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## THE COUNTERSTROKE

By AMBROSE PRATT

Author of "Vigorous Daunt, Billionaire."

(Continued.)

"It was the conception of a Satan!"

stammered Perigord.

The Count nodded and smiled as if a compliment had been addressed to him.

"Ah, well, my son, in spite of everything, you have at last beaten me. In my old age you have bested me. The son of Bosa Gracci has conquered his father. The son of no other living man could have done it. I am proud of you, my son!"

The words were uttered in a manner of such bombastic and fantastical conceit that they were really ludicrous, but Perigord shuddered at such praise.

"Evil man!" he muttered hoarsely; "why have you told me these dreadful things?"

"It is cold! You are shivering. Can you not see, my son?"

"For God's sake call me anything but that! No, I see nothing."

The old man laughed grimly; then snarled out: "To think that I am beaten by such a blunt-witted creature! I who, at the age of a hundred and three years, have still a keener intellect than you, indeed than any living man!" he added vaingloriously.

"Answer me!" said Perigord.

"I shall, since time passes swiftly, swiftly. Every second is precious to the aged, my son, precious as gold. I have told you what I have told you for two reasons: firstly, because I hoped that the news would hurt you—cursed dog that you are, fool that I was not to strangle you the day that you were born!"

The Count's eyes glowed for a second with a fire of splotchy rage, as he spat out this sudden obprobrium, but quickly calmed himself resumed in a manner of superlative sweetness:

"The second reason, my dear son, is that I wished you to arrange all the details of my escape from this scurvy gang of yours who have me by the heels. You see, I am old and feeble, so cannot help myself. I dislike troubling you, but after all, to whom should a man look for assistance if not to his own offspring?"

"You expect me to help you to escape?" said Perigord.

The Count's thin lips curled scornfully.

"Be content with having ruined me; do you wish to make yourself a pariah?"

Perigord's face went livid, then ghastly white, from the various emotions that were raging in his bosom. "Not that," he muttered brokenly, "my God, not that!"

"I am rich," said the Count. "Assist me to escape, and I shall make you wealthy beyond your wildest dreams. The gold that you have taken from me I do not want. I know it is not for you; your council will claim it, greedy rogues that they are; kings are all greedy, and your share will be only small. But in Paris, in Vienna, Naples, Berlin, vast funds of mine are deposited. When I am free I shall share these with you—when I am free!"

"You will never be free—you are mad to expect it," growled Perigord. "Tomorrow at daylight you must die; even I cannot save you; it is decreed."

"Nonsense, boy, you must save me."

"Ah, let me think!" Perigord started abruptly to his feet, his hand pressed tightly to his side.

"Yes, think—think of the wealth that will be yours if you assist me. Only thus can it be yours, for without me you can get none of it. I vow I would rather benefit the banks and let them keep the gold for ever if you should prove so cursèd a son as to let me die. Think, Valdemar, it is your father who appeals to you, your father, boy."

"Your life has been too evil; you are not fit to live."

"I shall repent, for I am too old to engage in further wickedness. Assist me to escape, and in some secret corner of the world I shall spin out my few remaining days. Watch over me, guard me as you will, you will find that I shall do as I say, that my repentance shall be sincere. I swear to you, for a long while now I have felt remorseful of the past; you would not have me perish in my sins, unshriven, my son? Besides, if you are kind, when I die all that I have shall be yours."

The old man had assumed an expression of sorrow, of profound humility, but

## A COUGH SYRUP

that will treat a cold in a satisfactory manner must be soothing—warming—loosen the cough, and contain neither opium nor morphine.

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immediately relieves the throat irritation, the tightness across the chest, and makes a quick and perfect cure. It's guaranteed safe for the smallest child. Try it. 25c. at all druggists. Dr. Scott White Liniment Co., Ltd., St. John, N. B., and Chelmsford, Mass., manufacturers of the celebrated Dr. Harn's Dyspepsia Cure. \$1 bottle cures. Write for pamphlet.

frame was troubled and the sweat poured from him as he tried to rise from the ground on which he lay. It seemed to him that the Almighty had imposed on him a burden too great for mortal man to bear. He had devoted his life to a mission which, from the moment of its conception, he had believed God-inspired and God-protected. For a moment he dared to dispute the issue and to rail at his Creator for so treacherously rewarding his years of service and self-sacrifice.

The moment passed, and he expiated the blasphemy with a prayer so heartfelt and entirely earnest that his spirit became at length filled with a species of ecstasy, and he rose to his feet peaceful and purgatorial, believing that Heaven had thus sent its answer to his cry.

