

Sequel

by Allan Pinkerton

THE preceding pages of *Claude Melnotte* contain nothing but absolute facts; the incidents related in the chapters which follow, however, may be taken with a grain of allowance. The author does not say they did *not* occur as stated, but he cannot vouch for them from his own personal knowledge, as he can for all other portions of this volume; hence this sequel may be regarded as a recital of possibilities, rather than as a history of actual facts.

CHAPTER I.

L'ENVOI.

IN the month of April, 1855, the families, whose daughters had received the most attention from the Prince, began their preparations for a foreign tour. Each family was desirous that the others should not know anything of its own intentions; hence, the Hansons, the Beavers, the Humes, and the Pearsons were all quietly working in the same direction, in total ignorance that others were similarly engaged. Towards the middle of May, the guests of the Clifton began to separate for their annual *villeggiatura*, some going to Mackinac, some to Saratoga, and many others to watering-places on the seacoast. Among these last were the four families above-named, who took leave of each other with many outward expressions of regard, and much inward jealousy and dislike.

“Goodbye, my dear,” said Mrs. Beaver to Mrs. Hanson. “I suppose we shall meet at Newport or Cape May. I shall miss you so much, and your sweet little girl, also. Bye-bye.”

The “sweet little girl” looked daggers at the speaker, as she felt herself quite a grown young lady, especially since the Prince had paid her so much attention. Mrs. Hanson replied, however:

“Oh! yes, I certainly hope we shall meet this summer; but at any rate, of course we shall all return to the Clifton next fall. We shall have so much to talk about, then.”

“Yes, indeed; I have no doubt we shall quite surprise each other with our adventures,” said Mrs. Beaver, as she went out.

Each lady was so engrossed in her own plans that she never suspected that the other was contemplating the same kind of a surprise on her part.

“I hate that Mrs. Beaver,” said the impulsive Miss Hanson, as the door closed. “She is always trying to make me appear a little girl. She used to do the same when the Prince was here.”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Hanson; “I don’t like her ways at all. She is a very scheming woman, and was terribly mortified that you received more attention from the Prince than her daughters did. Never mind; wait until we return from Munich next fall — *if we do return then*,” she added, significantly.

Miss Hanson's blushes showed that she fully understood the possibility implied in her mother's last remark, and she, therefore, hastened to change the subject.

Miss Pearson and Miss Hume were nearly of the same age, and, previous to the Prince's coming, they had been quite intimate. They still maintained an outward friendship, and Miss Hume spent the evening before her departure in Miss Pearson's room.

"So, you are going to Rye Beach, are you?" said Miss Pearson. "Well, we shall leave here for New York next week. There will be time enough to arrange our plans after we reach there. I should so like to go to Europe."

"Oh! my! Would you?" exclaimed the horror-stricken Miss Hume. "It must be dreadful to cross the ocean. I know I should die of seasickness. Besides, it's terribly dangerous."

Miss Hume never suspected that Miss Pearson really intended going, but desired to frighten her out of any possible desire she might have, to go. Miss Hume was one of those women who never do anything directly, if they can possibly accomplish it by indirect means. Her parents were rather mismatched (though to the world they were apparently harmonious), and she had been continually forced to dissimulate ever since she could recollect. Miss Pearson, on the contrary, was disposed to be perfectly frank, and her principles would not permit her even to acquiesce in a deception. She replied, therefore:

"Well, I should certainly expect to be seasick, and if there were a storm, I should be very much frightened; nevertheless, I should like to go."

Her frankness disarmed Miss Hume's slight suspicions, so that the subject was soon dropped; but Miss Hume congratulated herself that one rival was safely disposed of for the summer.

By an odd coincidence, the Beaver and Hume families engaged passage by the same steamer, in the last week of May, and on the day of sailing the two parties met, face to face, on the dock. Yet, even then, they were so anxious to deceive the other, that neither suspected what was the other's object in being there, and in the mutual desire to conceal their real intentions, the following ludicrous scene occurred, as they walked on board the steamer:

Mr. Beaver — "Why, Hume, where did you come from? Mrs. Hume and Miss Lydia, too; really, quite an unexpected pleasure. Going to take the steamer for Cape May, I presume?"

