

***WILLIAM  
LE QUEUX***

***THE LADY  
IN THE CAR***

**William Le Queux**

# **The Lady in the Car**

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# **Preface.**

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## **An Apology.**

I hereby tender an apology to the reader for being compelled, in these curious chronicles of an adventurous motorist and his actions towards certain of his female acquaintances, to omit real names, and to substitute assumed ones. With the law of libel looming darkly, the reason is obvious.

Since the days when, as lads, we played cricket together at Cheltenham “the Prince,” always a sportsman and always generous to the poor, has ever been my friend. In the course of my own wandering life of the past dozen years or so, I have come across him in all sorts of unexpected places up and down Europe, and more especially in those countries beyond the Danube which we term the Balkans.

For certain of his actions, and for the ingenuity of his somewhat questionable friends, I make no apology. While the game of “mug-hunting” remains so easy and so profitable, there will be always both hunters and hunted. As my friend’s escapades were related to me, so have I set them down in the following pages, in the belief that my readers may perhaps care to make more intimate acquaintance with the clever, fearless, and altogether remarkable man whose exploits have already, from time to time, been referred to in guarded and mysterious terms by the daily press.

William Le Queux.

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# Chapter One.

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### His Highness's Love Affair.

The Prince broke open a big box of choice "Petroffs," selected one, lit it slowly, and walked pensively to the window.

He was in a good mood that morning, for he had just got rid of a troublesome visitor.

The big *salon* was elegantly furnished with long mirrors, gilt chairs covered with sky-blue silk upholstery, a piano, and a pretty writing-table set close to the long window, which led out to a balcony shaded by a red-and-white sun-blind—the *salon* of the best suite in the Majestic, that huge hotel facing the sea in King's Road, Brighton.

He was a tall, well-set-up man of about thirty-three; dark-haired, good-looking, easy-going, and refined, who, for the exception of the slightest trace of foreign accent in his speech, might easily have been mistaken for an Englishman. In his well-cut dark brown flannels and brown shoes he went to the balcony, and, leaning over, gazed down upon the sun-lit promenade, full of life and movement below.

His arrival a few days before had caused quite a flutter in the big hotel. He had not noticed it, of course, being too used to it. He travelled a great deal—indeed, he was always travelling nowadays—and had learned to treat the constant endeavours of unknown persons to scrape acquaintance with him with the utter disregard they deserved.

Not often did the Majestic, so freely patronised by the stockbroker and the newly-rich, hold as guest any person

equalling the Prince in social distinction, yet at the same time so modest and retiring. The blatant persons overcrowding the hotel that August Sunday, those pompous, red-faced men in summer clothes and white boots, and those over-dressed women in cream silk blouses and golden chatelaines, mostly denizens of Kensington or Regent's Park, had been surprised when an hour ago he had walked along the hall and gone outside to speak with his chauffeur. He was so very good-looking, such a sportsman, and so very English they whispered. And half of those City men's wives were instantly dying for an opportunity of speaking with him, so that they could return to their suburban friends and tell of their acquaintance with the cousin of his Imperial Majesty the Kaiser.

But Prince Albert of Hesse-Holstein was thinking of other things. He had no use for that over-fed Sunday crowd, with their slang chatter, their motor-cars and their gossip of "bithneth," through which he had just passed. He drew half a dozen times at his yellow Russian cigarette, tossed it away, and lit another.

He was thinking of his visitor who had just left, and—well, there remained a nasty taste in his mouth. The man had told him something—something that was not exactly pleasant. Anyhow, he had got rid of him. So Prince Albert Ernst Karl Wilhelm, head of the great house of Hesse-Holstein, grand-cross of the Orders of the Black Eagle, Saint Sava and the Elephant, and Commander of St. Hubert and of the Crown of Italy, returned again to the balcony, smoked on, and watched.

In the meantime, in the big hall below, sat a well-dressed elderly lady with her daughter, a pretty, fair-haired, blue-eyed girl of twenty, a dainty figure in white, who wore a jade bangle upon her left wrist. They were Americans on a tour with “poppa” through Europe. Mr Robert K. Jesup, of Goldfields, Nevada, had gone to pay a pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon, while his wife and daughter were awaiting him in Brighton.

