

### A Vicomte's Vagary

The little Vicomte de Banville in his younger days made no small pretensions to being a "bad dog." He particularly enjoyed flirtations, which is not to be wondered at; but he preferred them complicated, which, to my mind, is a mistake. In love, as in cookery, the simplest is the best, and, moreover, does not pall so quickly.

He was forever dreaming of intrigues, disguises, and mysteries. If he had had the task of reconstructing the old legends, he would have made Romeo scale Juliet's balcony as a telephone-line repairer.

One day after a luncheon—which would have been a dinner if the sun had not still been up, so much champagne had been consumed at it—Gaston de Banville laid a wager that before six o'clock that evening—it was then nearly four—he would return with at least three francs collected by singing in the streets.

Twenty minutes later, an unkempt, tattered, and generally suspicious-looking individual emerged from the famous restaurant where the party had been dining, and stopped at a large house in an adjacent street. It was Gaston, who lacked nothing for his role of street-singer. An hour later, his companions beheld him re-enter the room where they were awaiting him with the best patience in the world.

"There you are," he announced, tossing on the table a louis and a voluminous package. "I have won my bet, and stand a fair chance of winning a very pretty little woman."

"In so short a time?" they cried.

"But what is the trophy?"—the husband's head?

"No," said Gaston, "only his trousers. But I can say no more, the rule involves the honor of a lady of high degree."

In vain did his friends endeavor to extract anything more from him. They say as he was, the hero of the afternoon's adventure was dumb as an oyster. Less discreet than he, I shall recount his adventures.

When De Banville entered the court of No. 75, Rue Duphot, the Baronne de Pompinet was leaning out of a window, watching the movements of her pet fox-terrier, which was playing in the court. Evidently the dog had no ear for music, for no sooner did the pretended beggar open his mouth to sing—at the same time, from force of habit, directing an admiring glance at the fair lady before him—than Punch trotted up to him, and, on a hostile demonstration from the singer, flew at the latter and planted his teeth in an undefended portion of his anatomy.

The baroness uttered a shriek, and Gaston, foreseeing his inability to collect the stipulated sum, and his consequent loss of the bet, was departing, furious, to repair his wardrobe, when a trim little maid came running after him.

"Here," she said, slipping a frame into his hand; "here is something the baroness sends you. Is it enough?"

"Enough!" cried De Banville, with a disgust that was not all stimulated, "why, my pants is all tore, to say nothing of my wounds!"

"Well, you can come and settle the matter with my mistress. It would be better than going to the police."

Miss Annette could have added that her mistress had already been defendant in a dozen suits for assaults of this kind committed by Punch, and had lost every one of them.

Half an hour later, Gaston took leave of the baroness, bearing away, beside his twenty francs, a collection of delicious smiles, a worn pair of the baron's trousers in place of his own, which had suffered heavy losses in the encounter with the dog, and even a letter of credit on the druggist at the corner. But the pretended beggar had no need of lintments and salves, for Punch, for once in his life, had leaped too short and Gaston's hide was whole.

As he was going down the servants' stairway, the pretended invalid gallantly saluted Mlle. Annette on her blooming cheek. The girl did not get angry, for the viscount was not so badly grined that he was not still a good-looking young fellow.

"What do you mean, sir?" she cried; "are you crazy?"

"Yes," replied Punch's victim; "your dog has given me hydrophobia, and that's the way I bite."

But De Banville was reviving in his brain a machiavellian scheme directed against the peace of the baroness, who pleased him prodigiously. That very evening he sent her anonymously a handsome bouquet. The next day he appeared beneath her window again, wearing the baron's trousers, a particularly delicate attention. Mlle. de Pompinet appeared again, and bestowed on him a franc and a smile, on which latter he set a very high valuation. The following day, another smile and another piece of money, but in an envelope this time, and with a note. The affair was becoming interesting. Scarcely had Gaston got out into the street, when he tore the note open.

"At about four o'clock (it ran), go to No. 82, Rue du Cirque, and sing an air from 'The Huguenots.' You will be repaid for your trouble."

"Well, well," thought the viscount, "if I please her in these atrocious togs, what will she say when she sees me in all the splendor of my own apparel? What extraordinary creature are these base women of society! But why does she send me to the Rue du

Cirque? She will be there, doubtless, concealed behind some friend's curtains. Well, we shall see."

