upon the opposite side of the hall. Lady Angela, who had descended the stairs, was standing, pale and unsubstantial as a shadow. "It seemed to me that her eyes," he looked across at me, "were full of fire." He came slowly towards us. He laid his hand upon her arm. "Angela," he said, "Mr. Ducaigne will not accept my word. I can make

pression upon him. Perhaps he would more readily believe yours."

"Lady Angela will not ask me to believe the evidence of my own senses," said confidently.

She stood between us. I was

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"It is a very difficult position," declared, "very difficult indeed. The prince has been more than generous to me. He has been so good to me, that I cannot refuse his beneficence. I will do my duty, but I cannot do it. Let me think it out, I will try."

"By all means, your Grace," answered, "I will not let his duty slip from my hands. I am concerned in the matter ends here. I will tell you the exact truth concerning it and it seems to me by my own knowledge that the prince has been probably that the prince has been so very responsible for the loss of the leakages."

"The Duke shook his head slowly. "It is impossible," he said. "The prince's Grace is the best judge."

"The Prince was not in the hall at night when the safe was opened," answered.

"He probably has accomplices," answered. "Besides, how do we know he was not here?"

"Even if he were," the Duke raising his head, "how could he know the cipher?"

I made no answer at all. It was useless to argue with a man so evidently made up his mind and so convinced.

"Have you mentioned this matter to any one?" the Duke asked.

"To Colonel Ray only, your excellency," I answered.

"How?" The Duke was silent.

"In substance, yes, your Grace," detail, perhaps not so fully."

"And he?"

"He did not doubt my story, Grace," I said quietly.

The Duke frowned across at me.

"Neither do I, Ducaïne," he said.

"It is not a question of veracity. It is a question of construction. The young, and these things are all yours. The Prince might have been out, or something which you

"I abandoned the subject there. But as I left the room face to face with Blenavon, loitering outside. He at once spoke to me. His manner since the morning had altered. He addressed me no longer with hesitation, almost with respect. "Can you spare me a few minutes?" he asked. "I have a few words to say to you."

"I am at your service, Lord von," I answered.

"We will go into the hall and little smoke," he suggested, leaning away. "To me it seems the only way to the house free from draughts."

I followed him to where, in the corner of the great dome-shaped wide-cushioned lounge was set the wall. He seated himself and motioned me to follow his example. Several minutes he remained

twisting a cigarette with thin fingers stained yellow with nicotine. Every now and then he glanced furtively around. I waited for him to speak. He was Lady Angela's brother, but I disliked and distrusted him. He finally got his cigarette alight and turned to me.

"Mr. Ducaigne," he said, "I want to apologize to my friend, the Prince of Malors, for your behavior this afternoon."

"Apologize to the Prince?" I asked. "Why should I?"

"Because this is the only chance you have."

"I should have thought," I said, "his immediate departure was what I detected him in behavior—"

"That is just where you are mistaken," Elenavon interrupted eagerly. "He was mistaken, entirely mistaken."

I laughed, a little impolitely at first, but then, being a little afraid, considering that this was of my employer.

"You know the circumstances," I asked.

"The Prince has explained to me. It was altogether a misunderstanding. He felt his foot a little easier he was simply looking for a new one or something to read until you returned. I inadvertently he turned over your manuscript and at that time you entered."

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There was a moment's silence. I was listening to a distant voice in the distance.

"Am I to take it, Mr. Ducaigne," he said at last, "that you decide to apologize to the Prince?"

"I have nothing to apologize," answered calmly. "The Prince is tempting to obtain information in an illicit manner by the perusal of my papers, which are in my charge."

Blenayon rose slowly to his feet.

eyes were fixed upon the opposite side of the hall. Lady Angela, who had descended the stairs, was standing pale and unsubstantial as a shadow. It seemed to me that her eyes, as they looked across at me, were full of fire. She came slowly towards us. But I laid his hand upon her arm.

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