

Ottavio Emilio Linati c.1820 – 1885

Newspaper reports extracted from the British Newspaper Archive

PECULIAR CASE OF ALLEGED FRAUD. At Marylebone Police-court yesterday, Otavio Linati, 70, calling himself Prince Borghese, and residing at Chester Terrace, Eaton Square, was brought up on a warrant by Chief Inspector Hagan, of Scotland Yard, charged with obtaining by means of false pretences the sum of 20s. from the Rev. Lord Archibald Douglas, Roman Catholic priest, of St. Vincent House, Harrow Road. The Rev. Lord stated that on Oct. 23 the Prisoner called on him, and represented he was Prince Borghese. They had a long conversation lasting for nearly two hours, during which they talked upon general topics, and the prisoner appeared to him to be a svery well informed and was evidently intimately acquainted with the city of Rome and the country around. The Prisoner asked him if he knew the Borghese Palace, and replied that he did not. Towards the end of their conversation the Prisoner asked him to dine with him on the following evening, he declined that, as he had an engagement, but promised to have luncheon with him. He then intimated that he had run to the end of his money, and should be much obliged if he could lend him some until the following day, when the Princess and his daughters would return. Prosecutor's suspicion was aroused by the suggestion, but on the faith of the representation made by the prisoner he lent him £1. He afterwards found he had been imposed upon. Next day he sent to Westbourne Park Villas, Bayswater, to see if the prisoner resided there, as in course of conversation with a friend he had found that a person of the prisoner's description had imposed on him, and then he ascertained that he had been defrauded and at once communicated with the police. Mr. Marsham: You let him have the money on the faith of his representation that he was Prince Borghese? Lord Douglas : Yes, I did. Mr. Marsham: Have you found out he is not ? Lord A. Douglas: I have no proof that not, but the officer knows something about it. The Prisoner denied saying that he was Prince Linati. What he said was that he was related to him. Chief Inspector Hagan said he met the Prisoner in Chester Square at seven o'clock on Monday, and, stopping him, asked him if his name was Prince Borghese. He replied, No,' and when asked what was his name he said Linati. Witness read the warrant him, and said he knew nothing about it. He was then conveyed to the Harrow Road Police Station, where, on being searched, was found Italian passport, dated February 8, 1872, bearing the name Count Otavio Linati. When arrested, the prisoner said he was not Prince Borghese, but was a brother of Count Linati, of Parma. The prisoner was further charged with obtaining £1 from the Rev. Charles J. Moncrief Smyth, Roman Catholic priest. When asked if he belonged to the family of Count Linati of Parma, he said, Yes, he is my brother. On the officer stating that there were numerous complaints about the prisoner, he was remanded in custody for completion of enquiries.

Linati said, I am Borghese. the course of conversation the prisoner said he had taken house at Putney and furnished it an expense of £1,300, and intended attending the church at which prosecutor ministered. In common courtesy he asked the prisoner to lunch with him, and he accepted the invitation. While at the table prosecutor intimated that he wanted to build a church, but had not got any funds. After luncheon they inspected the site selected for the church, and the prisoner said, You may count on me for £2,000 towards the building, but don't let my name be known, nor erect a tablet announcing the fact. Then the prisoner remarked that he was afraid he was too late to get cheque changed at Messrs. Coutts, his bankers, and asked if prosecutor would advance him £10 until Monday, when would return the money and an instalment of the promised gift. Witness had not the £10, but lent him £1, and had not seen him since until now. Chief-Inspector Hagan said many persons besides those in Court had complained of the prisoner, and was committed for trial.

...report of a case which came before the Marylebone police-court last week, I should say that no decently educated member of the criminal classes ought ever to be hard-up for a sovereign, so long as there are people in the world so easily gulled as the Rev. Charles Smyth, of South Fulham. This gentleman was favoured with a call from an Italian, who called himself Prince Borghese, obligingly stayed to luncheon, promised a donation of two thousand pounds to Mr. Smyth's new church, and ...

He concluded by asking the favour of cash for a cheque, but the Rev. gentleman only advanced him a sovereign until he was better prepared with cash. Chief Inspector Hagen, of Scotlandyard, stated that the prisoner was known to him as a writer of begging letters, who had swindled the lady superiors of several convents.

...He called upon the Rev. Lord A. Douglas and the Rev. C. J. Smith, and represented himself as a Roman prince. The first invited him to luncheon, and subsequently lent him a sovereign; the second advanced him sovereign on the security of a cheque. In his way, the Signor was as lavish as that other Italian prince of whom playgoers have heard a great deal. One of his highest flights of fancy was to promise Mr. Smith £2,000 towards the building of a new church. In the dock at the Middlesex Sessions he appeared as a shabby adventurer, who maintained himself when out of gaol by writing begging letters. In consideration of Linati's age—the hoary impostor has passed his 70th year—the Assistant Judge merely sentenced him to prison....

...a writer of begging letters, who had swindled the lady superiors of several convents. The prisoner, instead of being Prince Borghese the son of an Italian glazier. Taking into consideration the prisoner's advanced age. the Assistant-Judge passed the lenient sentence of six months' imprisonment....

A HOARY IMPOSTOR. The experience of Octavio Linati, alias Prince Borghese, shows that after all it is still easy to obtain money if only you are believed to be well off. Signor Linati called upon the Rev. Lord A. Douglas and the Rev. C. J. Smith, and....