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THE COUNTERSTROKE

By AMBROSE PRATT

Author of "Vigorous Daunt, Billionaire."

(Continued.)

Cressingham looked him straight in the eyes. "Very well, I give them to your Eminence to sell, and distribute the proceeds among the poor of Naples."

The Cardinal got to his feet and emitted again, but this time his smile was really kind and his eyes were soft and luminous. "Well said, my son," he murmured. "I shall accept the trust." He took the jewels. "The Count d'Attila is a man, and so must needs possess a soul, however black with sin it be; a soul perhaps that may be saved. If all his wealth is so expended, even though it be in the hands of a man who should see that his punishment hereafter may not be thereby softened in some way! At any rate, the gold of the wicked is accursed and can only be purged of the evil which it has occasioned when it is given to the poor, for thus out of evil arises good. All theologians have thought thus and I think as they."

The man's face was transfigured as he said these words, and it was impossible to doubt his earnestness. He resumed presently, addressing himself to Cressingham and Oeltjen: "You, Count von Oeltjen, are a Catholic; listen then to me. You, my Lord Francis Cressingham, are of another faith, but what I am about to say should not offend you. You will presently see forth on a difficult and dangerous mission, a mission to which the Holy Mother Church accords its blessing because its object is entirely pure and good and noble, in that it seeks not only to save the lives of kings, who after all are men, and in the sight of God lovely as the lowliest, but it aims for the saving of men's souls from sin. Our Divine Redeemer when on earth gave to the disciples whom He loved a form and discipline of prayer which He taught them to use as the means whereby they might best approach the throne of the Most High when most in need of blessings. In that prayer, He said these words: 'Leave not in our temptation, O Lord, my children, behold then the part of your mission, which is chiefly blessed. The hearts of all men are weak and subject to temptation, therefore Jesus Christ in His divine wisdom taught us to beseech God to save us from temptation. If God prospers you, my children, you will be His humble instruments in saving countless hundreds of souls from the ways and opportunities of sin. I point out these things in order that you may approach your task, not in a spirit of adventure, not with feelings of hatred and vengeance in your hearts, but reverently, thankfully, devoutly and yet bravely, as God's servants should at all times, about the accomplishment of duties which they are given to perform. Above all, I exhort you to prepare yourselves, to cleanse by prayer and by sincere repentance your own hearts from sin before you set forth, for thus you will deserve success, and offendments to deserve success, is to condemn them. My children, my little sermon is finished with the exception of my blessing which I shall now give you."

Oeltjen at once fell on his knees before the prelate, and Cressingham, after a second's hesitation, followed suit, feeling in spite of himself that he was in presence of a man whose blessing could do him no harm and one whose mind was so lofty and spiritual that he could kneel to him without experiencing any loss of dignity. The Cardinal made the sign of the cross above their heads, and murmured: "Benedicite, Benedicite! Dominus vobiscum!" "Deum spiritum tuo," answered Oeltjen.

His Eminence gravely motioned them to arise, and turned to Perigord. "Let us depart," he said. Perigord drew from his pocket a letter which he gave to Cressingham. "These are your instructions, my Lord; you will start at noon tomorrow."

"But the men, the officers?"

"Are all on board and asleep long ere this."

"In that case we could start at once."

"You will start at noon, tomorrow. Read now your instructions. Good-bye, my Lord."

Perigord and the Cardinal then shook him gravely by the hand, and taking Oeltjen with them left the cabin. Cressingham immediately tore open the letter and read as follows:

"You will start at noon of July 30 from Naples, and proceed at half speed on the ordinary route of vessels proceeding to Gibraltar until you pass Sardinia. You will then steam full speed due north, keeping Sardinia and Corsica at least fifty miles to starboard until the latter island is rounded, after which you will be at liberty to proceed as best you deem fit to Attila. The manner of attack on the objective point is left entirely at your own discretion. But having captured the place you will take prisoners all its inhabitants and secure them in the hold of the Sea Hawk. You will then carefully search the island and castle, and remove therefrom to the yacht all books, papers and documents whatsoever that may be found, also any treasure, specie or other valuables. You will demolish any printing presses or machinery which may be discovered, but carefully preserve and transport all blocks and letterpress in use. You will entirely destroy by fire, if necessary, the cable station and all telegraphic instruments, but preserve all records of messages if any such exist. Should you be interrupted at your work by the arrival of enemies, you are given discretionary powers to act in such emergency in any way you may judge best. The Count's silver boat, engines and appliances

will remove to the yacht intact. After the castle has been ransacked you will destroy it by dynamite; you will also as far as possible wreck the tunnel opening on the stone boat-head, and the boat-head itself by the same means. After everything here detailed has been carefully effected you will return with your prisoners at full speed to Naples, where your arrival will be anxiously expected. God bless and prosper you."

"PERIGORD."

Cressingham conned this document over until he had got its contents by heart. Then it struck him that as he was in command of an important and possibly very dangerous expedition, he might as well avail himself of the perquisites of his position. He rang a bell and a steward entered the room on instant.

"A bottle of champagne, please; your best."

"Large or small, my Lord?"

"H'm, large, please. Where is my cabin?"

"Through that door, my Lord."

"Good, bring two glasses, please, and go and the Count von Oeltjen."

"He has gone ashore, my Lord."

