

German Short Stories of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries
Rudolf Greinz (1866-1942)

A Quarter Tirol Eagle

(From: *Lustige Tiroler Geschichten* [Merry Tales from the Tirol], Leipzig:
Reclam [1909])

My friend Franz Lauterbacher is a very good fellow. But he has one weak point. Every summer, when the stream of foreigners pours into our mountains, he goes around in a terrible paddy.

No wonder. First of all, he is a post-office clerk. So he must work at the counter from early morning to late evening, and he must be polite and amiable and supply answers to every unnecessary question imaginable from foreigners. That makes him awfully irritable. And secondly, he maintains that during the foreigner-season the native guest is the stepchild in an inn. And when all is said and done, that is a vital matter for a bachelor.

It was in August. My friend Lauterbacher and I were somewhat late for lunch at the "Bear." The good dishes had of course all gone.

Lauterbacher made the grumpiest face at his disposal. We were sitting on the verandah, which led out into the large and shaded garden. Out there, it was teeming with foreign guests. The waitresses had their hands full and were flying back and forth like the clappers. It took half an eternity before we were served.

Suddenly, after we had happily finished our feed, my friend tugged my sleeve. I had fleetingly observed him intently occupied with the menu during the last few minutes while I had been reading a newspaper.

“Look here!” he grinned maliciously as he held the menu out to me.

“What?” I asked in astonishment. I could not believe my eyes. In one section of the menu, there could clearly be read the words: “A Quarter Tirol Eagle with Dumplings. 1 Crown 80 Pence.”

“Yes. Just read! It’s correct, all right!” he gave a merry laugh.

“Whoever wrote that nonsense in there?” I asked.

“I did, of course!” he remarked with satisfaction. He had even copied the handwriting remarkably well.

“You’ll see some high and haughty foreigner fall for it!” Lauterbacher said contentedly. “High and haughty foreigner” was a favourite expression of his, which he derived from the rise in tourism.

While we were speaking, three foreign tourists entered the verandah, hung three massive rucksacks, icepicks and loden coats on the coat racks with much noise and circumstance, and took a seat not far from us. Lauterbacher cut his grumpiest face. But I noticed that he secretly sneaked glances at the arrivals which were not so very unfriendly.

The waitress fetched the menu from our table and carried it to the gentlemen.

“Now, let’iz git me breath back a tad!”¹ said a smallish, stocky man as he fanned his lobster-red head with his handkerchief.

“Gie it here!” ordered a tall, strong man in a peremptory tone, and he took the menu out of Katie’s hand.

“To drink?” asked the waitress. Red wine was ordered. When Katie

¹ In the original story, the tourists are northerners from Berlin.

had left to fetch the wine, the foreigners animatedly discussed what they should eat.

“My ward! Lend a lug to this!” said the tall, strong man with the imperious voice. “There’s a quarter Tirol Eagle wi’ dumplings here. Aw’ll order that!”

“Tirol Eagle wi’ dumplings? Is thör really that?” the third gentleman, a lean little fellow, asked doubtfully.

“Wey aye, of course thör is! When it’s writ heor!” the tall man explained condescendingly.

“Aw’ve nivvor eaten that!” the fat little man shook his head disapprovingly.

“Aye, aw believe that!” the tall man said, incensed. “Isn’t this the first time ye’ve sniffed around wi’ yer neb in the mountains? There’s still a great deal, me lad, ye’ve got te larn!”

“Gan’ canny, gan’ canny, divvn’t puff yersel’ up!” the third man said good-naturedly. “Ye’re in Tirol for the forst time as weel!”

“Aw am that! Aw divvn’t dispute that at aall. But aw trust mesel te come through on me own, me lad. Aw trust mesel te git te knaa the land an’ the people an’ the customs an’ habits, lads. Believe ye me!” the strong man said boastfully.

Franz Lauterbacher stepped on my foot. His nose, which looked like a bulb in his face, glowed dark-red with malice and spite. In the meantime, the waitress came with the wine.

“Have the gen’lemen chosen yet?” she asked.

“We hev indeed!” The tall man was still holding the menu in his hand

as he now turned towards Katie. “Bring iz this scran² heor: Tirol Eagle wi’ dumplings!”

“What?” asked Katie.

“This scran heor, aw said! A Quarter Tirol Eagle!” said the tall man, slowly emphasising each word.

“Does it taste lush?” asked the little fat man.

“A kind o’ national dish, aw tek’ it?” the third man inquired.

“We don’t ’ave that!” Katie said shortly, having only half listened.

Outside in the garden there were impatient cries and raps for her.

“Ye divvn’t hev it?” The tall man knit his brow. “Then why’ve ye writ it on the menu?”

“Yes, yes,” Katie cried out into the garden. “I’ll be right there!” And as she ran away, she cried to the foreigners, “Youse’ll just ’ave to choose summat else!”

“Nah, what a scorvy trick!” complained the tall man.

“They’ll just hev run oot!” remarked the third man, shrugging his shoulders.

“Run oot? Then it has te be crossed oot!” said the tall man indignantly.

“Ah, leave it!” the fat man said placatingly. “Let’s just eat summat else!”

“Ah’m not ganning te stand for this kind o’ thing!” the tall man cried in a raised voice. “What’s writ on the menu must be brought te the table!”

² Food.

Ye understand me?”

Now the opportunity had come for my friend Lautenbacher to cut into the conversation. “The gentleman is quite right!” he said, having turned towards the tall man. “One shouldn’t put up with that!”

“Isn’t that so?” The tall man nodded benevolently to my friend. “Aw’ll caal the host hear!”

