

CHAPTER 6

HIGH LIFE

Mr Salteena awoke next morning in his small but pleasant room. It was done in green and white with Monograms on the toilet set. He had a tiny white bed with a green quilt and a picture of the Nativaty and one of Windsor Castle on the walls. The sun was shining over all these things as Mr Salteena opened his sleepy eyes. Just then there was rat tat on the door. Come in called Mr Salteena and in came Edward Procurio ballancing a tray very cleverly. He looked most elegant with his shiny black hair and pale yellow face and half shut eyes. He smiled in a very mystearious and superier way as he placed the tray on Mr Salteenas pointed knees.

Your early beverage he announced and began to pull up the blinds still smiling to himself.

Oh thankyou cried Mr Salteena feeling very towzld compared to this grand fellow. Then to his great supprise Procurio began to open the wardrobe and look at Mr Salteenas suits making italian exclamations under his breath. Mr Salteena dare not say a word so he swallowed his tea and eat a Marie biscuit hastilly. Presently Procurio advanced to the bed with a bright blue serge suit. Will you wear this today sir he asked quietly.

Oh certainly said Mr Salteena.

And a clean shirt would not come amiss said Procurio what about this pale blue and white stripe.

With pleashure replied Mr Salteena. So Procurio laid them out in neat array also a razer and brush for shaving. Then he opened a door saying This is the bath room shall I turn on hot or cold.

I dont mind said Mr Salteena feeling very hot and ignorant.

It is best for you to decide sir said Procurio firmly.

Well I will try cold said Mr Salteena feeling it was more manly to say that. Procurio bowed and beat a retreat to the bath room. Then he returned and told Mr. Salteena that when he was washed he would find his breakfast in the sitting room. When Mr Salteena was dressed in his best blue suit and clean shirt he stroled into the sitting room where a gay canary was singing fit to burst in the window and a cople of doves cooing in a whicker cage. A cheery smell greeted him as Procurio glided in with some steaming coffie. Mr Salteena felt more at home and passed a few remarks about the weather. Procurio smiled and uncovered some lovely kidnys on toast and as he did so bent and whispered in Mr Salteenas ear you could have come in in your dressing gown.

Mr Salteena gave a start. Oh can I he said ten thousand thanks.

Then Procurio passed out and Mr Salteena finished his kidneys and chirped to the birds and had a cigarette from a handsome purple box which he found on the desk. Then Procurio entered once more and with a bow said. His lordship is going to a levie this morning and thinks it might amuse you to go too. Could you be ready by 11 o'clock.

Oh yes what fun said Mr Salteena have you any notion what a levie is my man.

Procurio gave a superier smile. It is a party given by the Queen to very superier people but this one is given by the Prince of Wales as the Queen is not quite her usual self today. It will be at Buckingham palace so you will drive with his lordship.

Mr Salteena was fearfully excited. What shall I weare he gasped.

Well of course you ought to have black satin knickerbockers and a hat with white feathers also garters and a star or two.

You supprise me said Mr Salteena I have none of those articles.

Well said Procurio kindly his lordship will lend you his second best cocked hat as you are obliged to wear one and I think with a little thourght I might rig you up so as to pass muster.

Then they rumaged among Mr Salteenas things and Procurio got very intelligent and advised Mr Salteena to were his black evening suit and role up his trousers. He also lent him a pair of white silk stockings which he fastened tightly round his knees with red rosettes. Then he quickly cut out a star in silver paper and pinned it to his chest and also added a strip of red ribbon across his shirt front. Then Mr Salteena survayed himself in the glass. Is it a fancy dress party he asked.

No they always were that kind of thing but wait till you see his Lordship--if you are ready sir I will conduct you in.

Mr Salteena followed Procurio up countless stairs till they came to the Earls compartments and tapped on the bedroom door.

Come in cried a merry voice and in they strode.

I have done my best with Mr Salteena my lord I trust he will do the hat of course will make a deal of diffrence.

Mr Salteena bowed nervously wishing he had got correct knickerbockers as his trousers did not feel too firm in spite of the garters.

Not half bad cried the earl try on the hat Salteena it is on my bed. Mr Salteena placed it on his head and the feathers and gold braid

became him very well but he felt very jellous of the earl who looked a sight for the gods. He had proper satin knickerbockers with diamond clasps and buckled shoes and black silk stockings which showed up his long fine legs. He had a floppy shirt of softist muslin with real lace collar and cuffs. A sword hung at his side and a crimson sash was round his waist and a splendid cocked hat on his head. His blue eyes twinkled as he pulled on a pair of white kid gloves.

Well come on Salteena he cried and dont be nervus I will get you a pair of knickers tomorrow. Will you get a hansome Procurio.

Presently the earl and Mr Salteena were clattering away to Buckingham palace.

You wont mind if I introduce you as Lord Hyssops do you said the earl as he lit his pipe. You see you are sort of mixed up with the family so it wont matter and will look better.

So it would said Mr Salteena what do we do at the levie.

Oh we strole round and eat ices and champagne and that kind of thing and sometimes there is a little music.

Is there any dancing asked Mr Salteena.

Well not always said the Earl.

I am glad of that said Mr Salteena I am not so nimble as I was and my garters are a trifle tight.

Sometimes we talk about the laws and politics said the earl if Her Majesty is in that kind of a mood.