Mrs. Hume (aside to her daughter) — "How *did* those pretentious Beavers ever come to be here?" (Aloud) "Oh! I am so glad to meet you, Mr. Beaver. Mrs. B., you are looking even better than you did when you left Chicago. Your girls, too; why you have quite a family party."

Mrs. Beaver — "Yes, indeed; it seems so odd to meet Clifton House people so far away. Have you been in New York long?"

Miss Hume (leading the way over the gangplank) — “Oh! no; we arrived about a week ago, having stopped in Rochester for a time.”

During this conversation, the ladies had been “taking stock” of each other’s dresses, and the Beaver girls had been wondering among themselves how they could have the ill-luck to meet “that Hume girl;” she would be sure to tell everyone that they had gone to Europe to meet Prince Beauharnais. Mr. Hume and Mr. Beaver had been talking vaguely about the weather, when suddenly, Mr. Beaver saw Miss Hume advancing toward the Cunard steamer, and he spoke up in a very jocular manner:

“That isn’t your steamer, Miss Lydia. You would have found it no joke, if you had been carried off to Liverpool in a Cunarder, especially if your baggage had gone to Cape May. Ha! ha! ha! You would have had a nice time!”

Miss Hume was very quick-witted, and she determined to go on board the steamer immediately, without troubling her head about the Beavers’ destination, so she stopped and replied:

“We are real sorry to leave you so soon, but we are not going to Cape May. You see, some of our friends are going abroad by this steamer, and we came down ——”

“Oh! just so,” interrupted the cunning Beaver, who had been racking his brains to account for his presence there, and who saw a plausible reason in Miss Hume’s remarks. “We are here, then, on the same errand. Our friends, the Carters of Cincinnati, are going abroad by this steamer, and we have come down to see them off.” Saying which, he joined Miss Hume, and the two parties moved on board. Here they separated, since each family was very anxious to escape from the other, and to avoid observation until after the steamer had sailed.

“I would ask you to call on us,” said Mrs. Beaver, “but we shall leave town today.”

“What a pity!” replied Miss Hume, with a dry, little cough; “so do we.”

“Well, goodbye, all,” came in a chorus from both parties, as they moved away from each other.

“There, Mrs. Beaver,” said that lady’s triumphant husband, “didn’t I get us out of that scrape nicely? If those Humes knew we were going to Europe, it would be just like them to follow us by the next steamer.”

“Yes, Alf.,” replied his wife, “I must say I couldn’t have done better myself.”

At the same time, Mr. Hume was saying:

“Well, Mrs. Hume, your daughter’s talent for equivocation was turned to some use in that instance. Beaver is rich enough to tag right along after us, if he supposed we were going to visit the Prince. Lydia, I congratulate you upon your presence of mind. You ought to have been a politician, my dear.”

Lydia Hume was used to such compliments from her father, and never noticed them in any way.

In a short time, the steamer got under way and left the harbor. A heavy, chopping sea was met just outside the Narrows, and nearly every passenger yielded to the motion of the vessel in a few minutes. The first week of the voyage the sea was somewhat rough, hence, none of the members of the Beaver or Hume parties were able to leave their staterooms. The latter half of the trip was violently stormy, and very few of the passengers appeared at meals or on deck, until smooth water was reached, and the ship was gliding rapidly up the Mersey. The Beavers were then among the first to be ready to disembark, and accordingly ascended to the upper deck, where, with their friends, the Carters, they took seats directly in front of one of the staircases leading to the main *salon*. They were chatting gaily, in agreeable anticipation of the pleasures of foreign travel, and were contrasting the harbor of Liverpool with that of New York, when the connection of thoughts led Mr. Beaver to say, laughingly:

“I wonder when we shall meet the Humes again.”

An exclamation behind them caused the whole party to turn and look, and there, just pausing at the top of the staircase, stood all three members of the Hume family! Miss Hume was the first to recover herself; her stony glare of amazement changing to one of amusement as she took in the horrified looks and intense embarrassment of the Beavers. Stepping forward, gracefully, she said:

“Why, how very unfortunate you must have been, Mrs. Beaver, to have been carried away *accidentally*, on the steamer — *especially if your baggage has gone to Saratoga*,” she added, with a mocking glance at Mr. Beaver. “Now we,” she continued, “were so fortunate as to get ours on board just in time. Our friends, the Stantons, were unable to go, and we decided to take their berths instead of going to Cape May.”

