

A GOOD PRINCE

I FIRST saw him one morning of last summer, in the Green Park. Though short, even insignificant, in stature and with an obvious tendency to be obese, he had that unruffled, Olympian air, which is so sure a sign of the Blood Royal. In a suit of white linen he looked serenely cool, despite the heat. Perhaps I should have thought him, had I not been versed in the *Almanach de Gotha*, a trifle older than he is. He did not raise his hat in answer to my salute, but smiled most graciously and made as though he would extend his hand to me, mistaking me, I doubt not, for one of his friends. A member of his suite, however, said something to him in an undertone, whereat he smiled again and took no further notice of me.

I do not wonder the people idolise him. His almost blameless life has been passed among them, nothing in it hidden from their knowledge. When they look upon his dear presentment in the photographer's window—the shrewd, kindly eyes under the high forehead, the sparse locks so carefully distributed—words of loyalty only and of admiration rise to their lips. For of all princes in modern days he seems to fulfil, most perfectly, the obligation of princely rank. *Νόπιος* he might have been called in the heroic age, when princes were judged according to their mastery of the sword or of the bow, or have seemed, to those mediæval eyes that loved to see a scholar's pate under the crown, an ignoramus. We are less exigent now. We do but ask of our princes that they should live among us, be often manifest to our eyes, set a perpetual example of a right life. We bid them be the ornaments of our State. Too often they do not attain to our ideal. They give, it may be, a half-hearted devotion to soldiering, or pursue pleasure merely—tales of their frivolity raising now and again the anger of a public swift to envy them their temptations. But against this

admirable Prince no such charges can be made. Never (as yet, at least) has he cared to "play at soldiers." By no means has he shocked the Puritans. Though it is no secret that he prefers the society of ladies, not one breath of scandal has ever touched his name. Of how many English princes could this be said, in days when Figaro, quill in hand, inclines his ear to every key-hole?

Upon the one action that were well obliterated from his record I need not long insist. The wife of an aged ex-Premier came to have an audience and pay her respects. Hardly had she spoken, when His Royal Highness, in a fit of unreasoning displeasure, struck her a violent blow with his clenched fist. The incident is deplorable, but belongs, after all, to an earlier period of his life; and, were it not that no appreciation must rest upon the suppression of any scandal, I should not have referred to it. For the rest, I find no stain, soever faint, upon his life. The simplicity of his tastes is the more admirable for that he is known to care not at all for what may be reported in the newspapers. He has never touched a card, never entered a play-house. In no stud of racers has he indulged, preferring to the finest blood-horse ever bred a certain white and woolly lamb with a blue riband at its neck. This he is never tired of fondling. It is with him, like the roebuck of Henri Quatre, wherever he goes.

Suave and simple his life is! Narrow in range, it may be, but with every royal appurtenance of delight! Round the flower-garden at Sandringham runs an old wall of red brick, streaked with ivy and topped infrequently with balls of stone. By the iron gates, that open to a vista of flowers, stand two kind policemen, guarding the Prince's procedure along that bright vista. As his perambulator rolls out of the gate of St. James's Palace, he stretches out his tiny hands to the scarlet sentinels. An obsequious retinue follows him over the lawns of the White Lodge, cooing and laughing, blowing kisses and praising him. Yet his life has not been all happy. The afflictions that befall royal personages always touch very poignantly the heart of the people and it is not too much to say that all England watched by the

cradle-side of Prince Edward in those hours of pain, when first the little battlements rose about the rose-red roof of his mouth. Irreiterate be the horror of that epoch!

As yet, when we know not even what his first words will be, it is too early to predict what verdict posterity will pass upon him. Already he has won the hearts of the people; but, in the years which, it is to be hoped, still await him, he may accomplish more. *Attendons!* He stands alone among European princes—but, as yet, only with the aid of a chair.

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