Promptly at four, Gaston was at the appointed place, singing:

"Pia bianca del velo."

But he saw nothing unusual and went away at last with two sous given him by a little girl.

The following day the baroness again sent him to the Rue du Cirque, but this time it was "Faust" that he must sing. You should have seen the feeling with which De Banville sang:

"Salve dimora casta et pura."

But again nothing untoward happened. Still, instead of his lover-like impatience, his pride as an artist was satisfied. He bore away with him a collection of fourteen sous.

It was now time to take a decisive step. That evening, in his offering of flowers—the fourth—the baroness found the following note, unsigned and in an unknown hand:

"It is an admirable trait to love music, but the artists themselves deserve encouragement. Do you not think that the duo from 'Faust' is worthy of being sung in some more private place than a court?"

As she read these lines, the poor Baronne de Pompinet almost fainted.

"Great heavens!" she cried, "some one knows my secret. I am lost!"

She did not close her eyes that entire night.

While the baroness was ruminating the face of her pillow under her uneasy little blonde head, Gaston, in the smoking-room of his club, had just ended the recital of the events narrated, keeping to himself, of course, the names of streets and persons.

"And what are you going to do now?" he was asked; "for you surely do not intend to keep up your present role forever?"

"What am I going to do? Tomorrow the streetsinger will give way to the man of the world. You can imagine the stupefaction of the lady when I say to her: 'I still come to her of you. But I am not a mercenary beggar, and I prefer the gift of a smile.' Eh, boys, what a tabernacle that will make!"

"What new joke in Gaston to you?" asked the Marquis de Plessin, who entered the room just then.

"Oh, nothing much," said Gaston, nonchalantly, "just a little adventure of mine. I was amusing them with the tricks of a woman."

"Faith, in the matter of tricks, men need not try to rival women. Just listen to this: A charming friend of mine has a most dependable husband, you can never tell whether he is going to go out or to stay at home. Now, can you guess what she has devised to keep me posted on the programme of the day? Why, she hires a poor beggar of a street-singer to come and sing before my house. We have a code agreed upon beforehand. Each opera has a special significance. The Huguenots means 'I am waiting for you.' 'Faust' is 'Not-to-day.' 'William Tell' is 'I shall be in the Bois.' And so on. It is a great scheme."

The shout of laughter that greeted this recital could be heard four squares away. Gaston alone did not join in it.—Translated for the Argonaut from the French of Leon de Tinscau.

**An Unappreciated Gift.**

It is rude to look a gift-horse in the mouth—but it is also wise for the giver to inquire what sort of a horse would be most welcome. A writer in Tit-Bits reports a happening in the Perkins family bearing on this point.

When old Mr. Perkins left the house in which he had lived for forty years, and arrived with all his household goods and treasures at the home of his son, there was trouble.

One of his most treasured family belongings was missing—a big family album bound in full calf. Mr. Perkins was inconsolate. "I've used it regular or years," he said, "and I wouldn't have lost it for worlds."

"Never mind," said his son, "we'll see what can be done about it."

A little later he appeared with a new album, beautifully bound in crimson plush, with great brass clasps, which he presented to his father.

On seeing it, the old man's jaw fell to an alarming degree. He banged his withered fist on the table with force.

"In the name of goodness," he said, "who could strip a razor on that?"

**A Burdened Man.**

A certain small boy in grade number six was rapidly assuming manly ways. Not long ago, says a writer in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, there was to be an entertainment at his school. Songs, recitations and a grab-bag were the principal features. The small boy waxed eloquent of the coming glories of this show, and more especially of the part he was to take.

On the morning of the entertainment his mother suggested that he should take his little sister, about four years old, with him. He hung his head.

"Don't you want to take her?" his mother asked.

"No, I don't," he answered.

"Why not?"

"Cause there ain't none of the other fellers has to bring their children," was the reply.

**It Would Not Show.**

That everything should be neat and shipshape is most important aboard a yacht. A writer in the Mariner's Advocate tells the story of the captain of a certain sloop, who crossed the deck in a hurry, seemingly very much perplexed. A lady stopped him and asked what the trouble was.