With the inquisitiveness of the American girl Mary Jesup had obtained the “Almanach de Gotha” from the reading-room, and both mother and daughter were, with difficulty, translating into English the following notice of the Prince’s family which they found within the little red-covered book:

“Evangéliques—Souche: Widukind III, comte de Schwalenberg (principauté de Holstein), 1116-1137; bailli à Arolsen et acquisition du château de Hesse vers, 1150; Comte du Saint Empire de Hesse, 1349, dignité confirmée, 22 juin, 1548; bailli de Wildungen, 1475; acquisition d’Eisenberg (château fort, aujourd’hui en ruines, situé sur la montagne du même nom) vers, 1485; acquisition par héritage du comté de Pyrmont, 1631; coll. du titre de ‘Hoch et Wohlgeboren,’ Vienne, 25 févr., 1627; prétention à l’héritage du comté de Rappolstein (Ribeaupierre Haute-Alsace) et des seigneuries de Hohenack et de Geroldseck (ibidem) par suite du mariage (2 juill, 1658) du cte Chrétien-Louis, né 29 juill, 1635, + 12 déc. 1706, avec Elisabeth de Rappolstein, née 7 Mars, 1644, + 6 dec. 1676, après la mort de son oncle Jean-Jacques dernier comte de Rappolstein, 28 juill, 1673; les lignes ci-dessus descendent de deux fils (frères consanguins) du susdit Chrétien-Louis comte de



Hesse-Eisenberg, de Pymont et Rappolstein, etc.—V. L'édition de 1832 (Page 84)."

"There, mother!" exclaimed the pretty girl. "Why, they were an ancient family even before America was discovered! Isn't he real nice? Say! I only wish we knew him."

"Ah, my dear," replied the elder woman with a sigh. "Those kind of people never know us. He's a royalty."

"But he looks such a nice man. What a lovely car he's got—real fine! I've been out to see it. How I wish he'd take us for a ride."

"You'd better ask him, my dear," laughed her mother.

"Guess I shouldn't be backward. I believe he would in a moment, if I asked him very nicely," she exclaimed, laughing in chorus. Truth to tell, she had admired him when she had first encountered him two days ago. She had been seated in one of those wicker chairs outside the door in King's Road, when he had come out and taken the chair next to hers, awaiting his car—a big sixty "Mercedès" painted cream, with the princely arms and crown upon its panels.

He was talking in English to his man, who had carried out his motor-coat. He was a prince—one of the wealthiest of all the German princes, a keen automobilist, a sportsman who had hunted big game in German East Africa, a landlord who owned a principality with half a dozen mediaeval castles and some of the finest estates in the German Empire, and one of the Kaiser's most intimate relatives. And yet he was travelling with only his man and his motor-car.

Though Mary Jesup was heiress to the two millions sterling which her father had made during the past three years—as half the people in the hotel knew—yet she was aware that even her father’s wealth could not purchase for her the title of Princess of Hesse-Holstein. She was a very charming girl, bright, athletic and go-ahead—a typical American girl of to-day—and as she strolled out along the pier with her mother, her thoughts constantly reverted to the young man in brown who had given her more than one glance when he had passed.

Meanwhile, there had entered to the Prince his faithful valet Charles, a tall, thin, clean-shaven Englishman, some four years his senior.

“Well?” asked his Highness sharply casting himself into an easy-chair, and taking another “Petroff.”

“Got rid of him—eh?”

“Yes—but it was difficult. I gave him a couple of sovereigns, and made an appointment to meet him in the bar of the Cecil, in London, next Thursday at four.”

“Good. That gives us time,” remarked the Prince with a sigh of relief. “And about the girl? What have you found out?”

“She and her mother dined in the *table-d’hôte* room last night, and took coffee afterwards in the Palm Court. The father is the man who owns the gold-mines in Nevada—worth ten million dollars. Last year he gave half a million dollars to charity, and bought the Bourbon pearls for his wife. Gave eighty thousand pounds for them. She’s got them here, a long string twice round her neck and reaches

to her waist. She's wearing them to-day, and everybody, of course, thinks they're false."

