

PRINCE IL BALEINE

by W. S. Gilbert



When autumn boat and train
Bore London folk to pleasure,
The good Prince Il Baleine
He sought, across the main,
Amusement for his leisure.

A dusty time, and long,
He'd had at balls and races,
At crowded levee throng,
At play and concert song,
And various other places.

But, ah! the British Snob
Besieged that Prince, in plenty:

The Snob adores a Nob,
And follows him, to rob
His *dolce far niente!*

And finding that the Prince
Much eagerness to know them
Did not at once evince,
They did not matters mince,
But begged himself he'd show them.

“Our wishes do not baulk,
Throw off this English shyness—
And show us how you walk,
And let us hear you talk—
Now do, your Royal Highness!

“You're too reserved by half:
Begin perambulating;
We've paid to see you laugh—
We've paid to hear you chaff
Four gentlemen in waiting.

“Come sit and eat an ice,
Or drain a bumping measure;
We've practised much device,
And paid a heavy price,
To see you take your leisure.”

(It grieved that Prince Baleine—
Most sensitive of fishes—
It always gives him pain
When people can't obtain
The fullness of their wishes.

But doctors grave had said,
“Hang up your stick and beaver;
You *must* have rest and shade,
Or you will soon be laid
Upon your back with fever.”)

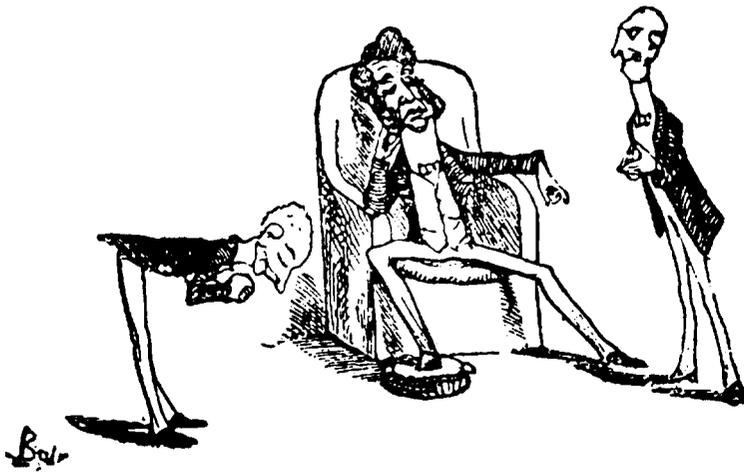
No morning when he woke
But British Snobs addressed him;
His peace of mind they broke,
So up he rose, and spoke
These words to those who pressed him:

“Oh, over-loyal throng,
Be guided, pray, by reason:
You may encore a song
(Though that, I think, is wrong),
But not a London Season!

“I’m told to lie me down
And rest me at my leisure;
But here’s my valet, Brown,
He’s not much worked in town,
He’ll take my place with pleasure!

“I am his special care;
He brushes, combs, and laves me,
He parts my chestnut hair—
He folds the coats I wear—
And strops the blade that shaves me.

“He knows my little ways
And, though it’s not expected
He’ll match my Royal blaze,
Yet, basking in my rays,
He’ll shine with light reflected.”

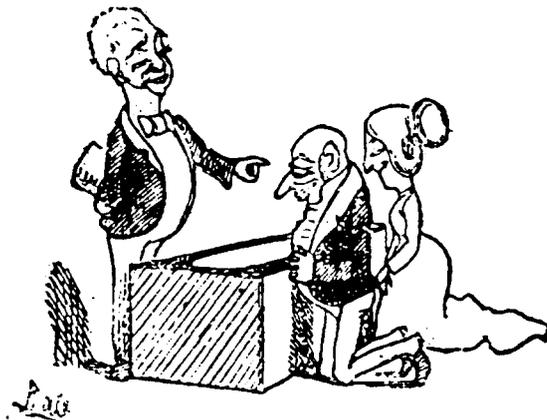


“Oh, my!” the people cried,
“To Mister Brown I’ll bow me!
Oh, ain’t he dignified,
Yet not a spark of pride!
Oh, Mister Brown, allow me!

“And so you wash the Prince,
And pack his clothes for starting,
You scent with jasmine leaf
His pocket-handkerchief,
And regulate his parting!

“And that, I understand,
Is your department, is it?
And this then is the hand
That combs at his command?
Oh, please, do let me kiss it!

“Is this (oh, treat of treats!)
The bedroom that you sleep in?
When cloyed with Royal sweets,
And these the very sheets
Which every night you creep in?”



“And in this bath you tub. .
Ere out of doors’ you sally?
And do these flesh-gloves scrub--
These dainty towels rub--
The Prince’s happy *valet* ?”

The Snobs with joy insane,
Kotoo’d to Brown, unseemly”
And Brown does not complain,
While good Prince Il Baleine
Enjoys his rest extremely.