This was a literal fact; the Stantons, having secured berths several weeks in advance, had sold their tickets to the Humes about a week before the steamer sailed.

The female wing of the Beaver party were quite crushed at this audacious statement, especially as the Carters were looking at them with open astonishment; knowing that the trip had been planned by the Beavers a long time in advance, the Carters could not understand Miss Hume’s remarks, nor the too evident confusion of the Beavers. Mr. Beaver finally plunged into an explanation, with about as much presence of mind as a bull in a china shop.

“Well — ahem; the fact is, — that is, you know — at least, I mean that we were only joking that day. You see we didn’t want every one to know where we were going, —— ” here he caught a savage look from his wife, and hastened to correct matters. “Of course, I don’t mean there was any objection, you know, but for certain private reasons——,” another glance from his wife sent his wits wool — gathering, and he stumbled along: “We accepted an invitation — that is, I mean — we expect one — our plan was arranged, you know, last winter——,” here he broke down, utterly annihilated by the looks of horror of his own family and those of amusement in the faces of the Humes and Carters.

“Oh! I quite understand you, Mr. Beaver,” said the sarcastic miss Hume; “depend on it, your secret is safe with us. Well, good morning, I suppose we shall see you in London, or Paris, or, *possibly*, Munich; so, *au revoir*, my dear Mrs. Beaver.”

The Humes then moved off triumphantly, and left the Beavers biting their lips in wrath and shame. The steamer was nearly at the docks, so that all the passengers were preparing to leave. The Carters, therefore, retired from the upper deck, leaving the Beavers overcome with mortification at their ridiculous position.

The blame for the whole affair was thrown upon Mr. Beaver, first, for inventing such a stupid story in New York, and then, for making the matter worse by his idiotic attempt at explanation to Miss Hume. This unfortunate incident considerably damped the spirits of the Beaver party, but they consoled themselves by anticipations of the delightful trip through Switzerland, which they had arranged to make in company with the Prince. Filled with these agreeable hopes, they determined to hurry on to Munich in advance of Miss Hume, whom they now recognized as an open and formidable enemy. Unfortunately, by some mistake, all their baggage was carried through Paris, and sent on to Marseilles, where it remained for about ten days before its whereabouts could be discovered. They were thus delayed about two weeks, as of course they could not go to see the Prince without a full supply of handsome dresses.

Meanwhile, the Humes also remained in Paris, having sensibly preferred to obtain all their stylish outfit in that city, instead of having it made in the United States. They then went to Brussels to purchase some fine lace, and proceeded thence to Munich.

Mrs. Pearson and her daughter were the last to start, being obliged to wait for some friends whose escort was desirable, and they arrived in Paris just after the Beavers and Humes had taken their departure. Mrs. Pearson immediately went to a popular American banking-house, to draw some money, and there learned that there were already two more Richmonds in the field, or, in other words, that Miss Hume and the Misses Beaver had arrived in Paris recently, but had just started for Bavaria. The Pearsons, therefore, determined to send their letters of introduction to Prince Beauharnais by mail, and to await a reply in Paris. In order to send their letters in proper style, Mrs. Pearson requested the American Minister to forward them through the Bavarian diplomatic representative in Paris. The letters were, therefore, sent to the Bavarian legation, with a polite note from our Minister requesting the Bavarian Envoy to forward them to Prince Beauharnais. Of course, the existence of such an individual was promptly denied, and, in a short time, the Pearsons received perfectly satisfactory evidence that their *soi-disant* prince must have been a very plausible and agreeable—but, nevertheless, lying—impostor. Both mother and daughter were highly indignant and mortified, but they had been very guarded in their talk about the Prince at home, and had not mentioned him at all abroad, so that they did not fear that any gossip would connect them with the bogus Prince. They were all curiosity, however, to know what sort of a time the Humes and Beavers had had in their personal search for him, and they also congratulated themselves that they had escaped that humiliation at least.

The fates decreed that the three Clifton House parties should arrive in Munich on the same day — the Hansons from Dresden, the Humes from Brussels, and the Beavers from Paris. Each party was provided with a courier, and, as soon as they were established in their rooms, the couriers

were duly instructed to learn the whereabouts of Prince Beauharnais' palace, in order that they might call upon him the next day. The wondering couriers were greatly puzzled at the name of this wealthy prince, of whom they had never heard before, and, accordingly, ventured to ask a few questions. The tourists were all so anxious to show what distinguished people they were, that the story of the young Prince and his various invitations was told with great pride to all the couriers.