“That won’t do you any good!” Lauterbacher said in a very friendly voice. Then he mysteriously added: “The people here just don’t want to let you have the food!”

“Indeed? Ye think so?” said the tall man, interested. All the three men at the next table now turned towards us and listened expectantly to Lauterbacher.

“I don’t just think, but I know it!” my friend declared with certainty.

“Eh! An’ why, if aw may ask?” said the tall man.

“Why, for the simple reason that it’s actually only a dish for locals!” explained Lauterbacher.

“Wey, what’s it daeing on the menu then?” asked the fat little man.

“Is it a lush dish?” inquired the third man.

“You bet!” My friend clicked his tongue. “You have to eat it! A dish like that is found only here in the Tirol!”

“Eh! Well, was aw reet agyen?” asked the tall man, pleased as Punch.

“Weel! What good does that dee me, if aw cannit git it!” said the fat man.

“Ye shall git it, me son!” the tall man comforted him, tapping him

benevolently on the shoulder. "Why shouldn't wuh git what's canny!"

"Aw'll order a Quarter with dumplings an' aal!" the third man declared.

"So three Tirol Eagles!" cried the tall, strong man.

Lauterbacher was all delight. Cordially and obligingly, he gave the foreigners information to all their questions and described to them with great credibility the excellence and the taste of the desired dish. He also revealed to them that he himself had partaken of it half an hour before. Today, the eagle was especially juicy and cooked to a rare tenderness.

When the waitress returned to the table, the tall man ordered: "Three Tirol Eagles wi' Dumplings!"

Katie opened her eyes wide. They must be "touched," she thought. But out loud, she said, "There's no such dish! We don't 'ave it!"

"Divvn't try te fool iz!" the tall man said, sternly. "If it's writ on the menu, ye hev it!"

"Nah! Certainly not!" Katie protested, looking in astonishment from the one to the other.

"Ye hev it, aw say!" the tall man continued in a raised voice.

"Just ye come heor, me lass," said the fat little man. "What's yer nyem?"

"Katie."

"Noo, Katie, can ye read?"

"Yes."

"Well, then read this!" He triumphantly held the menu out to her and waved it about before her eyes.

Katie threw a fleeting glance at the menu and then remarked, "I'll go an' ask in the kitchen!" and she hurriedly disappeared.

"Ye see!" my friend said in triumph. "Noo ye'll git it!"

"Us are varry obliged te ye!" the tall man bowed in gratitude.

Shortly afterwards, Katie brought a pickled hen in a bowl with dumplings as a side-dish. The three foreigners surveyed the dish with distrust.

"Is that supposed te be a Tirol Eagle?" the tall man asked.

"Yes!" said Katie.

"It's a bog-standard chicken!" the tall man burst out in indignation.

"Nah, nah, it's an eagle!" the waitress insisted.

"Nat, it's a chicken!" The tall man.

"Ye wanna dupe us!" The fat man.

"Wuh winnit faa for it!" The third man.

"Tek it away!" roared the tall man.

The noise attracted curious listeners from the garden. Katie's face was blood-red all over and she was close to tears.

"Admit it! Ye wanted te tek us in!" yelled the tall man.

"Nah, nah, not at all! But we don't 'ave no eagles, and so the cook gave me the 'en!" said Katie, crying.

"Ye do! Ye hev the eagle!" cried the tall man.

"Nah, not at all!"

"Ye do!" remarked the third man.

"Bring it heor! Reet away!" roared the tall man in his powerful voice.

Katie disappeared, as quickly as she could, with the hen.

“Hey – I think it’s wise that we go now,” my friend Lauterbacher softly nudged me. The crowd in the garden had caused the host to come rushing over. During the following exchange, my friend and I unobtrusively mingled with the curious onlookers so we could slip away at the right time.

The host sought to placate the foreigners. But that did not do the slightest bit of good.

“What kind o’ a country is this! Why, it’s like bein’ in Russia!” the tall man complained.

“An outrageous, mean trick!” “An infamous protection racket!” the two others seconded.

“But gentlemen...” The host.

“Whisht!” the tall man barked at him.

“Well, I must say!” the host interrupted.

“Ye’ve nowt te say! Ye hev te gie us what’s on the menu!” the tall man yelled in a rage.

“We wanna Tirol Eagle wi’ dumplings!” the fat little man shouted in fury.

“Gentlemen, if you will not behave yourselves here, then I must request you to leave at once!” cried the host.

“What?” the third man now roared at him. “Not git any Tirol Eagle wi’ dumplings, an’ then git chucked oot intiv the bargain! Damn an’ blast it!” and the third man gave the table a furious thump that rattled the glasses.

The host seemed to be considering if he was having to deal with escapees from the lunatic asylum or with exceedingly tipsy tourists. In the end he appeared to be of the latter opinion and sharply declared: “It would

perhaps be wiser for the gentlemen to sleep off their intoxication than to kick up a row and make stupid jokes here!”

“What? Row an’ jokes?” roared the tall man, whose face had gone purple with rage.

“Aw’ll gie ye a joke! Poliss!³ Where’s a poliss?” we heard him cry. Then we disappeared.

It was better that way. Later, there was a regular punch-up because of the Quarter Tirol Eagle with Dumplings. The host and the house-servant finally chucked out the three furious tourists with the help of several sympathetic guests. The matter was also said to have a legal epilogue, in which the menu with the Quarter Tirol Eagle played an important role as *corpus delicti*.

The actual wrongdoer, however, has not been discovered up to the present day. My friend still feels as happy as a white hare whenever he remembers the affair.

³ Policeman.