Twilight had already drawn its mantle round the earth, and he descended the steps in the gloaming marvelling to find how softly beautiful the world appeared, under its awning of awakening stars, whose western folds were still flushed faintly with a tender amber radiance, which shot in spiral streams across the sky and gently touched the east with gold.

He drew fresh comfort from the glory of the heavens, fresh purpose from the peace on sea and land. His first act on arriving at the beach was to seek out Cressingham and Oeltjen.

To the latter he said gently: "Go, my friend, to the yacht, and bring back with you the priest and the five gentlemen whom you will find awaiting word from me."

When Oeltjen had gone, he said to Cressingham: "You, my Lord, I desire to take a message to our prisoner. Tell him that my plans are altered, and he must die within an hour. Should he ask for me, say that I shall not go. Tell him further that a priest is here who will confess him if he wills."

Cressingham departed, and presently entered the Count's tent. The old man was still seated before the now empty champagne bottle, and his face was flushed, his eyes glittered feverishly in the candle light.

"Ah!" he cried. "Where is Perigord?"

"He has sent me in his place to warn you to prepare yourself for death. In an hour you will be shot. I am further to inform you that a priest is in attendance, should you require his services."

"I must see Perigord. Beg him to visit me. I shall not detain him for a moment."

"He refuses to see you again, sir."

"Refuses! my son dares to refuse his father's last wish on earth! Tell him that I, Bosa Gracci, his father, command his immediate presence here! Don't stare, sir; go and do my bidding!"

The old man's imperiousness was a sight magnificent to witness; Cressingham thought him raving, but nevertheless, much impressed, he bowed and conveyed the message word for word to Perigord, adding, however, apologetically: "He must have turned crazy, sir."

Perigord smiled sadly and answered: "Would that it were as you suppose. He is not crazy. I am the Count d'Attala's son. Until this day I knew naught of it, but he has crushingly convinced me."

"And yet—you will kill him?" stammered Cressingham aghast.

"I shall do my duty," replied the other with calm and simple dignity. "Kindly return and say to the Count these words: 'Your son has made his peace with God. He implores you to do likewise, for in an hour you will die.'"

The Count's face on his comprehending this message became transfigured with venomous and reckless rage. He hurled at the young man a perfect storm of angry curses, refusing utterly to credit the inexorable logic of Perigord's determination, and finally became calm when Cressingham threatened to reimpose the gag. Then he fell to whining and miserably entreating his enemy to enlist in his favor and endeavor to soften his son's stubborn heart.

Cressingham listened for awhile, but becoming at last utterly disgusted and a little impatient at the sight of a white head stooped so low, he retreated and sought out Perigord, that he might obtain permission to remove Desire as far as possible from the scene of execution, so that she might not witness her grandfather's death.

Perigord at once consented, and immediately Oeltjen returned from the yacht he was bidden to take Desire to the castle on a pretended errand to the cable room, and so detain her there beyond the allotted time.

Six gentlemen followed Oeltjen ashore from the yacht. One was the Cardinal Carnito, and to him Perigord disclosed the relationship which existed between the Count and himself.

The Cardinal was deeply shocked, but after a few minutes' reflection he unreservedly commended his friend's determination, and expressed his own intention of at once approaching the Count with the pious idea of attempting to prepare his soul for death.

Five minutes after he had entered the old man's tent the watchers heard a scream of pain followed by wild peals of laughter. They rushed forward, but before they reached the place the Cardinal emerged, his face horribly cut and profusely bleeding.

The Count d'Attala, with fiendish cunning, had pretended to be grateful for the prelate's kindness, and lured him into unsuspecting close companionship; then when the Cardinal was completely off his guard he had attacked him with the champagne bottle, the only weapon he possessed, and the laughter which Perigord and Cressingham had heard was his paeon of triumph at the success of his plan.

By the time the prelate's wounds had been attended to, the allotted hour had expired, and at Perigord's command the Count was carried forth to the open beach, and at once placed opposite the five Italian gentlemen who stood in line, their cocked revolvers in hand, awaiting the word.

The prevailing darkness concealed the victim's face; but to render the aim of the firers sure a lantern was placed behind his back upon the sand. There followed a long silence which the Cardinal was the first to break, for Perigord was again in the throes of spiritual agony, and he desperately fought for strength to utter the terrible command which was to hurl his father to perdition.

"Bosa Gracci," said the Cardinal in a low, trembling voice, "I implore you to confess your sins, to repent before you die."

The Count d'Attala chuckled and jeered: "Ha! ha! there's a sweet Christian for you; I've already snatched both his cheeks, and he implores me."