"How foolish these American women are! Fancy wearing pearls of that price in the open street! Why, she might easily be robbed," his master remarked.

"But who'd believe they're genuine? They're too big to take a thief's fancy," replied the faithful Charles. "The Jesups seem fond of jewellery. Miss Mary has a lovely diamond necklet—"

"And wore it last night, I suppose?"

"Of course. They are newly-rich people, and crowd it all on. Yet, what does it matter? Men like Jesup can easily buy more if they lose it. Why, to have her jewels stolen is only a big advertisement for the American woman. Haven't you seen cases in the paper—mostly at Newport they seem to occur."

"The girl is pretty—distinctly pretty, Charles," remarked the Prince slowly, with a philosophic air.

"Yes, your Highness. And she'd esteem it a great honour if you spoke to her, I'm sure."

Prince Albert pursed his lips.

"I think not. These American girls have a good deal of spirit. She'd most probably snub me."

"I think not. I passed through the hall five minutes ago, and she was looking you up in the 'Almanach de Gotha.'"

His Highness started.

"Was she?" he cried with quick interest. "Then she evidently knows all about me by this time! I wonder—" and he paused without concluding his sentence.

Charles saw that his master was thinking deeply, so he busied himself by putting some papers in order.

“She’s uncommonly pretty,” his Highness declared presently. “But dare I speak to her, Charles? You know what these Americans are.”

“By all means speak to her. The mother and daughter would be company for you for a few days. You could invite them to go motoring, and they’d no doubt accept,” the man suggested.

“I don’t want the same experience that we had in Vichy, you know.”

“Oh, never fear. These people are quite possible. Their wealth hasn’t spoiled them—as far as I can hear.”

“Very well, Charles.” The Prince laughed, tossing his cigarette-end into the grate, and rising. “I’ll make some excuse to speak with them.”

And Charles, on his part, entertained shrewd suspicions that his master, confirmed bachelor that he was, had, at last, been attracted by a girl’s fresh, fair beauty, and that girl an American.

Time hung heavily upon the Prince’s hands. That afternoon he ran over in his car to Worthing, where he dined at Warne’s, and the evening he spent in lonely state in a box at the Brighton Alhambra. Truth to tell, he found himself thinking always of the sweet-faced, rather saucy American girl, whose waist was so neat, whose tiny shoes were so pointed, and whose fair hair was always drawn straight back from her intelligent brow.

Yes. He felt he must know her. The morrow came, and with it an opportunity occurred to speak with her mother.

They were sitting, as it is usual to sit, at the door of the hotel, when a mishap to a dog-cart driven by a well-known actress gave him the desired opportunity, and ten minutes later he had the satisfaction of bowing before Mary Jesup herself.

He strolled with them on to the Pier, chatting so very affably that both mother and daughter could hardly believe that he was the cousin of an Emperor. Then, at his request to be allowed to join them at their table at luncheon, they had their midday meal together.

The girl in white was altogether charming, and so unlike the milk-and-water misses of Germany, or the shy, dark-eyed minxes of France or Italy, so many of whom had designed to become Princess of Hesse-Holstein. Her frank open manner, her slight American twang, and her Americanisms he found all delightful. Mrs Jesup, too, was a sensible woman, although this being the first occasion that either mother or daughter had even met a prince, they used "Your Highness" a trifle too frequently.

Nevertheless, he found this companionship of both women most charming.

"What a splendid motor-car you have!" Mary remarked when, after luncheon, they were taking their coffee in the Palm Court at the back of the hotel.

"I'm very fond of motoring, Miss Jesup. Are you?" was his Highness's reply.

"I love it. Poppa's got a car. We brought it over with us and ran around France in it. We left it in Paris till we get back to the Continent in the fall. Then we do Italy," she said.

“Perhaps you would like to have a run with me and your mother to-morrow,” the Prince suggested. “It’s quite pretty about the neighbourhood.”

