

## THE ROMANCE OF KARL MAY.

Of the same stuff of which "Les Misérables" was made is a case which recently came to trial in Charlottenburg, Germany, where Karl May, a wealthy man who had in some ways earned the names of philanthropist and author, sued a well known labor leader for libel in that he had denounced him as an ex-convict. The defendant proved his case.

The trial developed that Karl May, the philanthropist, was Karl May, the brigand whose exploits had kept the Austro-German frontier in terror for years. He developed criminal instincts while yet in school, and for thefts and burglary he served a prison sentence. Later he was a convict for four years. On his release his robberies covered all of southern Saxony, and he developed great criminal ingenuity escaping arrest with wonderful luck.

Gathering about him a band of freebooters, he established his headquarters in the mountains on the Austrian frontier, from whence he descended to raid towns, railroad trains, and noblemen's castles. Soldiers sent to capture him were unable to find his hidden lair and became lost in the fastnesses. Peasants were immune from robbery and warned the brigands of the soldiers' approach. Once, however, the latter had the band surrounded, but May captured a sentry and, donning his uniform, passed through the ranks and escaped, while his band retired to a cave which the military had overlooked. On another occasion May and his lieutenant were at an inn when two troopers rode up to capture them. The robbers jumped through the window and rode off on the troopers' horses.

But the chief's luck deserted him. He was taken and served eight years in prison. On his release in 1885 he disappeared, and when more than fifteen years later several books dealing with social and philanthropic subjects appeared with the name of Karl May as their author, no one thought of him as being the brigand of Saxony. These books had a large sale, and the author prospered in other ways, for he came to be rated as wealthy. He headed subscriptions for various charities and helped movements to ameliorate the condition of the poor.

The animus of the labor leader in exposing the former history of the philanthropist is not told, but his revelations were complete. He even proved that May had published a sensational romance embodying some of his adventures as a brigand. Trusting that time and his later reputation would protect him, May brought suit for libel, and when he lost out he collapsed and attempted his life.

Now that the nature of criminal impulse is being studied scientifically, the case of May doubtless will prove an important chapter in modern criminology. It may be a case of old fashioned "regeneration," or an up to date case of dual personality. Its romance at least is unquestionable.