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THE

COUNTERSTROKE

By AMBROSE PRATT

Author of "Vigorous Daunt, Billionaire."

(Continued.)

Those awake turned and glanced at the intruders, but with an indifference that was at first startling from its utter unexpectedness. But the reason was soon made manifest. Each movement they made was accompanied by the clanking of iron and a hasty examination informed Cressingham that they were one and all gyved and fettered with the most superlative care, their heavy chains in every case being riveted to ring bolts in the floor. While the gentlemen stood there endeavoring to recover from their astonishment, two men got up slowly to their feet, and after a careless glance into the furnace of the engine, unscrewed a tap and poured into a funnel-shaped opening a quantity of oil from cans which stood within their range of action.

Cressingham's first thought was that these men must be suffering victims, unfortunate creatures whom the cruel Nihilists had possibly kidnapped from their homes, printers, telegraphers, engineers, perhaps of special ability, who had been stolen into such vile slavery, and thenceforth compelled to serve their inhuman taskmasters bitterly against their will. With this idea he started forward to examine them. The slaves did not in any way resent his action; they were too sullen, too indifferent to care; not one showed even a trace of curiosity on seeing so many strange faces so suddenly about him.

The young man, however, was soon disabused of his imaginings, and his kindly intention to immediately release them perished almost as soon as it was born. They possessed, without exception, countenances unmistakably vicious and criminal, and it needed no physiognomist to discern as desperate and abandoned a set of rogues and scoundrels as the gaols of Europe could readily produce in rivalry.

Ten minutes of vigorous and systematic search failed to discover any means of egress from the cavern except the door by which they had entered. Cressingham then gave the word to depart, and they mounted again to the basement, leaving for the time the slaves to their own devices.

There he held a short council of war, and it was arranged that the force should be divided: six should go and reinforce the Count's guard, two should proceed to the look-out, which commanded a complete prospect of the island, four should guard the main entrance to the Castle, and the remaining four, including Cressingham himself, should carefully re-examine the ground floor, with the view to discover an opening which might lead to some secret tunnel into which the Count's remaining servants had probably retreated in order to conceal themselves.

The disposition was immediately effected, and all proceeded to their allotted tasks. Cressingham first visited the Count's bedroom, but everything there was in the same condition that he had left it. The old man lay quietly on his side, trussed up like a fowl, and breathing heavily. Orsini stood beside him with revolver cocked, Vicenzo guarded the door and the bounden prostrate negroes alert and anxious as a fox. Neither had been disturbed nor heard a single alarming sound.

Cressingham tapped heavily upon every panel of the bedroom and library walls, but with the single exception of the door which had admitted his comrades and himself to the apartment, all appeared solid, and resounded dully to his knocking. Leaving the library, he investigated in similar fashion the other sixteen rooms of that floor of the chateau, but no sign of hollow wall or hidden door rewarded his careful search.

By this time he had become horribly anxious for his sweetheart's safety, and commenced to despair of finding her alive. He was on the point of ascending to retest the upper floor, when the two men whom he had despatched to the look-out suddenly returned, their eager faces showing they brought news.

"Well?" said Cressingham excitedly.

One replied: "There are a dozen negroes on the beach and scattered around the bay, my Lord, all hard at work engaged in collecting and burning wreckage."

Like a flash there occurred to the young man the true reason he had been unable to discover the remainder of the Count's attendants. They were no doubt covering up the traces of last night's destructive work.

But that did not explain the disappearance of Miss Elliott and Madame Viyella. He at once ordered his whole force to await the arrival of the negroes, concealing themselves, as well as they could, in the main hall, and secure them immediately on entrance. Then with renewed anxiety he betook himself to the upper floor and resumed his work. In ten minutes he was interrupted by a messenger with the information that one negro had returned as if on an errand to the castle, and had been captured.

Cressingham had by that time seen the hopelessness of further search in that part of the castle, for the walls on the upper story were all above ground, and only one stone thick. It was ridiculous to suppose the existence of any secret passage possible. He suddenly determined to question this negro, and accompanied his comrade to the great hall, where he found the fellow cowering bound upon the floor, displaying the most craven terror. Cressingham ordered his gag to be removed, and standing over him with a cocked revolver, demanded in Italian: "Where are the two ladies who were in this house last night?"

The negro answered with chattering teeth: "Pardon, Excellency, I do not know."

"When did you see them last?"

"Excellency, last night at dinner; they dined with my master, the Prince."

"The Prince!"

"Yes, Excellency, the Prince of Attala."

"You are lying to me. You know where they are. Speak or I shall kill you."

The fellow's black face became grey with fear. "Good, kind Excellency," he wailed, "I dare not tell your Excellency a lie. I know not where they are, I swear it."