“I’m sure you’re very kind, Prince,” responded the elder woman. “We should be charmed. And further, I guess my husband’ll be most delighted to meet you when he gets down here. He’s been in Germany a lot.”

“I shall be very pleased to meet Mr Jesup,” the young patrician responded. “Till he comes, there’s no reason why we should not have a few runs—that is, if you’re agreeable.”

“Oh! it’ll be real lovely!” declared Mary, her pretty face brightening in anticipation of the pleasure of motoring with the man she so admired.

“Then what about running over to Eastbourne to tea to-day?” he suggested.

Mother and daughter exchanged glances. “Well,” replied Mrs Jesup, “we don’t wish to put you out in the least, Prince. I’m sure—”

“Good! You’ll both come. I’ll order the car for three o’clock.”

The Prince ascended the stairs much gratified. He had made a very creditable commencement. The hundred or so of other girls of various nations who had been presented to him with matrimonial intent could not compare with her, either for beauty, for charm, or for intelligence.

It was a pity, he reflected, that she was not of royal, or even noble birth.

Charles helped him on with a light motor-coat, and, as he did so, asked:

“If the Parson calls, what am I to say?”

“Say what you like, only send him back to London. Tell him he is better off in Bayswater than in Brighton. He’ll understand.”

“He may want some money. He wrote to you yesterday, remember.”

“Then give him fifty pounds, and tell him that when I want to see him I’ll wire. I want to be alone just now, Charles,” he added a trifle impatiently. “You’ve got the key of my despatch-box, eh?”

“Yes, your Highness.”

Below, he found the big cream-coloured car in waiting. Some of the guests were admiring it, for it had an extra long wheelbase and a big touring body and hood—a car that was the last word in all that was comfort in automobilism.

The English chauffeur, Garrett, in drab livery faced with scarlet, and with the princely cipher and crown upon his buttons, raised his hat on the appearance of his master. And again when a moment later the two ladies, in smart motor-coats, white caps, and champagne-coloured veils, emerged and entered the car, being covered carefully by the fine otter-skin rug.

The bystanders at the door of the hotel regarded mother and daughter with envy, especially when the Prince got in at the girl’s side, and, with a light laugh, gave the order to start.

A few moments later they were gliding along the King’s Road eastward, in the direction of Lewes and Eastbourne.

“You motor a great deal, I suppose?” she asked him, as they turned the corner by the Aquarium.

“A good deal. It helps to pass the time away, you know,” he laughed. “When I have no guests I usually drive myself. Quite recently I’ve been making a tour up in Scotland.”

“We’re going up there this autumn. To the Trossachs. They say they’re fine! And we’re going to see Scott’s country, and Edinburgh. I’m dying to see Melrose Abbey. It must be lovely from the pictures.”

“You ought to get your father to have his car over,” the Prince suggested. “It’s a magnificent run up north from London.”

The millionaire’s wife was carefully examining the Prince with covert glances. His Highness was unaware that the maternal gaze was so searching, otherwise he would probably have acted somewhat differently.

A splendid run brought them to Lewes, the old-world Sussex capital. There, with a long blast of the electric siren, they shot down the hill and out again upon the Eastbourne Road, never pulling up until they were in the small garden before the Queen’s.

Mary Jesup stepped out, full of girlish enthusiasm. Her only regret was that the people idling in the hall of the hotel could not be told that their companion was a real live Prince.

They took tea under an awning overlooking the sea, and his Highness was particularly gracious towards Mrs Jesup, until both mother and daughter were filled with delight at his pleasant companionship. He treated both women as equals; his manner, as they afterwards put it, being devoid of any side, and yet he was every inch a prince.

That run was the first of many they had together.



Robert K. Jesup had been suddenly summoned by cable to Paris on business connected with his mining interests, therefore his wife and daughter remained in Brighton. And on account of their presence the Prince lingered there through another fortnight. Mostly he spent his days walking or motoring with Mrs Jesup and her daughter, and sometimes—on very rare occasions—he contrived to walk with Mary alone.

One morning, when he had been with her along the pier listening to the band, he returned to luncheon to find in his own room a rather tall, clean-shaven, middle-aged clergyman, whose round face and ruddy complexion gave him rather the air of a *bon vivant*.