These couriers are always men of great information, and are very shrewd judges of character. In this case, each one felt confident that his employers had been imposed upon, but he did not dare to tell them so in their present state of mind. After a late dinner, however, the three couriers met in a neat cafe, which was the usual resort of these men. As they were members of the same *Bureau des Couriers*, they were all well acquainted, and they sat down with their beer and pipes to compare notes. After the usual salutations had passed, they began talking about their respective employers and their proposed routes of travel.

"Oh! but I have the queer lot," said Jacques. "They are here, they say, to visit a prince, and may I never see Savoy again if I don't think they are just about crazy. They have given me a minute description of his park and his palace, and they have an invitation to spend three months with him; so my duties are apt to be light for a while—provided," he added, scratching his ear, dubiously, "I can succeed in one thing."

"*Parbleu ! mon ami*, but thou art more lucky than I," answered Edouard. "I, also, have some of these devils of Americans, and I have been in purgatory since I left Paris. They, too, are acquainted with a prince, who has invited them to accompany him on a tour down the Rhine and through Germany. If I had only *one* thing necessary to enable me to get rid of them for three months, I would ask for nothing better."

"Yes," added François, "thou mayst well say that. My route is through the villainous mountains of Switzerland, where—it is a thing to be hoped—they may, some of them, break their necks. Ah ! but how it must have rained princes in that land of savages—America. My party of Comanches, also, are to have a prince for a companion; and may I sup with the devil if it is not the hardest job I have, to find this same prince."

"*Mon dieu !*" exclaimed Jacques, excitedly, "thou hast named the one thing necessary to my comfort. If my prince and his palace were but found, I should be ready to believe in the tales of the Arabian Nights."

"What! is it possible!" cried Edouard. "Are we all in the same boat?"

"What is the name of thy prince?" asked Jacques, leaning over the table.

"Prince Beauharnais!" came, simultaneously, from the lips of Edouard and François.

The three couriers dropped back into their seats, whence they had half arisen, and regarded each other for several moments with looks of grotesque solemnity. Then, as they caught a full appreciation of the absurdity of the whole affair, they broke into loud peals of mocking laughter.

After a time, they drew their chairs close together and had a long consultation in a low tone of voice, during which, they were evidently planning some very amusing scheme. On separating, they went in different directions, laughing to themselves and wagging their heads mysteriously.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning dawned bright and beautiful. No more perfect day could have been selected for a visit, and the whole tribe of delighted Americans prepared themselves to descend upon the Prince. In each party, the question of what they should wear had been long and earnestly discussed, and the different decisions reached were somewhat suggestive of the respective characters of the individuals.

Mrs. Beaver had such a great regard for money and position that she desired to show, in her dress and appearance, that she was wealthy and "to the manner born." Hence, she decided that they should proceed with as much ceremony in calling upon the Prince, as if they were attending a court reception. The ladies of her party, therefore, appeared in full, evening dress, and Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them. Mrs. Beaver had obliged Mr. Beaver to purchase a complete suit of court costume for himself, also, and his "make-up" was really gorgeous. He was, it is true, a little uncertain whether his chapeau ought to be worn "fore-and-aft" or "athwartships," (nautical terms which Mr. Beaver had picked up on shipboard) but the obliging courier set him right upon this point. His dress sword, as it clinked along on the tile floor of the hotel, was the occasion of great satisfaction to him, and his martial strut might have been imposing, had his figure been more soldierly, and his bearing less awkward. When moving straight forward on a smooth floor, he had no difficulty, but the moment he removed his chapeau with his left hand and offered his right arm to his wife, he found that his sword had an unpleasant habit of forming the most extraordinary complications with his legs imaginable. Before he returned to his hotel that day, he was fully prepared to believe in the total depravity of inanimate things, especially as applied to dress-swords. About eleven o'clock, however, all was ready, and the party called upon the faithful Jacques to direct them to the palace of the Prince Beauharnais. Jacques responded meekly, and two elegant carriages, with liveried drivers and footmen, drove up to the hotel to take the visitors to the palace.