"The fact is, ma'am," he said, "our rudder's broken."

"Oh, I shouldn't worry about that," said the lady. "Being under water nearly all the time, no one will notice it."

### TRUSTS IN THE CIRCUS

In 1837 Titus & Angevine Conceived Idea of Amalgamation.

AND THEN P. T. BARNUM

The Clever Showman Thought It Could be Done—The Tent Show Business Controlled by a Few Men. Forepaugh a Tireless Fighter.

On the eve of the unforeseen panic of 1837, June, Titus & Angevine, of the powerful and wealthy combine of "Flatfoots," conceived the idea of amalgamating the interests of those engaged in the circus and menagerie business and the importation of wild beasts into one gigantic monopoly to be known as the Zoological Institute. Considerable progress was made to the alarm of managers, who desired to preserve their individuality, when the financial crash of the century thwarted their scheme.

It was decades after this well-nigh successful attempt at centralization, before Phineas Taylor Barnum came to believe that the tent show business could be controlled by a few men, with himself at the head. This opinion was strengthened by the immediate unparalleled success of the P. T. Barnum Show under the direction of William C. Coup.

Adam Forepaugh, was at the head of a large show and his field was, after leaving Philadelphia, the territory west of Pittsburgh and Buffalo. He had touched the East and paid for his experience, supplanting his whole outfit out of Yankeeedom as fast as a special train could carry him. In 1879 he again tempted fate down East with unsatisfactory results, but later on he conquered the land of the rising sun and by tours of the extreme West to the Pacific Coast and the South, acquired a national reputation and became the only admitted rival of P. T. Barnum.

"Old" John Robinson "owned the South" as Barnum and Coup learned to their cost.

Then there entered the American sawdust arena, a new gladiator with his fighting clothes on in the person of James A. Bailey, backed by his former employer and later associate, James E. Cooper. Bailey was a whirlwind warrior and hit a managerial head wherever he saw one, and went after P. T. Barnum and Adam Forepaugh as fearlessly as he did the small fry.

Cooper was a man of considerable financial resources, and Bailey, in 1881, planned the purchase of the Forepaugh and Coup shows, which added to the London, would have made Cooper and Bailey a power on the road. The Coup show was in straits but the Forepaugh show had already cleared for the season three times as much money as its would-be purchaser offered for the entire fabric. Adam Forepaugh only laughed at the inadequate proposition.

Bailey now looked hopefully to an alliance with P. T. Barnum as a stepping stone to his heart's desire. Bailey assumed the Barnum management and the personal direction of all the advertising, and he just made everything hum and the weaklings stand from under, or take to the woods.

P. T. Barnum and James A. Bailey both underrated Adam Forepaugh who was a diamond in the rough without graces or culture, but an abundance of common sense.

One spring P. T. Barnum came out in one of the official publications of the show in a personal card, the like of which he was so skilled in finding, and boldly called on the dear public to support the Barnum show and the Barnum show alone. With the clever argument that if he received all the patronage, he would be the better equipped to supply all the arena amusements, Mr. Barnum was speaking for himself and the "equal owner" who probably endorsed the sentiment.

When Adam Forepaugh read this proposition he exploded verbally and emphatically, and he said: "Barnum and Bailey or no one else in the business can ever monopolize it."

Barnum & Bailey, in their attempt to corner the business, also set out to secure the brains in the circus calling. Their staff was made up of the very best of talent but when they were all assembled there still remained men of capacity and intellect in the employ of pugnacious and hectoring rivals fully able to contend against annihilation.

In England, after the death of Mr. Barnum and Mr. Bailey's sole succession, the result was quite different than here. In that "tight little isle" the Barnum & Bailey show crushed all opposition out of existence and lastingly ruined the circus business in Great Britain.

**No "Mountain High" Waves**

When writers speak of waves "mountain high" they are merely indulging in poetic extravagance. A wave exceeding 30 feet in height is seldom encountered. Some have been seen on the Atlantic that reached a height of 44 to 48 feet, but that was entirely exceptional.

Huggins—That pretty little sculptress I met at your reception the other evening completely turned my head.

Miss Peachey—Indeed! I knew she modeled in clay, but I wasn't aware that she worked in wood.