Sight of his unexpected visitor caused the Prince to hold his breath for a second. It was the Parson.

“Sorry I was out,” his Highness exclaimed. “Charles told you where I was, I suppose?”

“Yes, Prince,” replied the cleric. “I helped myself to a whisky and soda. Hope you won’t mind. It was a nice morning in town, so I thought I’d run down to see you.”

“You want another fifty, I suppose—eh?” asked his Highness sharply. “Some other work of charity—eh?”

“My dear Prince, you’ve guessed it at once. You are, indeed, very good.”

His Highness rang the bell, and when the valet appeared, gave him orders to go and get fifty pounds, which he handed to the clergyman.

Then the pair had luncheon brought up to the room, and as they sat together their conversation was mostly about mutual friends. For a cleric the Reverend Thomas Clayton

was an extremely easy-going man, a thorough sportsman of a type now alas! dying out in England.

It was plain to see that they were old friends, and plainer still when, on parting a couple of hours later, the Prince said:

“When I leave here, old fellow, you’ll join me for a little, won’t you? Don’t worry me any more at present for your Confounded—er charities—will you? Fresh air for the children, and whisky for yourself—eh? By Jove, if I hadn’t been a Prince, I’d have liked to have been a parson! Good-bye, old fellow.” And the rubicund cleric shook his friend’s hand heartily and went down the broad staircase.

The instant his visitor had gone he called Charles and asked excitedly:

“Did any one know the Parson came to see me?”

“No, your Highness. I fortunately met him in King’s Road, and brought him up here. He never inquired at the office.”

“He’s a fool! He could easily have written,” cried the Prince eagerly. “Where are those women, I wonder?” he asked, indicating Mrs Jesup and her daughter.

“I told them you would be engaged all the afternoon.”

“Good. I shan’t go out again to-day, Charles. I want to think. Go to them with my compliments, and say that if they would like to use the car for a run this afternoon they are very welcome. You know what to say. And—and see that a bouquet of roses is sent up to the young lady’s room before she goes to dress. Put one of my cards on it.”

“Yes, your Highness,” replied the valet, and turning, left his master to himself.

The visit of the Reverend Thomas Clayton had, in some way, perturbed and annoyed him. And yet their meeting had been fraught by a marked cordiality.

Presently he flung himself into a big armchair, and lighting one of his choice "Petroffs" which he specially imported, sat ruminating.

"Ah! If I were not a Prince!" he exclaimed aloud to himself. "I could do it—do it quite easily. But it's my confounded social position that prevents so much. And yet—yet I must tell her. It's imperative. I must contrive somehow or other to evade that steely maternal eye. I wonder if the mother has any suspicion—whether—?"

But he replaced his cigarette between his lips without completing the expression of his doubts.

As the sunlight began to mellow, he still sat alone, thinking deeply. Then he moved to go and dress, having resolved to dine in the public restaurant with his American friends. Just then Charles opened the door, ushering in a rather pale-faced, clean-shaven man in dark grey tweeds. He entered with a jaunty air and was somewhat arrogant of manner, as he strode across the room.

The Prince's greeting was greatly the reverse of cordial.

"What brings you here, Max?" he inquired sharply. "Didn't I telegraph to you only this morning?"

"Yes. But I wanted a breath of sea-air, so came down. I want to know if you're going to keep the appointment next Monday—or not."

"I can't tell yet."

"Hylde is anxious to know. You promised her, remember."

“I know. But apologise, and say that—well, I have some private business here. You know what to say, Max. And I may want you down here in a hurry. Come at once if I wire.”

The man looked him straight in the face for a few moments.

“Oh!” he ejaculated, and then without being invited, crossed and took a cigarette.

“Charles,” said the visitor to the valet who had remained in the room, “give me a drink. Let me wish success to matrimony.” And with a knowing laugh he tossed off the whisky and soda handed to him. For half an hour he remained chatting confidentially with the Prince, then he left, saying that he should dine alone at the Old Ship, and return to London at ten.

When Max Mason had gone, Prince Albert heaved a long sigh, and passed into the adjoining room to dress.