The Cardinal fell upon his knees and cried out with a humility that touched Cressingham to the heart: "My son, I implore you to save your immortal soul while there is time. It is the eleventh hour, but even yet true repentance may prevail. Did not Christ pardon the thieves upon the Cross? My son, relent, relent. Trust to the divine mercy of the Redeemer, let your heart be touched by His supreme, eternal love. He lived and died to save you; will you let His work, His sacrifice, His sufferings for you go all in vain?" He passed.

The Count retorted: "Stare, I could listen to you so much more comfortably with a cigarette between my lips. You perhaps have one about you?"

The Cardinal got slowly to his feet. "Foolish man, you dare to mock at me, about to die!"

[To be continued.]

## Daily Fashion Hints for Times Readers.



WHERE ELEGANCE AND COMFORT COMBINE.

The shortwaisted Empire effects, that are so quaintly charming when worn by a slender erect figure are used to advantage in the garments that signalize the boudoir and the afternoon tea hour. Here a richness and elaboration is permitted which is deemed somewhat out of place where garments of a more decided negligee type are concerned. Crepe de Chine is deservedly a favorite with the makers of tea gowns, for there is scarcely any other weave on the counters that responds to the draper's art so readily. And, in addition, it does show up to delightful advantage each and every little attempt at trimming or elaboration that may be displayed. One of the new shades in yellow, a faint sulphur tint, is shown in the illustration, and on this a creamy Valenciennes entre-deux is used in straight and angular lines. A



BLOUSE OF NET AND LACE.

An easily made little blouse of white net is shown in the illustration, the ruffles being made of narrow ruffles of selvaige net, headed by a strip of narrow satin ribbon gathered through the centre. The upper part of the waist was tucked in groups, and there was a yoke of heavy Irish crochet lace under the square tabs, under which a little tie of green velvet was slipped. The ends of the tie were finished by tassels and the top of the collar was finished by narrow folds of the velvet.

## NEW BRUNSWICK

### MATTERS

Messrs. Tweedie, Pugsley and Emmerson Interview Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

Ottawa, Jan. 4.—Premier Tweedie, Dr. Pugsley and Hon. Mr. Emmerson had an interview with Sir Wilfrid Laurier this afternoon on New Brunswick matters. It is believed various appointments and kindred questions were discussed.

The dominion government has decided to put an export duty on electric power. When parliament re-assembles Hon. A. B. Aylesworth will introduce a bill providing that no company can export power out of Ontario without a license. These licenses will be granted under regulations by the governor-in-council.

The government will have the power to place an export duty on power, with a provision that any company that is supplying Canadian consumers with power at reasonable prices may be relieved from paying this export duty.

At present there are a couple of Niagara power companies that export all they produce to Buffalo. In future they will have to supply a certain percentage to Canadian consumers or face an export duty which will be practically prohibitive.

Another Niagara company supplies Toronto with power and, of course, it will escape the export duty.

This restriction will not only keep Canadian power to Canadians but to some extent will prevent the desecration of Niagara.

At today's meeting of the cabinet two county judges were appointed for British Columbia. John R. Brown takes the place of Judge Clements in Yale and Kootenay, and Fred Calder, of Ashcroft, succeeds Judge Cornwall in Cariboo.

The Transcontinental Railway commission is advertising for tenders to be received at Ottawa at noon 14th February for the following sections of the transcontinental:

(1)—From Moncton westward 50 miles.

(2)—From Grand Falls westerly 62 miles.

(3)—From the Quebec bridge easterly 150 miles.

(4)—From a point 150 miles west of the Quebec bridge to Weymouth east 45 miles.

(5)—From a point about eight miles west of Abitibi River Crossing easterly for a distance of 150 miles.

Each tender must have an accepted cheque as follows:

Section 1, \$75,000; section 2, \$90,000; section 3, \$225,000; section 4, \$75,000, and section 5, \$225,000.

Slaughter House Commissioners Meet

At a meeting of the slaughter house commissioners yesterday afternoon the by-laws were amended so as to give after May 1, the board more complete control over the teamsters who haul meat from the slaughter houses to the city market.

Complaints have been heard that meat is not covered while in transit and that the vehicles themselves were not always all that should be. A license fee of \$1 a year will be charged in future to all teamsters and these men will be under obligations to keep their vehicles up to the satisfaction of the commissioners under pain of \$40 fine or cancellation of their license. Under the old regulation the license of the slaughter house or the party who did the actual hauling was supposed to furnish the vehicle.

The amended regulation reads as follows:

"Any person desiring to convey meat from any public slaughter house by carriage or other vehicle to the city market or elsewhere must fill up and file with the commissioners an application in the form or to the effect of B hereunto annexed, and in filling up and signing such form all blanks must be fully and truthfully filled up according to the true intent thereof.

The license fee for vehicles shall be \$1 a year, beginning May 14 in each year. Failure to keep such vehicles clean and

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