

# The Castle Comedy

By THOMPSON BUCHANAN

"But French Percy will have found that pass, takes the alarm and goes while we are waiting for the idiot downstairs to send for soldiers to take us," Jean argued.

"The more reason we must work our way out by morning. I'll fix it." And Fournery began again to walk.

The White Falcon inn was but a scant five miles from the castle. When they slipped from Dubarre's room that night, the spies had made straight for the inn. It was after 10 o'clock when they got there and doors were closed tight.

With difficulty they aroused the place, and the sleepy landlord stood against a two strange wayfarers who wanted horses at that time of night. They were dirty and torn and scratched from walking through the muddy fields.

Highwaymen who have lost their mounts," he thought. No, they could not have horses. He kept none for hire there, he said. Fournery begged, pleaded, insisted, and in vain. It was the king's business they were on, he urged. The loyal innkeeper pursed up his lips and asked for proofs.

Mine host became in turn obstinate, sulky, suspicious. At last, angry, the chief spy drew a pistol, promising great rewards, but threatening dire vengeance if the horses were not forthcoming.

The soldiers were fifteen miles away. They would not reach the inn perhaps for thirty hours. By that time "French Percy" might have escaped. It behooved the blood-seekers to hurry. Fournery stopped suddenly in his hurried walk about the room.

"Jean, I have it!" he exclaimed and darted to the fireplace. The prison evidently had been once a chamber for important guests. Though now dismantled of fine furniture, its size and the big open fireplace showed the quality.

"Can you make it?" asked Jean. Fournery, the small one, shook his head. "I'll try." And without more ado he thrust his head up into the black hole.

Ten minutes later a slight, soot-begrimed figure crept cautiously along the ridge pole of the White Falcon. Carefully Fournery slipped over the roof down that way. His stooped feet made no noise on the old shingles.

Soon he had reached the lowest spot. It was a short eight-foot drop to the soft grass below. The kitchen window stood invitingly open. Through it the spy crawled quickly. Then, with all the daring and skill of his calling, he snaked through the inn toward the upstairs room where his assistant was still confined.

Secure in his belief that the highwaymen could not break through barred windows and oaken doors, mine host had gone to sleep. The country lord left to watch the prisoners' door snored loud enough to drown the slight noise made by Fournery raising the bar from place. Now the comrades were reunited. They lifted the stable key from the sleeping hostler and started downstairs. Then some grim humor made Fournery pause.

"Hush!" he whispered. Retaining the spies picked up the sleeping man carefully and bore him within the room. He only mused a bit in his slumber. When the door was safely barred again they crept down through the house and out of the kitchen window. Not a soul had been disturbed. A number of horses stood within the stable. They picked the two best and led them out just as the moon was setting.

shall write you an invitation to the wedding." "But could I not see her, thank her, say farewell?" begged St. Croix, his soul in his words.

"Not unless she will," said the Englishman, but I can take a message of farewell." "Not farewell, but a revoir," answered the French cousin, smiling.

"The prisoner drew himself up and spoke very slowly." "A St. Croix would reunite the Percys, cousin." And his meaning was very clear.

"For a full minute Sir Henry looked only blank. Then he gradually the astounding proposition sifted through in his consciousness. An offer of marriage from a Frenchman! His honest English heart blazed fierce anger at the insult.

Furiously he strode up to St. Croix and shook his fist in the face of that astonished young man. "You insolent puppy! You renegade! Love my daughter—my May! What do you mean?"

"And she loves me, I'll swear it!" was the quick retort, for this bit of English speech, in French, seemed not to fear the hottest blast of British rage.

"You low bravo!" roared Sir Henry. The other corrected him very quietly. "You forget, cousin, I'm a Percy too. My blood's as proud as yours. My mother was one of the older branch. There's no taint in the St. Croix line."

Sir Henry tried vainly to emulate his calmness. "By the eternal! I'm glad you told me," he blurted. "Then, rage swept by, he continued furiously. 'Do you think I'd let her marry you, a traitor, ostent, an enemy of the king—you, who have English blood on your hands—you, a spy, a thief, who stole over here from France, plotting to rob me of my dearest treasure? But you'll never get her, for you'll be dead before she's married.'"