"Oh! indeed!" This was news to Cressingham, but he did not cancel his order for all that; and when an hour afterwards he retired to sleep the champagne bottle was—well, a dead marine.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Supper Party.

Miss Francine Elliott was upon the high road to recovery when Cressingham made his escape from the island of Attila. She had been carefully attended during her illness by the Count's negro physician, who, although a person without university qualifications, proved to be the possessor of much skill in the practice of medicine. She found nothing to complain of in her treatment during the time of her illness. The old Count seemed to have discovered a trying for her, and although he frequently showed himself impatient and crochety, he was on the whole kind, and paid her many little attentions.

Madame Vivella she never saw except at a distance, but Desire came often to visit her, and at least one hour every evening was spent very pleasantly by the girl in trying on the various articles of Miss Elliott's wardrobe, a wardrobe which the Count had provided for her from Italy shortly after her arrival on the island. Desire had grown very fond of her new friend, and was weary tired of asking questions about that wonderful London which had so long been the El Dorado of her dreams, and which she now eagerly looked forward to visiting at no very distant date.

Each morning Desire anxiously searched the bootbox for the red cloth which was to be the signal of her friend's return, but the days passed monotonously, and no sign came. Francine became well enough at last to walk unaided, and it was then her dearest pleasure to climb to the look-out and spend hours gazing out over the blue water, longing to be the first to discover sight of the vessel which might contain her lover and the hope of freedom. Many steamers and ships she saw pass across the horizon, but they all passed, and with each her hopes grew smaller and smaller. She remembered that a strong wind had blown on the night of Cressingham's departure, and Desire had described to her the trail of the ship which had borne him out to sea. It was hard to continue hoping on in such circumstances, but it was harder to resign all hope; and although in some moods she despaired, the very fact that so many steamers and other vessels passed the island inspired her with confidence that he might have after all been saved.

The hours of sunshine and balmy breezes that she devoted to the summit of the mountain meanwhile completed her recovery, and each day she grew more her old self, more established in health, and consequently more beautiful. The Count d'Attila watched her restoration with undisguised pleasure, and commenced to pay her many compliments on her altered appearance. It afforded him a species of cynical amusement to think that she expected deliverance, for her visits to the mountain top were interpreted by him correctly, but not aware of the full extent of her hopes and their foundation, he did not attempt to restrain her liberty, and indeed was once the companion of her excursion, having himself carried to the look-out in a palanquin.

On July 29 he invited her to supper with him, and in such a manner that she was constrained to accept the invitation. Madame Vivella and Desire were of the party, and she found herself sitting on the Count's right hand, opposite her father's murderer. It was a quaint situation, full of horror to the girl, but it would have profited her nothing to rebel against the sending of the fates, and recognizing her helplessness, she forced herself to resignation.

(To be continued.)

WANT CHANGES IN GAME LAWS

Fredericton, N. B., Dec. 21.—The annual meeting of the New Brunswick Guides' Association was held at the York hotel here this afternoon, and was well attended. Reports were submitted in which it was shown that the past season was a very successful one. The number of non-resident sportsmen who visited the province was larger than previous years, and a majority of them were successful in securing game. The elections of officers for the ensuing year resulted as follows:

Honorary president, L. B. Knight, St. John; president, W. H. Allen, Penniac; vice-president, David Mandersville, Northumberland; secretary-treasurer, R. F. Allen, Fredericton; executive committee, Adam Moore, Arthur Pringle, Hiram Mandersville, Henry Braithwaite, George E. Armstrong; committee on membership, T. H. Pringle, W. T. Griffin, John Moore.

A resolution was passed recommending the government to amend the game law, making a separate license fee for deer, to apply to both residents and non-residents. It was decided to make a game exhibit at the Sportsmen's Show to be held at New York in March; and a committee was appointed to secure, if possible, the cooperation of the local government, New Brunswick Tourist Association, and Fredericton Tourist Association.

This evening the guides and the local sportsmen held a pleasant reunion at Odd-fellows' hall.

Murray W. Shaw, of Memramcook, was in the city yesterday.

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Its tone, quality, construction and architectural beauty are unexcelled. For good music, for accompanying the solo voice or chorus of song, great artists all over the world are loud in its praises. And yet it is a Canadian instrument—perhaps the highest exponent of Canadian industry.

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Mrs. James Jardine and Miss Alice Jardine, of Rexton, Kent county, left last evening for Montreal.



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Public Notice

The undersigned having been appointed by the Common Council of the City of St. John, a committee of the said Council for conducting the sale of the Fisheries on the Eastern side of the Bay, River and Harbor of St. John, for the ensuing year, pursuant to law, hereby give notice that the Fishery lots along the east side of the Bay, River and Harbor, and all the Fisheries heretofore enjoyed and possessed by the inhabitants on the East side of the harbor, with those in and surrounding Navy Island, and also the Fishery lots on the Western side of the harbor, will be sold at Public Auction on TUESDAY, the FIRST DAY OF JANUARY NEXT, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, at the old City Court House, in the City of St. John, for the fishing season of the ensuing year, to end on the 15th day of December, 1907.

Dated the 12th day of December, 1906.

C. DERTON LOCKHART, JOHN M. GOLDRICK, J. R. M. BAXTER, ISAIAH W. HOLDER, HENRY H. PICKETT, JOHN W. VANWART.

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