That night proved a momentous one in his Highness’s life, for after dinner Mrs Jesup complained of a bad headache, and retiring at once to her room, left the young people together. What more natural, therefore, than that his Highness should invite Mary to put on her wrap and go for a stroll along the promenade in the moonlight. She accepted the invitation eagerly, and went up to her mother’s room.

“I’m going for a walk with him, mother,” she cried excitedly as she burst into the room where Mrs Jesup, with all traces of headache gone, was lazily reading a novel.

“That’s real good. Put on something thick, child, for its chilly,” was the maternal reply. “And, remember, you don’t go flirting with Princes very often.”

“No, mother, but just leave him to me. I’ve been thinking over what you say, and I mean to be Princess of Hesse-Holstein before the year’s out. Or else—”

“Or else there’ll be trouble—eh?” laughed her mother.

But the girl had disappeared to join the man who loved her, and who was waiting below.

In the bright August moonlight they strolled together as far as Hove, where they sat upon a seat outside the Lawns. The evening was perfect, and there were many passers-by, mostly couples more or less amatory.

Never had a girl so attracted him as had Mary that calm and glorious night. Never had he looked into a woman’s eyes and seen there love reflected as in hers. They rose and strolled back again, back to the pier which they traversed to its head. There they found a seat unoccupied, and rested upon it.

And there, taking her little hand tenderly in his, he blurted forth, in the blundering words of a blundering man, the story of his affection.

She heard him in silence to the end.

“I—I think, Prince, you have not fully considered what all this means. What—”

“It means, Mary, that I love you—love you deeply and devotedly as no other man has ever loved a woman! I am not given to ecstasies over affection, for I long ago thought every spark of it was dead within my heart. I repeat, however, that I love you.” And ere she could prevent him, he had raised her hand and pressed it to his lips.

She tried to withdraw it, but he held it firmly. The moon shone full upon her sweet face, and he noticed how pale

and beautiful she looked. She gave him one glance, and in that instant he saw the light of unshed tears. But she was silent, and her silence puzzled him.

“Ah!” he sighed despondently. “Am I correct, then, in suspecting that you already have a lover?”

“A lover? Whom do you mean?”

“That tall, fair-haired, mysterious man who, during the past week, has been so interested in your movements. Have you not noticed him? He’s staying at the hotel. I’ve seen him twenty times at least, and it is only too apparent that he admires you.”

“I’ve never even seen him,” she exclaimed in surprise. “You must point him out to me. I don’t like mysterious men.”

“I’m not mysterious, am I?” asked the Prince, laughing, and again raising her hand to his lips tenderly. “Will you not answer my question? Do you think you can love me sufficiently—sufficiently to become my wife?”

“But—but all this is so sudden, Prince. I—I—”

“Can you love me?” he interrupted.

For answer she bent her head. Next moment his lips met hers in a hot passionate caress. And thus did their hearts beat in unison.

Before they rose from the seat Mary Jesup had promised to become Princess of Hesse-Holstein.

Next morning, the happy girl told her mother the gratifying news, and when Mrs Jesup entered the Prince’s private *salon* his Highness asked her, at least for the present, to keep their engagement secret.

That day the Prince was occupied by a quantity of correspondence, but the future Princess, after a tender kiss

upon her white brow, went out in the car with her mother as far as Bognor. Two hours later the Prince sent a telegram to the Rev. Thomas Clayton, despatched Charles post-haste to London by the Pullman express, and then went out for a stroll along King's Road.

He was one of the happiest men in all the world.

Not until dinner did he again meet Mrs Jesup and her daughter. After describing what an excellent run they had had, the millionaire's wife said:

"Oh, Mary has been telling me something about a mysterious fair-haired man whom you say has been watching her."

"Yes," replied his Highness. "He's been hanging about for some days. I fancy he's no good—one of those fellows who live in hotels on the look-out for pigeons."

"What we call in America a crook—eh?"

"Exactly. At least that's my opinion," he declared in confidence.

Mrs Jesup and her daughter appeared both very uneasy, a circumstance which the Prince did not fail to notice. They went up to his *salon* where they had coffee, and then retired early.