The Humes had decided that they would show Republican simplicity combined with elegance and taste, and the ladies appeared in appropriate dress for a morning visit. These were in the latest Paris style, richly but not showily trimmed, and were very becoming to both ladies. Mr. Hume was dressed with great care in a stylish morning suit, and his appearance denoted a quiet, self-reliant gentleman of business. A plain but handsome carriage awaited them, and François promptly seated himself on the box.

The Hansons agreed to make no change in their usual traveling costumes. The great American eagle was soaring in Mr. Hanson's mind, and on every occasion, he took pains to show his disregard of "the forms and ceremonies by which a bloated aristocracy would like to trammel the free intercourse of man and man." He would drop in on his friend, the Prince, as he would on any one else, without any fuss or parade. If the young man were at home (as of course he would be, according to promise), they would be happy to have his company down the Rhine.

Mrs. Hanson was not so sure how the Prince would understand such an offhand, free-and-equal kind of treatment, but she recalled how often he had expressed his admiration for the freedom of manners in the West, and therefore she acquiesced in her husband's ideas. Miss Hanson decidedly objected to such an extreme application of republican principles, but her mother pacified her by allowing her to wear a full set of magnificent diamonds, necklace, earrings, bracelets, and rings.

"*Mon dieu !*" muttered Edouard, when he saw her, "a miss of seventeen years, wearing diamonds—and in traveling costume at that! Ah! these Americans! these Americans!"

This party, also, started about the same time as the other two, and after a short drive the various carriages drew up before the entrance to a large private palace. This palace, like many others in Europe, contained a fine gallery of paintings, which could be visited by tourists on obtaining a card of admission. The couriers had attended to this matter, so that, on arriving at the entrance, each party was successively admitted by the concierge.

The Hansons were the first to make their appearance; and, as they passed through the heavy, prison-like doors and up the wide staircase, they felt that the realization of their hopes was at hand. Edouard said something in German to a servant in livery, and the latter led the way to the end of a grand corridor hung with fine paintings, where they entered a medium-sized room filled with portraits. Here the servant left them, and they seated themselves to await the coming of the Prince. They had hardly composed themselves ere footsteps were heard coming down the long corridor. Mrs. Hanson gave a hurried glance into a mirror to assure herself of her good appearance, and Miss Hanson cast down her eyes, while her blushing cheeks and heaving bosom showed that she took more than a trifling interest in the approaching interview. Mr. Hanson had seated himself on the opposite side of the room from his wife; but, as the footsteps were still some distance away, he arose and crossed over, at the same moment glancing down the corridor, as he passed the open door. His eyes were none of the sharpest; hence, he only took in a general impression of the advancing party, without being fully able to distinguish features.

"My gracious! Mrs. Hanson," he exclaimed, in a loud whisper, "the Prince and all his family are coming. The old gentlemen is dressed in full court uniform, and there are three or four ladies with him, all in full dress, also. I wonder what they'll think of us," and he looked ruefully at their own plain traveling dresses.

"The Prince is not tall, but he has a commanding air, which would show his rank anywhere," continued Mr. Hanson. "I didn't observe the ladies, since I only caught a glimpse, as I passed before the door."

The party was now close at hand, so that nothing more was said, and the Hansons waited in mute expectancy. Edouard had discreetly remained in the corridor.

Suddenly, a gentleman and lady crossed the threshold of the door. The Hansons rose eagerly, and the newcomers, also, commenced to advance with great cordiality. Unfortunately, the gentleman's sword twisted itself around his legs and nearly tripped him up, while an ejaculation of disappointment and surprise broke simultaneously from the lips of both parties. The supposed

prince and his family proved to be the whole tribe of Beavers, who had arrived only a moment or two after the Hansons.

For half a minute there was not a word spoken, but each party looked at the other in dumb amazement. Then they all commenced talking at once, in a nervous, jerky style, which plainly showed the general embarrassment. The Hansons were not only perplexed by at the presence of the Beavers, whom they had left, as they supposed, in the United States, by they were, also, ready to cry at their stupidity in dressing so inappropriately. As they gazed at the elegant toilettes of the Beavers, revealing so many of their well-developed charms, it seemed to Mrs. and Miss Hanson as if they would be willing to sacrifice their “republican principles” to all eternity, for the privilege, at that moment, of being in full dress.

