

**COUNT BUNKER: BEING A BALD YET
VERACIOUS CHRONICLE CONTAINING
SOME FURTHER PARTICULARS OF TWO
GENTLEMEN WHOSE PREVIOUS CAREERS
WERE TOUCHED UPON IN A TOME
ENTITLED "THE LUNATIC AT LARGE"**

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Count Bunker: being a bald yet veracious chronicle containing some further particulars of two gentlemen whose previous careers were touched upon in a tome entitled "the lunatic at large" by J. Storer Clouston

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J. STORER CLOUSTON

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WHOSE PREVIOUS CAREERS WERE TOUCHED UPON
IN A TOME ENTITLED "THE LUNATIC AT LARGE"

BY

J. STORER CLOUSTON



BRENTANO'S

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COUNT BUNKER

CHAPTER I

IT is only with the politest affectation of interest, as a rule, that English Society learns the arrival in its midst of an ordinary Continental nobleman; but the announcement that the Baron Rudolph von Blitzenberg had been appointed attaché to the German embassy at the Court of St. James was unquestionably received with a certain flutter of excitement. That his estates were as vast as an average English county, and his ancestry among the noblest in Europe, would not alone perhaps have arrested the attention of the paragraphists, since acres and forefathers of foreign extraction are rightly regarded as conferring at the most a claim merely to toleration. But in addition to these he possessed a charming English wife, belonging to one of the most distinguished families in the peerage (the Grillers of Monkton-Grillyer), and had further demonstrated his judgment by purchasing the winner of the last year's Derby, with a view to improving the horse-flesh of his native land.

From a footnote attached to the engraving of the Baron in a Homburg hat holding the head of the steed

in question, which formed the principal attraction in several print-sellers' windows in Piccadilly, one gathered that though his faculties had been cultivated and exercised in every conceivable direction, yet this was his first serious entrance into the diplomatic world. There was clearly, therefore, something unusual about the appointment; so that it was rumored, and rightly, that an international importance was to be attached to the incident, and a delicate compliment to be perceived in the selection of so popular a link between the Anglo-Saxon and the Teutonic peoples. Accordingly "Die Wacht am Rhein" was played by the Guards' band down the entire length of Ebury Street, photographs of the Baroness appeared in all the leading periodicals, and Society, after its own less demonstrative but equally sincere fashion, prepared to welcome the distinguished visitors.

They arrived in town upon a delightful day in July, somewhat late in the London season, to be sure, yet not too late to be inundated with a snowstorm of cards and invitations to all the smartest functions that remained. For the first few weeks, at least, you would suppose the Baron to have no time for thought beyond official receptions and unofficial dinners; yet as he looked from his drawing-room windows into the gardens of Belgrave Square upon the second afternoon since they had settled into this great mansion, it was not upon such functions that his fancy ran. Nobody was more fond of gaiety, nobody more appreciative of purple and fine linen, than the Baron von Blitzenberg; but as he mused there he began to recall more and more vividly, and with an ever

rising pleasure, quite different memories of life in London. Then by easy stages regret began to cloud this reminiscent satisfaction, until at last he sighed—

“Ach, my dear London! How moch should I enjoy you if I were free!”

For the benefit of those who do not know the Baron either personally or by repute, he may briefly be described as an admirably typical Teuton. When he first visited England (some five years previously) he stood for Bavarian manhood in the flower; now, you behold the fruit. As magnificently mustached, as ruddy of skin, his eye as genial, and his impulses as hearty; he added to-day to these two more stone of Teutonic excellences incarnate.

In his ingenuous glance, as in the more rounded contour of his waistcoat, you could see at once that fate had dealt kindly with him. Indeed, to hear him sigh was so unwonted an occurrence that the Baroness looked up with an air of mild surprise.

“My dear Rudolph,” said she, “you should really open the window. You are evidently feeling the heat.”

“No, not ze heat,” replied the Baron.

He did not turn his head towards her, and she looked at him more anxiously.

“What is it, then? I have noticed a something strange about you ever since we landed at Dover. Tell me, Rudolph!”

Thus adjured, he cast a troubled glance in her direction. He saw a face whose mild blue eyes and undetermined mouth he still swore by as the standard by which

to try all her inferior sisters, and a figure whose growing *embonpoint* yearly approached the outline of his ideal hausfrau. But it was either St. Anthony or one of his fellow-martyrs who observed that an occasional holiday from the ideal is the condiment in the sauce of sanctity; and some such reflection perturbed the Baron at this moment.

"It is nozing moch," he answered.

"Oh, I know what it is. You have grown so accustomed to seeing the same people, year after year—the Von Greifners, and Rosenbaums, and all those. You miss them, don't you? Personally, I think it a very good thing that you should go abroad and be a diplomatist, and not stay in Fogelschloss so much; and you'll soon make loads of friends here. Mother comes to us next week, you know."

"Your mozzer is a nice old lady," said the Baron slowly. "I respect her, Alicia; bot it vas not mozzers zat I missed just now."

"What was it?"

"Life!" roared the Baron, with a sudden outburst of thundering enthusiasm that startled the Baroness completely out of her composure. "I did have fun for my money vunce in London. Himmel, it is too hot to eat great dinners and to wear clothes like a monkey-jack."

"Like a what?" gasped the Baroness.

To hear the Baron von Blitzenberg decry the paraphernalia and splendors of his official liveries was even more astonishing than his remarkable denunciation of the pleasures of the table, since to dress as well as play

the part of hereditary grandee had been till this minute his constant and enthusiastic ambition.

"A meat-jack, I mean—or a—I know not vat you call it. Ach, I vant a leetle fun, Alicia."

"A little fun," repeated the Baroness in a breathless voice. "What kind of fun?"

"I know not," said he, turning once more to stare out of the window.

To this dignified representative of a particularly dignified State even the trees of Belgrave Square seemed at that moment a trifle too conventionally perpendicular. If they would but dance and wave their boughs he would have greeted their greenness more gladly. A good-looking nursemaid wheeled a perambulator beneath their shade, and though she never looked his way, he took a wicked pleasure in surreptitiously closing first one eye and then the other in her direction. This might not entirely satisfy the aspirations of his soul, yet it seemed to serve as some vent for his pent-up spirit. He turned to his spouse with a pleasantly meditative air.

"I should like to see old Bonker vunce more," he observed.

"Bunker? You mean Mr. Mandell-Essington?" said she, with an apprehensive note in her voice.

"To me he vill always be Bonker."

The Baroness looked at him reproachfully.

"You promised me, Rudolph, you would see as little as possible of Mr. Essington."

"Oh, ja, as leetle—as possible," answered the Baron, though not with his most ingenuous air. "Besides, it is