The fellow evidently spoke the truth, and Cressingham was bitterly chagrined. After a moment's thought he said: "You came here with a message to your master, is it not so?"

"Yes, Excellency."

"Give it to me; I am your master now."

"Yes, Excellency, good, kind Excellency, I am glad that you are my master, Excellency, I—"

Cressingham cut his shivering protestations short. "The message!" he cried sternly.

"Excellency, the foreman Julius Octavius Anthony discovered that one of the boats is missing, and he ordered me to hasten to my master—pardon, Excellency, my late master—with the tidings; he feared—" The man hesitated.

"Feared what, fool?"

"Excellency, he feared that one or some of the Turks might have survived the explosion and escaped us while we slept."

"Ah! was not this boat secured as usual?"

"Excellency, I fastened it myself; the key has never since left my hands."

"How then could the boat have been taken by the Turk? Is the lock smashed?"

"N—no, Excellency."

"Has any one in the castle another key?"

"Yes, Excellency, the Prince and Signor Desire each have a key."

Cressingham remembered that Desire had the previous night been striving to escape the island in a boat, a boat which had been staved in and sunk after its collision with his launch. But a moment's reflection taught him that it could not have beeen the craft in question, for each of the Count d'Attala's boats was as strong and substantial as the launch itself, and, moreover, it could never have been propelled by a single person at the speed with which the girl had driven hers.

He questioned further at hazard, in order to verify his thought. "There was another boat on the beach last night?"

"Yes, Excellency, the Turkish yacht's skiff."

"What has become of it?"

The man trembled, and shrivelled up as though expecting annihilation, and whined out piteously: "Good, kind Excellency, I do not know."

"It is not on the beach now."

"No, Excellency."

Cressingham turned to his companions and spoke in French: "Gentlemen, if a complete examination of the island fails to reveal the presence of my fiancee, Miss Elliott, and Madame Viyella, we shall know that they have escaped the island in that boat—"

"Hist!" cried one of the men, interrupting suddenly.

In the silence that ensued a noise of footsteps and voices was heard on the path without the great door. Instantly all prepared themselves for a struggle, one man to save time stunning the negro with a violent blow from a revolver butt. Next moment the door opened, and the remaining servants of the Count, weary and dirty from their toil, trooped unsuspiciously into the hall, anxious probably for their breakfast. When all had entered, the gentlemen sprang from their hiding, and threw themselves upon the astonished negroes. Then followed a wild melee of oaths and blows and startled screams, but before many minutes had passed all were bound and helpless, many having surrendered without offering resistance.

"Gentlemen," cried Cressingham, rising, excited and panting from his exertions, "we have accomplished our mission, and bloodlessly—the island of Attala is ours."

Three ringing cheers greeted his words. Cressingham tore from his pocket a small flag, it was the Union Jack, and fastened it upon the scabbard of his sword.

"A volunteer!" he cried, "a volunteer to wave this from the look-out, so that the Sea Hawk may know and enter the harbor without fear."

A dozen hands were raised, but the nearest seized the trophy and hurried to the door. Next second he returned, and said: "My lord, the Sea Hawk is at this moment rounding the point."

"Then," said Cressingham, "to work! Before we breakfast our prisoners must all be shipped, for that is our first duty, and only then can we eat in safety. The Count is now bound and gagged, but he is such a devil that until he is safe aboard the Sea Hawk I shall continue to fear him!"

Two hours afterwards every living creature on the island had been transported to the yacht; Attala was utterly abandoned, and Cressingham and his companions were feted in the cabin of the Sea Hawk, with a magnificent disregard to the cost of Perigord's champagne.

(To be continued.)

Butler and Jewels Disappear

NEW YORK, Jan. 1.— It became known recently that the jewels with which a butler and maid disappeared belonged to Mrs. Jose Vega, wife of a wealthy manufacturer, who lives in No. 234 Central Park West. She is mourning the loss of numerous rings, brooches and ornaments, some of which are heirlooms several hundred years old. The actual value of the articles stolen she places at $4,000, but she declares that she would not have taken ten times that sum for them on account of associations.

Mr. Vega and his wife and little daughter lived at the Hotel Marseilles until this fall, when they moved into an apartment. They had frequent shifts of servants and a month ago engaged Gabriel Hilt as butler and Louise Louys as maid, from a Sixth Avenue employment agency.



GABRIEL HILT

Mrs. Vega did not know until after the vanishing that the two were married. Hilt was a butler of astonishing erudition. He spoke seven languages—French, Italian, German, English, Spanish, Portuguese and modern Greek. The woman spoke three, but included no English in her repertory.