Before many remarks had passed, however, footsteps were again heard approaching, and the opposing factions seated themselves in decorous silence to await the Prince’s entrance. Mrs. Beaver’s heart swelled in conscious anticipations of triumph, as she glanced from the overpowering toilettes of her blooming group to the sombre traveling dress worn by Miss Hanson. Nearer and nearer came the tread, the step being slow and stately, as became a dignified prince, and again the curtains at each side of the door swayed back as a tall gentleman entered, with a lady on each arm.

It was now Mrs. Beaver’s turn to exclaim and look embarrassed; though, for that matter, no one felt particularly at ease. The newcomers were the Humes, toward whom, of all others, the Beavers felt most bitter. The first surprise being over, and the greetings having been made all around, Miss Hume commenced the action. She had the advantage of being dressed more appropriately than any of the others, and, moreover, the *prestige* of her first victory over the Beavers gave her confidence. Besides, she carried more guns than all the rest of the ladies present, owing to her imperturbable coolness and sarcastic wit. She began:

“I declare, I was quite a prophet, was I not, Mrs. Beaver? You know I said we might possibly meet in Munich.”

Mrs. Beaver, when fairly under fire, was not an antagonist to be despised, and she, therefore, rallied nobly.

“Why, yes,” she replied; “I think you did say something of that kind; but, of course, my dear, I never imagined you were in earnest. Now, I should have thought, last winter, that Bavaria would have been the last place you would ever have been likely to visit.”

“Oh! I don’t wonder you thought so,” said Miss Hume, “for I presume it is not a particularly attractive country to Americans in general. I imagine you will hardly find it worth staying here more than two or three days.”

“Indeed,” replied Mrs. Beaver, determined to sink her enemy at the first broadside, “we propose staying here about three months, and the Prince has promised to make it very agreeable for us. We came on his invitation.”

As she spoke, she glanced at the other ladies with a smile of conscious superiority, which said, plainly:

“I am sorry for your disappointment, ladies; but you see I have a monopoly of the Prince, and you may as well acknowledge your defeat and retire.”

To her surprise, both the Hansons and the Humes returned her smile with interest, as though rather amused than alarmed.

“I have no doubt he would make it very pleasant indeed,” spoke up Mrs. Hanson; “but, of course, you will not remain here until his return?”

“His return?” asked Mrs. Beaver, hurriedly. “Is he away?”

“Oh! no,” answered Mrs. Hanson, regaining all her self-importance at Mrs. Beaver’s exposure of her ignorance and alarm; “he is not away now, but he is going away soon to spend the summer, traveling.”

This was the last shot necessary to overpower Mrs. Beaver, and she actually showed her distress in her face.

“Oh! yes,” chimed in Miss Hume, jauntily; “he has agreed to make a tour through Switzerland with us. He arranged to meet us here the twentieth of this month, and start immediately.”

“Oh! pardon me!” exclaimed Mrs. Hanson, losing her presence of mind and her politeness together; “you must be mistaken. The Prince promised to start *with us*, for a tour down the Rhine and through Germany, on the twenty-fifth of this month.”

“Really, you must excuse me for arguing the question,” returned Miss Hume, very decisively. “The Prince could not have made two appointments; and here is my notebook where he himself wrote down the date and route we should travel. Would you like to see it, Mrs. Hanson?”

This completed the discomfiture of both the Hansons and the Beavers, leaving Miss Hume mistress of the situation. The position of all parties was now awkward in the extreme, and no one can say how they would have settled affairs, had they not been interrupted.

A middle aged man entered the room through another door than that leading into the corridor, bowed politely to all parties, and said, in very good English:

“Pardon my intrusion, ladies and gentlemen, but a duty I have to execute. I am Herr Althorp, of the Department of Justice. I have been informed that you and other Americans have been deceived by a man, professing to be a son of Prince Beauharnais, of Bavaria. Believe me, he must a swindler have been. There is no prince of that name in Bavaria. Neither has any prince of Bavaria, nor (as far as we can learn) of any other German State, been in America during the winter past. We have had already some inquiries about this man, and the American Minister will tell you that he must an imposter be.”

“But who was he, then?” asked Mr. Hume, who was the most self-possessed person in the whole party.