Just then the splendid edifice appeared in view and Mr Salteena licked his dry lips at sight of the vast crowd. All round were carriages full of costly people and outside the railings stood tall Life Guards keeping off the mere people who had gathered to watch the nobility clatter up. Lord Clincham began to bow right and left raising his cocked hat to his friends. There was a lot of laughter and friendly words as the cab finally drew up at the front door. Two tall life guards whisked open the doors and one of them kindly tipped the cabman. Mr Salteena followed his lordship up the grand steps trying to feel as homely as he could. Then a splendid looking fellow in a red tunic and a sort of black velvet tam a shanter stepped forward from the throng shouting what name please.

The Earl of Clincham and Lord Hyssops calmly replied the earl gently nudging Mr Salteena to act up. Mr Salteena nodded and blinked at the menial as much as to say all is well and then he and the earl hung up their cocked hats on two pegs. This way cried a deep voice and another menial appeared wearing stiff white breeches top boots and a green velvet coat with a leather belt also a very shiny top hat. They

followed this fellow down countless corridors and finally came to big folding doors. The earl twiddled his mustache and slapped his leg with his white glove as calmly as could be. Mr Salteena perspired rather hard and gave a hitch to his garters to make sure.

Then the portles divided and their names were shouted in chorus by countless domesticks. The sumshious room was packed with men of a noble nature dressed like the earl in satin knickerboccers etc and with ladies of every hue with long trains and jewels by the dozen. You could hardly moove in the gay throng. Dukes were as nought as there were a good lot of princes and Arch Dukes as it was a very superier levie indeed. The earl and Mr Salteena struggled through the crowd till they came to a platform draped with white velvit. Here on a golden chair was seated the prince of Wales in a lovely ermine cloak and a small but costly crown. He was chatting quite genially with some of the crowd.

Up clambered the earl followed at top speed by Mr Salteena.

Hullo Clincham cried the Prince quite homely and not at all grand so glad you turned up--quite a squash eh.

A bit over powering your Highness said the earl who was quite used to all this may I introduce my friend Lord Hyssops he is staying with me so I thought I would bring him along if you dont mind Prince.

Not at all cried the genial prince looking rather surprised.

Mr Salteena bowed so low he nearly fell off the platform and as the prince put out a hand Mr Salteena thought he had better kiss it. The Prince smiled kindly I am pleased to see you Lord Hyssops he said in a regal voice.

Then the Earl chipped in and how is the dear Queen he said reverently.

Not up to much said his Highness she feels the heat poor soul and he waved to a placard which said in large letters The Queen is indisposed.

Presently his Highness rose I think I will have a quiet glass of champagne he said you come too Clincham and bring your friend the Diplomats are arriving and I am not much in the mood for deep talk I have already signed a dozen documents so I have done my duty.

They all went out by a private door and found themselves in a smaller but gorgeous room. The Prince tapped on the table and instantly two menials in red tunics appeared. Bring three glasses of champagne commanded the prince and some ices he added majestically. The goods appeared as if by magic and the prince drew out a cigar case and passed it round.

One grows weary of Court Life he remarked.

Ah yes agreed the earl.

It upsets me said the prince lapping up his strawberry ice all I want is peace and quiet and a little fun and here I am tied down to this life he said taking off his crown being royal has many painful drawbacks.

True mused the Earl.

Silence fell and the strains of the band could be heard from the next room. Suddenly the prince gazed at Mr Salteena. Who did you say you were he asked in a puzzled tone.

Lord Hyssops responded our hero growing purple at the lie.

Well you are not a bit like the Lord Hyssops I know replied the Prince could you explain matters.

Mr Salteena gazed helplessly at the earl who had grown very pale and seemed lost for the moment. However he quickly recovered.

He is quite alright really Prince he said His mother was called Miss Hyssops of the Glen.

Indeed said his royal Highness that sounds correct but who was your father eh.

Then Mr Salteena thought he would not tell a lie so in trembly tones he muttered My poor father was but a butcher your Highness a very honest one I may add and passing rich he was called Domonic Salteena and my name is Alfred Salteena.

The Prince stroked his yellow beard and rather admired Mr Salteena for his truthful utterance--Oh I see he said well why did you palm off on my menials as Lord Hyssops eh

Mr Salteena wiped his sweating brow but the earl came to the rescue nobly. My fault entirely Prince he chimed in, as I was bringing him to this very superior levie I thought it would be better to say he was of noble birth have I offended your Royal dignity.

Not much said the prince it was a laudible notion and perhaps I will ask Mr Salteena to one of my big balls some day.

Oh your Highness gasped our hero falling on one knee that would indeed be a treat.

I suppose Prince you have not got a job going at this palace for my friend asked the earl you see I am rubbing him up in society ways and he fancies court life as a profession.

Oh dose he said the prince blinking his eyes well I might see.

I suggested if there was a vacancy going he might try cantering after the royal barouche said the earl.

So he might said the prince I will speak to the prime Minister about it and let you know.

Ten thousand thanks cried Mr Salteena bowing low.

Well now I must get along back to the levee announced the prince putting on his crown I have booked a valse with the Arch duchess of Greenwich and this is her favorite tune. So saying they issued back to the big room where the nobility were whirling gaily roand the more searious people such as the prime minister and the admirals etc were eating ices and talking passionately about the laws in a low undertone.

The earl was soon mingling gaily in a set of lancers but Mr Salteena dare not because of his trousers. However he sat on a velvit chair and quite enjoyed over hearing the intelligent conversation of the prime minister. And now we will leave our hero enjoying his glimpse of high life and return to Ethel Monticue.

CHAPTER 7

BERNARDS IDEAR