

THE PRINCE'S WAGER

[It is easier to get arrested for nothing than one would at first imagine; as is shown conclusively in this amusing story, which is translated by Sophie Earl from the French of Henri Pages.]

Toward the end of the second Empire, Prince Edmond de Karival was the most brilliant trouper of the Boulevard des Italiens.

Very blond, pale and slender, imperceptibly plump, a temperance coacher, zero,—with the aid of his enormous fortune he amused society by his freaks and fancies, even commencing occasionally to astonish the populace.

One evening he gave a grand dinner at his own mansion in the choir was exquisite, and the dessert was served in a whirl of gaiety.

"Very well; let us wager," cried the prince suddenly, springing to a challenge from the opposite end of the table, "that my fellow-beings in any way, without having committed any sort of crime, broken any law or regulation, I got myself arrested, when I please and dragged to station like a vagabond, a thief, an assassin."

He spoke in an easy tone from which he never departed, even when making the most extraordinary statements or propositions, and his words cut clearly through the laughter and conversation.

"I wager two thousand louis—who will take it up?"

There were wealthy men around the board, well used to heavy stakes; but the magnitude of the sum startled them.

"There is no doubt,"—no play on words, or anything like that," quired the fat Duke de Morville.

"Not in the least," replied the prince; "I give you my word as a gentleman."

"But," suggested another, "you will probably proceed to do one of those actions which, without being classed as offences, yet arouse the police. As, for example, you will show yourself in public in such an extravagant or remarkable costume that you will be followed by a crowd of jeering urchins, and, to put a stop to the disorder, an officer will be obliged to conduct you to a station, where he will lead you less conspicuously."

"You are quite wrong," replied de Karival; "if I should get myself taken up for wearing some extraordinary costume, the officer would know very well that he had only to deal with an eccentric character, an oddity otherwise inoffensive. No; I tell you they will grasp me by the collar and drag me to the station believing I am conducting a mafioso, while I shall be perfectly innocent of any fault or misdemeanor, transgressing no enactment."

"Well, then, how will you go about it?" exclaimed Gastamie, the banker, who was very nervous and excitable.

"Ah, that is my secret. You can understand that if I told you that beforehand."

"Of course," interrupted Gastamie; but I have it now! You will tap a policeman on the shoulder saying: 'Old fellow, I'm your man. I have killed all my family in a moment of frenzy. Remorse is choking me. Take me up, old fellow, let the law do its worst!'"

They started with laughter. The idea of the Prince de Karival tapping a policeman on the shoulder, calling him "old fellow" and begging relief from his remorse, awoke the wildest merriment. The prince alone preserved his cool gravity. He explained quickly to the impatient banker that his intention was not only to abstain from evil-doing, but even to avoid any words or actions capable of provoking his arrest. And he repeated:

"I shall take up the two thousand louis!"

"I cried Gastamie with an exuberant gesture.

The next day, about seven o'clock in the evening, when the bonfires were swarming with people and the restaurants began to fill up, a shabby wretch made his way through the crowd with bent head and watery eyes, picking up, here and there, the cigar-stems others threw away.

The man was still young, and had evidently fallen from a higher rank to judge from the distinction of his pale, refined face, his patrician hands, his general bearing.

Very tall and thin, he must have been an elegant figure in society. Now he was reduced—by what vice or misfortune?—to old shoes with broken straps, and at his neck an old black silk cravat which looked as if it might have been worried by a family of playful puppies.

Still, it was evident that this unfortunate man was not discouraged or despairing, for in all his misery there was a certain care and cleanliness not usually apparent in men of his class.

As he passed before Vignerot, a restaurant then very fashionable, he stopped for a few seconds to look in at the clear windows with their gipsy hangings, through which the diners could see the dinner seated opposite to richly dressed ladies, and dividing their attentions between the exquisite viands and their fair companions. At that moment a gentleman and lady got out of a carriage, and entered the dining room. Through the open door the shabby beggar saw a sentry-table laden with fruits and airy vegetables, while toward him rattled that color of request, so disagreeable to those who have just dined, so delectable to the hungry.

He advanced, and before the door closed, placed and timidly placed himself at the first empty table.

But he was scarcely seated when the head-waiter, a very distinguished and stylish-looking individual, perceived him and hurried toward him with an expression of annoyance.

"What are you doing there, you?"

"Why," replied the unfortunate, pointing to the other guests, "I come to eat, like all these people."

He spoke so seriously that it was impossible to think he had been drinking. The head-waiter concluded that he must be weak-minded, and said sarcastically: "You have mistaken the hour and the door, my good man; the soup-kitchen is around the corner, and the soup is dispensed in the morning." He shook his napkin at the intruder to chase him off, as one would a troublesome fly. His appearance certainly did not grace the establishment. But the other diners did not seem disposed to quit his place.

"I don't care much for soup," he answered, "and the food given out in the morning would not suit me."

The head-waiter was struck with the purity of his accent and the refinement of his thought. "This is no born vagabond," he thought; "it is some man of position, ruined by gambling."

"And," continued the shabby one, "there is no reason why you should not serve me a dinner when I am ready to pay for it. There—if you have any doubts—there is my pocket book." He opened his napkin and from an inside pocket drew out a pocket-book stuffed with banknotes. Selecting one, he handed it to the waiter.

"You may look at it closely if you will see it is not a counterfeit."

It was a note for a thousand francs; and there were at least fifty others in the purse, so judge from its volume. The waiter took it, and scrutinized it for several instants, with wide nostrils and meditative frown. Then abruptly raising his head, like a man who makes

NEWS OF THE JUNCTION

The Charge of Criminal Libel Against the Editor of the Reporter.

The trial of the late editor of the Reporter, A. T. Stevenson, for criminal libel took place yesterday before P. M. Ellis. It lasted nearly all day, and the P. M. reserved his decision until next Friday.

The employees of the W. A. Murray Co. of King-street play the Junction this afternoon at cricket. The ladies are going to serve a quarter of eleven o'clock tea, with a good deal of amusement. He had no idea who was editor of the Reporter, and, when pressed pretty close, thought it must be C. C. Robinson, counsel for the defence.

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