“That I can not tell,” replied Herr Althorp. “The account which we have received makes it evident that he had plenty of money, and tried no one to swindle. Yet we cannot tell. It might be a wealthy young German have been, who wished the name of Prince to take, for pleasure. But, in republican America,”— here the gentleman smiled sardonically —“he could have derived no advantage from a title. However, we shall send our consul in New York to warn the public in America to beware of this man. If you will call on your Minister here, he will show you how you deceived have been,” and so saying, the worthy detective (for such he was, of the highest class,) retired as he entered.

The Beavers did not wait for him to finish, but were halfway out of the door in an instant. The Hansons stood not upon the order of their going, and soon passed the Beavers, whose progress was greatly impeded by Mr. Beaver’s sword. The manner in which it crossed between his legs, first one way and then the other, would have made a Stoic laugh. After making several frantic plunges over the dresses of his wife and daughters, Beaver resolutely put on his chapeau and let go of his wife’s arm. One more trip sent the chapeau off his head and brought him down on it with both knees. The strain was too much for the white satin unmentionables, and a ragged tear over each knee was the mortifying result. Rising to his feet, Mr. Beaver deliberately unbuckled his sword-belt and led the party, in an ignominious, straggling procession, to their carriages. On arriving at the hotel, the offending Jacques, the courier, was ordered to explain his part in the fiasco, preparatory to instant dismissal. Jacques, therefore, with great politeness, informed them that he knew of no such prince as they had named, but that the palace to which he had taken them had formerly been owned by Eugene, Vicomte de Beauharnais, created a Prince of France by his stepfather, Napoleon First, and afterwards Prince d’Eichstædt and Duke of Leuchtenberg, by his father-in-law, Maximillian I., King of Bavaria. The only surviving descendants of the family resided in Russia (having married into the Russian imperial family), and there was no such living person as the Prince Beauharnais. In this predicament, being required to take them to the Beauharnais palace, which had no existence, Jacques said the he had applied to the police for information. The authorities had recommended him to take the party to the Leuchtenberg palace, promising to send an “agent” to explain matters to the American tourists.

“It seems,” continued Jacques, “that inquiries had been made by two other couriers, on the part of American families, and the authorities had so arranged as to bring all three parties together at once, so that one explanation would suffice for all.”

Jacques looked so honest in making this statement that the Beavers wholly acquitted him of any intention to make them ridiculous, and they, therefore, abandoned their idea of dismissing him. To tell the truth, they reflected that it would not do to treat him harshly, as he had it in his power to expose them to the ridicule of every one by relating the whole story.

“But, Jacques,” suddenly recollected Mr. Beaver, “you told us, as we walked down that infernal corridor, that we should find all the Beauharnais family in the room at the end. Instead of that,

we found only that Hanson crowd, and I came near addressing a pompous Kentucky fool as ‘Your Highness,’ before I saw who it was. How do you account for that?”

“Oh!” replied Jacques, demurely, “*the portraits* of the Beauharnais family were all there.”

Mrs. Beaver looked at the courier for a moment, to see whether he was not poking fun at them, but his face was so simple and respectful that her suspicions were allayed.

The fact was that the whole *contretemps* had been planned by these three scamps of couriers, only the realization of the scheme had far exceeded in absurdity anything they could have expected. Each one made the same explanation as that made by Jacques, and in each case this explanation proved satisfactory, for the same reasons. From that time on, the couriers managed their respective parties just as they saw fit, since none of them dared to offend the men who could spread the story of that ridiculous episode in Munich.

The Hansons, Beavers, and Humes, by mutual consent, kept perfect silence upon the subject of their fiasco, since they were all nearly equally mortified. In consequence, they separated for tours in different directions, and remained abroad more than a year longer than they had at first intended. By the time they returned, the Prince had long been forgotten, and they were not annoyed by disagreeable questions from any one, except Mrs. Pearson and her daughter. These latter would occasionally express the hope that their friends had not been disappointed in visiting the Prince, etc.; but, as Mrs. Pearson was not specially vindictive nor ill-natured, the matter soon dropped, and, until now, no one has ever known the true story of the American Claude Melnotte — Prince Beauharnais.

THE END.

Claude Melnotte as a Detective and Other Stories. Chicago: W.B. Keen, Cooke, & Co., 1875, 120-144.