"Aye, that I will before she marries Wilmerding!" interrupted St. Croix angrily. Sir Henry had as last secured reasonable calmness. "Right you are," he sneered. "I'll have my friend the bishop over from Sir Harvey Johnston's tomorrow. Hanged you'll be, and we'll marry her to her true lover the day after."

And with that parting shot the raging squire pounded on the door to be let out. Utterly dejected, St. Croix threw himself in the only chair the waiting chamber afforded. Without he could hear the sound of the heavy bar falling into place and the loud voice of Sir Henry commanding, "Watch that outfront Frenchman close."

CHAPTER XIII. CAST into uttermost despair, St. Croix did not hear a modest knock upon his prison door. Again the knock was repeated, and the Frenchman looked up.

"Well, do you think I'm out?" he called impatiently. Then the bar was raised, the door opened slightly, and Captain Thorncliffe's head appeared. "May I come in, Colonel LeTapis?"

"Have I any choice, monsieur?" the prisoner retorted sarcastically. The Englishman's face hardened. "Certainly I would not intrude if possible to avoid it, sir," he said stily.

Instantly, stung at his rudeness to the man who so far as he could honorably had befriended him, the generous Frenchman sprang to his feet. "Pardon, monsieur—pardon," he cried. "A soldier should always be glad to welcome a brother soldier. It delights me to greet Captain Thorncliffe."

Now the captain entered smiling. "I feel I bring my welcome with me," he said, "as I am but the courier for your dinner. You must pardon the delay. Colonel LeTapis, but the events of the morning quite drove the thought of eating from our minds."

"I always hoped he would be slightly hurt—the man who told them not to fire," said the Frenchman at last. "And ever since that morning I've wished to meet again the coolest fighter I ever saw," replied the generous Englishman—the man who held my life and let me go with but a trifling wound. I owe you something." Then, being English, he swallowed all his feelings to burst out suddenly, "Where are those girls?"

"Girls?" exclaimed St. Croix, trying hard to keep the joy out of his voice. "Why, yes, your cousin and Mistress Courtleigh. They've prepared your dinner with their own hands and have been waiting an hour till Sir Henry should get out of the way to bring it to you."

Even as the captain spoke May Percy and Mistress Courtleigh appeared at the door, carrying a basket large enough to hold dinner for half a company. "May we come in, captain?" asked Mistress Courtleigh gayly. The prisoner sprang toward them. May Percy let go one half the basket and stood looking at St. Croix.

"Mademoiselle," he began. "Cousin, if you please," she corrected.

so him and tried to look archness from misty eyes. "Cousin—May." And at the tone Captain Thorncliffe and Mistress Courtleigh looked quickly off, for it was as though the two were alone and all others thousands of miles away. For the first time Captain Thorncliffe developed diplomacy.

"Come, come, Mistress Courtleigh," he cried, "it's against all prison rules for more than one visitor to be in this room at a time! I must ask you to step outside."

"What dreadful, dreadful rules, captain!" answered the girl, in mock rebellion, as, dropping her basket, she hurried for the door.

"They are necessary with desperate outthroats," replied the captain stiffly, bowing her out. Then he turned, all military, to Mistress Percy. "If you need me," he said, "for the prisoner he comes violent call."

A moment more and the pair within the room heard the bar without fall into place. Quickly May Percy turned with shy, sweet impulsiveness to St. Croix, holding out both hands. "Now—now I can thank you, cousin."

"He seized her hands and bent over to kiss them feverishly." "Ah, mademoiselle—cousin!" and his voice shook. "You always so overpays a service." He was standing close beside her, still holding her hands.

"But your life!" she cried. "You risked that for me! Even now, because of an outrageous death." She drew her hands away from him and bowed to walk up and down the room hurriedly. "I can't think of it. I must get you out some way. It's for that I am here—to help you back to France, to those you love and who love you and appreciate you."

"Mademoiselle." At his tone she paused, facing him. St. Croix came very close to her before he spoke, slowly, manfully. "It is all who love me are in France—then indeed it was a useless throw!"

"She tried to get away from the love in his eyes and could not. Then a great heart leap of joy sent crimson rushing to her cheeks; her bosom rose and fell quickly; her eyes softened. "You do—you mean," she murmured. "St. Croix only look her in his arms and held her close, so close that she could just hear his half-whisper—"

"That gallows-death—hereafter—are as nothing if he had been but speaking his message of perfect love through you, mademoiselle!"

