

An American Imprisoned and Fined for Joking in Bad German.

Some time ago a successful but somewhat impudent young man, residing in the valley of the Mississippi, married a beautiful maiden who had fled from a convent in order to share the joy and burden of life with him.

The excursion across the sea and as far as Heriberal, near where Belgian borders on the confines of Rhineland Prussia, was accompanied in a piping and pleasant way.

At Heriberal the French garde gave way to a German soldier, and when the young American was asked by the new conductor to show his ticket, he swiftly marshaled his knowledge of German, and inquired: "Sind wir in Preussen?" (Are we in Prussia?) and, receiving an affirmative answer, he said: "Who was right, my dear friend, the American or the German?"

Among the Germans of the Mississippi valley the word "spitzbuben" is sometimes used in the sense of tramp. In Germany it means thief and wretch. Who was right, my dear friend, the American or the German?

When the conductor heard the words of the American he replied with some excitement: "Ich werde Ihnen zeigen wie ein spitzbuben sind wir in Aachen abkomme!" (I will show you where the spitzbuben are when we arrive at Aachen.) The window of the coupe went down with a crash, and the train sped on across the Prussian frontier, on over a spur of the Ardennes and twenty minutes later rolled into Aachen, the famous city.

The conductor was true to his promise. As the train halted two policemen approached the coupe occupied by the bride and groom and requested the husband to step out. He indignantly refused, and was helped out. No words were wasted. No explanations were allowed. The prisoner was hurried a long the dark and narrow streets of the city, and the young bride, ignorant of the language and unable to comprehend what was transpiring, saw her husband dragged forcibly from her, and found herself alone at night in a strange land, amidst strange faces hustled a hand by an officer of the law toward a second-class hotel, where she threw herself on a sofa and lay prostrate for hours, dumfounded and dazed at the remarkable scene which had taken place.

About midnight a policeman came to the United States Consulate, and, arousing the Consul, related the incident, and handing him the prisoner's passport, intimated that the American citizen would like to have him call at the prison as early as possible the next day.

The Consul dressed himself and went to the place of imprisonment at once. He found the American in a narrow cell resting on a bed of straw. He told the story of his misfortune and begged the Consul to ascertain the whereabouts of his wife and afford her all necessary protection. The Consul left the prison and proceeded to the residence of the Chief of Police, where he presented the details of the case to that officer with the request that the American should be held in custody at the same time for his appearance at Court the next day. The order for the release was granted, and at 3 o'clock in the morning the Western gentleman was given back to his young bride whom he found half crazed with fright and anxiety.

At 10 a. m. the next morning all parties concerned met at the office of the Police Commissioner and the Consul, fully aware of the severity of the German Courts in all cases of majestats celdigung (insult to the crown) endeavored to effect a settlement, but without avail.

The testimony was heard. The conductor swore that the prisoner said "Alle Preussen sind spitzbuben" (All Prussians are spitzbuben). The American insisted that the conductor had misunderstood him, and that he had only intended to say in fun that "from Prussia came all of our Western tramps." Of course the German Court saw nothing very funny about it; and, the conductor's testimony having been taken, the prisoner was sent before the Amtsgericht, where the evidence was reviewed, and from there the case went to the schöffengericht for final trial.

It finally requires days, and sometimes weeks, to dispose of such a case, but by energetic management seven hours before the final judgment had been completed, the final judgment of the Court was made known. The prisoner was sentenced to pay a fine of \$60, in addition to \$40 in costs, and he was warned that the mild and merciful sentence was owing to his ignorance of law and the true meaning of the offensive phrase by which he had insulted a uniformed servant of His Majesty the King.

The prisoner eagerly settled the demands of the Court and started at once with his bride for the railway station. As the train moved away he opened the window of his compartment and said, in somewhat muffled tones, to the Consul: "Mum is my name until I get out of this country, but I'll watch for the frontier, and when we cross it I'll open my mouth as wide as the delta of the Mississippi and shout: 'Thank God, we are safe once more!'" - Washington Republic.

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