Half an hour later, while his Highness was lazily enjoying one of his brown "Petroffs," the millionaire's wife, with blanched face, burst into the room crying:

"Prince! Oh, Prince! The whole of my jewels and Mary's have been stolen! Both cases have been broken open and the contents gone! My pearls too! What shall we do?" His Highness started to his feet astounded. "Do? Why find that fair-haired man!" he replied. "I'll go at once to the

manager.” He sped downstairs, and all was quickly in confusion. The manager recollected the man, who had given the name of Mason, and who had left suddenly on the previous morning. The police were telephoned for, and over the wires to London news of the great jewel robbery was flashed to New Scotland Yard.

There was little sleep for either of the trio that night. Examination showed that whoever the thief was, he had either been in possession of the keys of the ladies’ trunks, wherein were the jewel-cases, or had obtained impressions of them, for after the jewels had been abstracted the trunks had been relocked.

The Prince was very active, while the two ladies and their maid were in utter despair. Their only consolation was that, though Mary had lost her diamonds, she had gained a husband.

About noon on the following day, while his Highness was reading the paper as he lolled lazily in the depths of the big armchair, a tap came at the door and a waiter ushered in a thin, spare, grey-faced, grey-bearded man.

The Prince sprang to his feet as though he had received an electric shock.

The two men faced each other, both utterly dumbfounded.

“Wal!” ejaculated the visitor at last, when he found tongue. “If this don’t beat hog-stickin’! Say, young Tentoes, do you know I’m Robert K. Jesup?”

“You—Jesup! My dear Uncle Jim!” gasped the other. “What does this mean?”



“Yes. Things in New York over that little poker job are a bit hot just now, so Lil and the old Lady are working the matrimonial trick this side—a spoony jay, secret engagement, and blackmail. Worked it in Paris two years ago. Great success! Done neatly, it’s real good. I thought they’d got hold of a real live prince this time—and rushed right here to find it’s only you! They ought really to be more careful!”

“And I tell you, uncle, I too have been completely deceived. I thought I’d got a soft thing—those Bourbon pearls, you know? They left their keys about, I got casts, and when they were out bagged the boodle.”

“Wal, my boy, you’d better cough ’em up right away,” urged the old American criminal, whose name was Ford, and who was known to his associates as “Uncle Jim.”

“I suppose the Parson’s in it, as usual—eh? Say! the whole lot of sparklers aren’t worth fifty dollars, but the old woman and the girl look well in ’em. My! ain’t we all been taken in finely! Order me a cocktail to take the taste away. Guess Lil’ll want to twist your rubber-neck when she sees you, so you’d better get into that famous car of yours and make yourself scarce, young man!”

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The *Sussex Daily News* next morning contained the following announcement:

“His Royal Highness Prince Albert of Hesse-Holstein has left Brighton for the Continent.”

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# Chapter Two.

## Table of Contents

### The Prince and the Parson.

His Royal Highness descended from the big cream-coloured “Mercédès” in the Place Royale, drew off his gloves, and entered the quiet, eminently aristocratic Hôtel de l’Europe.

All Brussels knew that Prince Albert of Hesse-Holstein was staying there. Hence, as the car pulled up, and the young man in long dust-coat and motor-goggles rose from the wheel and gave the car over to the smart chauffeur Garrett in the grey uniform with crimson facings, a small crowd of gaping idlers assembled to watch his entrance to the hotel. In the hall a few British tourists in tweeds or walking-skirts stared at him, as though a real live prince was of different clay, while on ascending the main staircase to his private suite, two waiters bowed themselves almost in two.

In his sitting-room his middle-aged English man-servant was arranging his newspapers, and closing the door sharply behind him he said: “Charles! That girl is quite a sweet little thing. I’ve seen her again!”

“And your Highness has fallen in love with her?” sniffed the man.

“Well, I might, Charles. One never knows.” And he took a “Petroff” from the big silver box, and lit it with care. “I am very lonely, you know.”

Charles’s lips relaxed into a smile, but he made no remark. He was well aware how confirmed was his master’s