The maid so won the confidence of Mrs Vega that she committed to her care all the keys of the apartment. Hilt and the woman apparently had a bitter quarrel three days before their final departure, and he was away for nearly a day without giving any explanation. He went back, however, on the morning of December 5, while Mrs. Vega was on a shopping tour. When she returned there was no one in the house to open the door. It did not occur to her even then that she had been robbed.

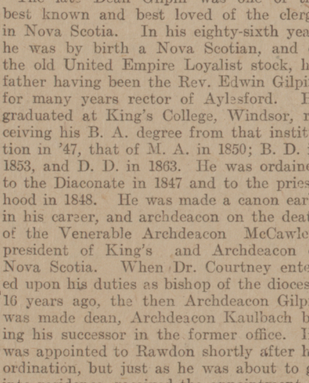
Mr. Vega, when he came home, suggested that she find out if her jewels were safe. Mrs. Vega was quite sure that Louise would not be guilty of theft, but she looked just for the purpose of convincing her husband that all was well. The loss was soon discovered. The butler had also taken Mr. Vega's best suit of clothes, purchased in Paris, and wore it away with him, leaving his own in its stead. The gold and diamonds made a small package and the butler and the maid were able to leave the house without attracting the suspicion of the elevator attendant. They had omitted to take another casket containing $10,000 worth of jewels. Their trunks were left in their rooms and from the man's baggage the police took his photograph, which they reproduced at the head of a circular describing the stolen articles.

DEAN GILPIN

(Halifax Herald).

The late Dean Gilpin was one of the best known and best loved of the clergy in Nova Scotia. In his eighty-sixth year, he was by birth a Nova Scotian, and of the old United Empire Loyalist stock, his father having been the Rev. Edwin Gilpin, for many years rector of Aylesford. He graduated at King's College, Windsor, receiving his B. A. degree from that institution in '47, that of M. A. in 1850; B. D. in 1853, and D. D. in 1863. He was ordained to the Diaconate in 1847 and to the priesthood in 1848. He was made a canon early in his career, and archdeacon on the death of the Venerable Archdeacon McCawley, president of King's and Archdeacon of Nova Scotia. When Dr. Courtney entered upon his duties as bishop of the diocese, 16 years ago, the then Archdeacon Gilpin was made dean, Archdeacon Kaulbach being his successor in the former office. He was appointed to Rawdon shortly after his ordination, but just as he was about to go into residence, received the appointment of headmaster of the old Halifax grammar school, which was at the northwest corner of Barrington and Sackville streets. He held this position until the establishment of the Halifax Academy, when arrangement was suggested by the city authorities to merge the Halifax grammar school in the academy. This arrangement was consented to on the condition that the dean should hold the headmastership as long as he desired to do so, and he did so for many years, ultimately retiring, since which time he has simply officiated as dean. His wife, who died about three years ago, was a daughter of "Sam Slick" (Mr. Haliburton). He is survived by four sons and a daughter. The sons are Dr. Gilpin, deputy commissioner of mines; Fred Gilpin, Arthur, of the British army, and now stationed in India, and Ralph. The daughter is Mrs. Croucher, of Yale, British Columbia.

In the rooms of No. 1 Wellington Hose Company last evening John Cummins, contractor, presented to the company a very fine picture of the Duke of Wellington, enclosed in a beautiful frame. The picture is a fac simile of that presented to her late majesty, Queen Victoria, on the occasion of her coronation. The fire lads very much appreciated the gift and will give it a prominent place in their station.



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Daily Fashion Hint for Times Readers.



EMPIRE MATINEE IN ORKEDA AND LACE.

There are so many moments in the daily routine of life when a dainty little possession like that pictured will find effective uses that it really is a temptation to have not only one but many of them. While quite elaborate in appearance, the making of these effective little garments is really quite a simple matter. It all depends upon the materials; but if the illustration be followed, a pale rose colored orkeda silk—one of those novel weaves that are of the taffeta class, but slightly different—and one of those net laces with a repousse pattern and an irregular edge will be employed. Neither is expensive; but it is the quality required that makes the cost run up. Over the shoulders there is a deep yoke of orkeda silk, laid in grouped tucks, this extending almost to the underarm. Then a band of the double lace is used to connect the lower part of sun-pleated silk, the lace applied in vandykes, and the silk cut away beneath. A straight flounce of the lace is also used at the edge, this only declaring itself between the points of the border. The sleeve is an exceedingly full pagoda pattern, with a double ruffle of the lace all around the lower edge; and the rest of the sleeve decorated with vandyked points of insertion to make the body of the dainty little garment.



EMPIRE BALL GOWN.