Once she looked up, and her eyes invited him. Slowly his head bent down. "My life for this!" he murmured, and their lips met. In a moment he raised his head. "And, oh, how cheap!" said St. Croix.

"Gaston! Gaston!" May Percy's arms were about his neck, and she was kissing him convulsively between little sobs and murmurings of love. "A hurried knocking" at the door hopped them from heaven to earth again. The lovers sprang apart. May Percy rushed to the table. Dubarre brought the basket, and between them they began setting out the lunch. The bar without was raised, the door shot open, and Mistress Courtleigh, her eyes flashing from heaven to earth, rushed into the room. She came to wreck the lovers' paradise—to tell them that their time was up, for Sir John Wilmerding would come on guard in five minutes.

"Have you shown him what you owe for May?" he asked, and then, seeing the girl smiling, trembling, blushing, Mistress Courtleigh understood that the reason for their coming among other things had been forgotten.

"Quick!" she commanded, and May Percy ran to the right-hand wall. St. Croix sprang after, turning her back sympathetically. Mistress Courtleigh made a great ado at setting out the dishes upon the table. May Percy was fumbling at a panel in the wall.

"What is it?" asked St. Croix eagerly. "A secret way!" she exclaimed. "Oh, where's that spring? I've known it since a child. Oh, that catch!" She was fumbling all over the panel excitedly.

"Quick! Quick!" cried Mistress Courtleigh from the table as there came a warning knock at the door. "Does Captain Thorncliffe know?" questioned St. Croix.

"No, but at least he'll be glad. Oh, here it is!" Mistress Percy cried out joyfully as she touched a spring and a small door slid back.

"It's dark enough," smiled the lover, smiling at the dark smelt that came out through the narrow patch of blackness.

"Yes, and small," continued May Percy. "Part of the way you must crawl. I've been through. It comes out at a big oak near the little lodge—our lodge, you know."

"Then in the but at 9." And as though in answer to his words a shadow—the shadow of Sir John Wilmerding—crossed the stained glass window. Within the room they could hear Captain Thorncliffe ask:

"What brought you out so soon, Jack?" And Wilmerding's reply: "I feared that Frenchman might escape. Hal, and I've decided to put my servant on guard here and stay in the room with him myself. It's best to take no chances."

"You must go at once," whispered May Percy. "Hide in the passage. The panel can be latched from within."

"Then Sir John, without, cried, alarmed. "Why, Hal, you've left the door open!"

"An revoir, sweetheart! Nine o'clock, and with a hasty snatched kiss St. Croix prepared to step within the passage.

May Percy moved over to the big prison door. Standing there beside her, the Frenchman and the pair within the room heard the bar without fall into place. Quickly May Percy turned with shy, sweet impulsiveness to St. Croix, holding out both hands. "Now—now I can thank you, cousin."

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## COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

C.M.R.'s Are Now Preparing to Go Into Camp on September 3rd.

The officers and non-commissioned officers are now undergoing a course of instruction conducted by Capt. Bell and Sergt. Instructor Dougherty. The officer commanding has received instructions from headquarters in Winnipeg that the squadron will commence its annual camp on Sept. 3rd next for a period of twelve days. A few recruits are still wanted to fill up the ranks. Each troop lieutenant has been and is still recruiting men for his troop.

### LONGEST BRIDGE

Contracts for the longest high bridge in the world was awarded by Canadian Pacific Railway Co. The bridge is to be on the Crow's Nest Pass branch and will cross the Belly river. It will be over a mile in length, and the centre will rise nearly three hundred feet above the surface of the water. The bridge crosses at a place where there are high and steep banks on each side, and owing to its great height, will be unequalled in bridge building. The superstructure will be carried on great steel girders, which will rest on very strong piers.

### ARCOLA GETS THE SEAT

Arcola, Aug. 20.—In the following letter to Editor McLeod of Arcola, Premier Scott hands out the decision of the government respecting the Cannington Judicial seat:

Regina, August 12, '07. A. D. McLeod, Esq., Arcola. Sir.—Respecting the selection of the

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Not a soul had been disturbed. A number of horses stood within the stable.

They picked the two best and led them out just as the moon was setting.

"We'll reach the garrison about day-break," said Fournery as they started.

On through the black night the pair rode, hand as horses could drive, for this was the king's business. Five, seven, ten, twelve miles of country

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