### FOOLING THE COLLECTORS.

Salting a House With Fake Antiques a Trick Worked in England.

Evidently America is not the only fools' paradise where the hoodwinking of collectors of antiquities is a profitable business. Here is a scheme which, according to the Grand Magazine, is true in all its details and is practiced in London:

Let the reader imagine he is listening to the end of an earnest conversation between a dealer of world-wide reputation and one of the latter's most important customers, a man whose bottomless purse is the lodestar of all swindledoms. The visitor complains that nothing really fine is to be picked up nowadays. When he thinks he has at length discovered some ancient piece of furniture in an out-of-the-way farmhouse, he is sure to learn at the last moment that it is not authentic and has merely been planted there by some cunning rogue of Wardour street or the Rue des Faussefrais.

"Ah," replies the dealer, looking very sage, "I know at least one place where there are still some perfect treasures! It's an old Elizabethan mansion in Shumbersinghore, but the owner, an unmarried lady, nearly seventy, though she has barely enough to live upon, absolutely refuses to sell a single article. She won't even allow a stranger to enter the house. I managed to get in by a trick once, and I assure you I was almost dumfounded at what I saw. The whole place is in identically the same state it was 200 years ago."

The book is now baited, but the dealer, who knows his snags, allows several days to elapse. Then he sends a telegram:

"Just learned that the old lady will be absent from home for a day or two; can bribe servants to show house."

The place is some distance from London; no matter, off the pair go, only to find on arrival at their destination that by some fatality the owner of the house has not gone away after all, so that the inspection must perforce be put off. Naturally the collector, if he is worth his salt, knows no rest now until another opportunity to see the treasures presents itself.

His desire is finally gratified, and in company with his "disinterested" cleereon he is allowed to run hastily through a few rooms filled with dusty old furniture piled up in picturesque confusion. He is not permitted to make a close inspection under pretext that the old lady may return at any moment and that he will find it difficult to explain his presence.

"What a terrible pity," sigh both men simultaneously as they hurry away, "that such admirable specimens should remain here in the dust!"

A month, perhaps two months pass; then one morning the dealer rushes in breathlessly to his customer's presence.

"You remember the old lady?"

"Yes, what about her?"

"She is absolutely compelled at last to raise some ready money, and has consented to sell me some of her most precious historical relics."

"By Jove, what luck! Buy everything you can for me. I must have those things, whatever they cost."

What the confiding millionaire did not know—though he assuredly suspects something of the kind now—is that the Elizabethan mansion was rented by the dealer; that all it contained was the same person's property, and that both the carefully trained servants and the "old lady" herself were in his pay.

### The Largest Steam Whistle.

East St. Louis has the biggest steam whistle in the world, says the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. It is a remarkable triple machine with three voices—a three-chime whistler, whose capacity for the annihilation of peace is extraordinary. This whistle blows a ten mile blast at half-steam, and with favorable wind has a disturbing power of twenty miles. It costs a dollar every time it is blown.

But this great whistle is not all noise. It is an idea in economy, a whistle trust, a noise combine. Almost all the little noises, yelps, toots and whines of smaller mechanical throats in East St. Louis are now dumb. The giant whistle trust whistles for them. The independent whistles have to whistle overtime to be heard.

Within the range of this whistle are said to be 100,000 persons who tell time by it.

The greatest modern siren comprises three whistles. The largest is almost six feet in height, and nearly as big around as a man. On each side of the main one is a smaller whistle. The three units combine to make one noise, with which even Babanne, miles away, across the Mississippi river, in the west end of St. Louis, is well acquainted.

This big triple whistler was also set up at a railway company's electrical generating station "as a feature." It is connected with an electric clock, which is regulated by the government standard time sent out from Washington on the dropping of a ball at exactly noon each day.

The electric clock which connects with the whistle is guaranteed not to vary five seconds in time a year, and the clock's record to date is satisfactory. Almost every man looks at his watch when the first blast is sounded by the big whistle at 7 o'clock in the morning. Almost every housewife in East St. Louis glances at her mantel timepiece when the siren wooms noon—the second blast of the day. The third blast is an hour later, and the last is at 6 in the evening.

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