The sketch depicts a ball or dinner gown of embroidered chiffon over a fitted lining, made princesse. The bands on the bodice were of satin, embroidered in relief, or flowered ribbon could be used. Tassels were attached to the longer bands back and front, and there were small connecting straps of velvet and buckles. The lower part of the skirt was trimmed with bands of plain satin of the same shade as the bodice trimming.

All Women

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OBITUARY

John Gallagher

John Gallagher died yesterday at the home of his sister, 600 Main street, after an illness which extended over some time. He was in his 58th year, followed the occupation of laborer and was son of the late Patrick and Catherine Gallagher.

William Fleming

The death of William Fleming, a respected resident of Fairville, took place last evening. He was sixty-five years of age and had conducted a retail liquor business for some years. Since Ready's brewery was started Mr. Fleming had occupied the position of cellar foreman. He had not been able to work for a year and his death was not unlooked for.

He is survived by his wife, who was a daughter of the late John Warren; four sons—Edward, of Boston; John, of the C. P. R. engineering staff, Calgary; William, at home, and Louis, who is attending the St. Joseph's College—and two daughters—Nellie and Mamie, at home. Mrs. Jeremiah Sullivan, of South Boston, is a sister.

John A. Ritchie

John A. Ritchie, I. C. R. watchman, died last evening at his home in Winter street, after a week's illness, succumbing finally to heart trouble. Mr. Ritchie was a son of the late Enoch Ritchie, of Petitcodiac. For years he conducted a restaurant on the north side of King square, but latterly had been in the I. C. R. service. He is survived by his wife and three children. He also leaves three sisters—Mrs. G. H. Nixon, of this city; Mrs. C. G. Robertson, of Boston, and Mrs. Taylor, wife of Rev. B. W. R. Taylor, of Schenectady (N. Y.) His mother, who also survives, is living with her daughter, Mrs. Robertson, in Boston. Mr. Ritchie was a man of genial disposition, who numbered many friends.

STEEL INDUSTRY 50 YEARS OLD

"So completely has the present become the 'age of steel,' and so great is the dependence placed upon its products in every line of activity, that it is scarcely to be believed that fifty years ago steel making was still in the experimental stage," says the Iron Trade Review. "The initial patents of importance were just being granted, and the problems of operation and equipment were yet to be worked out. Just fifty years ago the Siemens regenerative open-hearth furnace was patented, the date of the patent being December 2, 1856. It was this invention of Carl William Siemens—afterwards Sir William—a native of Hanover, but then a citizen of England, which made the open-hearth steel process a possibility. Heath who discovered the beneficial action of manganese, had in 1845 conceived the idea that cast steel could be produced in large quantities by fusing wrought and cast iron together upon the open hearth of a reverberatory furnace, but lacked means for producing the necessary heat. That desideratum was supplied just half a century ago through the Siemens invention. Sir William worked along the lines of producing steel from pig iron with iron sponge produced outside the furnace. The Martin brothers, in France, worked upon the production of steel from pig and wrought iron. Their principal patent was obtained in 1865 and in the same year Siemens started building his 'Sample Steel Works' at Birmingham. It was at this time, nearly ten years after the patenting of the furnace which made the process possible, that open-hearth steel was made in a commercial way. In 1867 Abram S. Hewitt visited the Paris exposition as commissioner of the United States and became impressed with the merits of the pig and scrap process of Messrs. Martin. In December of the following year Cooper, Hewitt & Co. made the first open-hearth steel in the United States."

Detective Killen went to New Ireland Monday and secured the axe Father McAulay found in his bedroom and with which it is supposed Miss McAulay was murdered. The weapon is now in the hands of Dr. Addy, who is making a microscopical examination of stains on the blade.

REXTON

REXTON, N. B., Dec. 31—The soft spell of weather which began Friday, 21st. inst. still continues. A great deal of the snow has gone and the roads are bare in places. The ice on the river is unsafe for travelling.

Very few smelts have been caught during the past week and buyers have stopped buying awaiting frosty weather. Mrs. Alex Jardine and her sister, Miss Etta Dickinson, left Saturday for Woodstock to visit their brother W D Dickinson. After a few weeks Miss Dickinson will proceed to Richmond, N. H. where she will be married to Mr. Gove of that place.

Miss Sadie Bird who has been visiting Mrs. Thomas Caie left today for Somerville, Mass.

Misses Anna Phinney and Sadie Hudson of Richibucto left Saturday for Boston to enter a hospital to train for nurses.

Miss Gertie Buckley of Rogersville is visiting Mss Mayme Murray, Rchibucto.

Miss Suzanne Richard, of St. Louis, is visiting Miss Lucy Maillet.

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