

# PRINCE

P.I.

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PRINCE. Well, my dear, here we are at last—just in time to compcl Duke Rudolph to fulfil the terms of his marriage contract. Another hour and we should have been too late.

PRINCESS. Yes, papa, and if you hadn't fortunately discovered a means of making an income by honest industry, we should never have got here at all.

PRINCE. Very true. Confined for the last two years within the precincts of my palace by an obdurate bootmaker who held a warrant for my arrest, I devoted my enforced leisure to a study of the doctrine of chances—mainly with the view of ascertaining whether there was the remotest chance of my ever going out for a walk again—and this led to the discovery of a singularly fascinating little round game which I have called Roulette, and by which, in one sitting, I won no less than five thousand francs! My first act was to pay my bootmaker—my second, to engage a good useful working set of second-hand nobles—and my third, to hurry you off to Pfennig Halbfennig as fast as a *train de luxe* could carry us!

PRINCESS. Yes, and a pretty job-lot of second-hand nobles you've scraped together!

PRINCE (*doubtfully*). Pretty, you think? Humph! I don't know. I should say tol-lol, my love—only tol-lol. They are not wholly satisfactory. There is a certain air of unreality about them—they are not convincing.

COSTUMIER. But, my goot friend, vhat can you expect for eighteen-pence a day!

PRINCE. Now take this Peer, for instance. What the deuce do you call *him*?

COSTUMIER. Him? Oh, he's a swell—he's the Duke of Riviera.

PRINCE. Oh, he's a Duke, is he? Well, that's no reason why he should look so confoundedly haughty. (*To NOBLE*.) Be affable, sir! (*NOBLE takes attitude of affability*.) That's better. (*Passing to another*.) Now, who's this with his moustache coming off?

COSTUMIER. Vhy, you're Viscount Mentone, ain't you?

NOBLE. Blest if I know. (*Turning up his sword-belt*.) It's wrote here—yes, Viscount Mentone.

COSTUMIER. Then vhy don't you say so? 'Old yerself up—you ain't carryin' sandwich boards now. (*Adjusts his moustache*.)

PRINCE. Now, once for all, you Peers—when His Highness arrives, don't stand like sticks, but appear to take an intelligent and sympathetic interest in what is going on. You needn't say anything, but let your gestures be in accordance with the spirit of the conversation. Now take the word from me. Affability! (*attitude*). Submission! (*attitude*). Surprise! (*attitude*). Shame! (*attitude*). Grief! (*attitude*). Joy! (*attitude*). That's better! You can do it if you like!

# PRINCE

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P. (2)

## Dialogue if Roulette Song is Included

LUDWIG. There, what do you think of that? That's our official ceremonial for the reception of visitors of the very highest distinction.

PRINCE (*puzzled*). It's very quaint—very curious indeed. Prettily footed, too. Prettily footed.

LUDWIG. Would you like to see how we say "good-bye" to visitors of distinction? That ceremony is also performed with the foot.

PRINCE. Really, this tone—ah, but perhaps you have not completely grasped the situation?

LUDWIG. Not altogether.

PRINCE. Ah, then I'll give you a lead over. (*Significantly*.) I am the father of the Princess of Monte Carlo. Doesn't that convey any idea to the Grand Ducal mind?

LUDWIG. (*stolidly*). Nothing definite.

PRINCE (*aside*). H'm—very odd! Never mind—try again! (*Aloud*.) This is the daughter of the Prince of Monte Carlo. Do you take?

LUDWIG (*still puzzled*). No—not yet. Go on—don't give it up—I daresay it will come presently.

PRINCE. Very odd—never mind—try again. (*With sly significance*.) Twenty years ago! Little doddle doddle! *Two* little doddle doddles! Happy father—hers and yours. Proud mother—yours and hers! Hah! *Now* you take? I see you do! I see you do!

LUDWIG. Nothing is more annoying than to feel that you're not equal to the intellectual pressure of the conversation. I wish he'd say something intelligible.

PRINCE. You didn't expect me?

LUDWIG (*jumping at it*). No, no. I grasp that—thank you very much. (*Shaking hands with him*.) No, I did *not* expect you!

PRINCE. I thought not. But ha! ha! at last I have escaped from my enforced restraint. (*General movement of alarm*.) (*To crowd, who are stealing off*.) No, no—you misunderstand me. I mean I've paid my debts! And how d'you think I did it? Through the medium of Roulette!

ALL. Roulette?

LUDWIG. Now you're getting obscure again. The lucid interval has expired.

PRINCE. I'll explain. It's an invention of my own—the simplest thing in the world—and what is most remarkable, it comes just in time to supply a distinct and long-felt want! I'll tell you all about it.