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November 5th, 1906

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THE

COUNTERSTROKE

By AMBROSE PRATT

Author of "Vigoro is Daunt, Billionaire."

(Continued.)

The Count appeared to interpret his duties lightly. He accompanied Cressingham at noon to Madame Viyella's doorstep and there left him, although Cressingham would have much preferred a stricter and complete espionage, for secretly he dreaded the approaching interview.

The Countess received him in her boudoir. She wore a loose dressing robe of opal silk open at the neck, and was reclining at full length on a lounge engaged in the role of partial invalid, salts and essence about her. The room was softly illumined with some concealed artificial light the windows being heavily draped with dark purple curtains to exclude the day. She looked very languid and lovely, and her pose, if studied, was a work of highest art, for all traces of art were absolutely wanting.

"Speak softly, please, Frank," she murmured; "my head aches."

He took a chair near by and watched her silently for so long that at last she raised her low lidded eyes and looked at him.

"I wait," she said.

"For what?"

"Surely—your excuses."

"I cannot apologize yet, Katherin; I am unconvinced."

She thought a moment, thinking deeply.

"Do you know, Frank," she said at last, "no man has ever insulted me but you. I do not like it. I have a mind not to bother trying to convince you—a mind to let you go."

"In that case, Madame—" He rose, hat in hand.

Her eyes opened wide. "You would go; you would dare leave me?" she gasped.

He nodded.

She stared at him, turning pale as death, then cried of a sudden—

"Go then. Never let me see your face again."

He bowed and obeyed, but from the door heard a low, painful moan. He turned. Madame Viyella was sobbing as though her heart would break.

Cressingham found an echo of her emotion in his own heart. Madame Viyella was very beautiful, even though her face was not of classic type. It was no sense of duty which prompted him to take the woman in his arms and press hot kisses on her crimson tear-wet mouth. Nor did a single recollection of his sweetheart come to intervene when, Madame's bosom next his heart, his nerves thrilled and his blood took fire at her siren sweetness.

And a siren at that moment was Madame. Her tears soon dried, she rested in his arms contentedly, and looked at him with burning heavy hidded eyes, her parted lips occasionally giving forth a sob or a deep sigh.

Madame had won. He was hers, hers at last she told herself exultantly. With a swift lithe movement she rose and stood before him, her dark hair falling in a shower below her waist. He rose too, breathing hard.

She took his hand and put it to her heart, which beat within its cage a wild impassioned prisoner. "It is yours!" she whispered; "all all yours, do you believe me now?"

"Katherin!" The cry was a struggling one; he was fighting for control.

The woman smiled to see. She sat upon the lounge and drew him down beside her—with a gust of words. "Foolish boy, you are still jealous. Really, it was my father, Frank. I know it is hard for you to believe, but it is true. He is a great person, and I am only his natural daughter. Do you understand? No one in the world knows aught of this but you, dear one. He sometimes visits me, but always secretly. Were our relationship once suspected—I should see him no more, and, Frank, he is the only near friend that I have. I love him, dear; he has always been good to me. I should not tell you anything of this. Ah, how I trust you!"

"Trust me more. What is his name?"

The woman smiled at him. "You are an honorable man, dear are you not? You would not break your word, much less an oath?"

"Ah!"

"I am oath-bound, Frank. You would not counsel me to break my vow. But ah, for your sake anything. Am I not yours, soul as well as body? Dear one, order me to break my oath! Are you not my master?"

Cressingham was beaten, and although he dimly recognized the method, the art of her attack was too perfect to allow a thought of insincerity. Honest as steel himself, he answered frankly as another of as pure calibre. "I have no right to ask that of you, Katherin."

"Then let us talk of love!" she cried, "since we are now together here with nought at last but love between us."

Fate saved him for the moment. There came a servant with a message for Madame; a person had called to see her who was of too exalted rank for cavalier dismissal. She got to her feet, a jealous light in her eyes and anger unconcealed; she hated to let him go, but she whispered in his ear some burning words, and Cressingham left her pledged to return that very night.

The cold calm light of the day without offered a sudden blight to his still tingling nerves, chilling the blood that still throbbed insolently in his veins. He remembered Miss Elliott then, and realized the depths into which he had almost fallen, the abyss on whose brink he still stood tottering. He remembered too the task which he had undertaken, and saw himself a double failure: a traitor to his duty, a traitor to his love.

In an almost reckless mood he called upon Colonel Vernon, his commanding officer, a kindly old soldier who had not fathered a crack regiment long enough to forget the follies of his own youth and who bore the reputation of being lenient to all faults save those that tarnished honor. To him Cressingham made full confession of his Russian fiasco, save only that he gave no names.

The Colonel had always been fond of his junior captain and did not want to lose him, but he saw an opportunity dear to his heart and, as he afterwards told his friend, General Poole, he "rated the youngster soundly. These hot bloods want a lesson now and then, Poole, and when they want it, sir, by gad they get it—from me!"

But the "ragging" once over, the Colonel proceeded straightway to discount his words; he invited Cressingham to lunch, and over the second bottle of Heidsieck waxed so reminiscent that Cressingham presently perceived he sat before a man who had spent a wilder and more thoughtless youth than he, and he was astonished and a little amused to find how proud at heart the old man was of the semi-disgraceful pranks and mishaps of his past.

The lesson did him good from a worldly point of view. It showed him that pains of the present become pleasant mental tit-bits for the jaded palate of maturer years. It taught him to attach less weight than was his wont to his own backslidings and shortcomings. He left the Colonel feeling half satisfied that an undiscovered sin is at most only half a sin. This moral obliquity of vision furnished him with an excuse to keep his appointment with Miss Elliott, in spite of the morning's treacheries. He had been false to her—granted; but then, she did not know of it! He loved her in spite of his falseness, indeed his fault had made him perhaps appreciate her more.

So he argued, attempting to convince himself, and when he reached her door the argument was still half finished. He had a queer instinctive presentiment that he would find her cold to him, that she would read his heart and divine the wrong that he had done her. That she loved him he never doubted; so strangely pentetrating is the mind of love, he had been able to read her heart in that without tangible reason or encouragement. Ah, well, perhaps she would save him from himself. He had been weak before temptation, and would infallibly be weak again before a similar temptation, but like most well-meaning sinners he was remorseful and anxious to find grace immediately the cause of sin had been removed. "Lead us not into temptation!" is the most necessary prayer of all, as Christ, the Master knew, for in fashioning that exhortation, which has descended upon the centuries to us, a legacy divine, He phrased that simple heart cry last of all in token of its measureless importance. Cressingham wanted to be saved from temptation, and so he rang the bell.

The butler answered the door, a man whom Cressingham knew well and had often liberally tipped; he seemed distraught and disturbed today, and his welcome was effusive, for, a old servant he knew well the reading of social symptoms, and he had long guessed at the gentleman's attachment to his mistress.

"Please come in, my lud—shall I take your coat and hat, my lud? The library, if you please, my lud."

"Miss Elliott at home, Adams?"

The butler followed him into the library. "Ah, my lud, I'm so glad you've come my lud." The man seemed so upset and anxious that Cressingham involuntarily felt concerned.

"Your mistress is not ill, Adams?"

"No, my lud; leastwise I hope not—we all hope not. But, my lud, I—I——"

Cressingham saw over the man's shoulder the faces of two servants peeping anxiously upon them from the passage without.

"What the dickens is the matter?" he demanded somewhat testily.

"The fact is my lud,—last night—I—the mistress, she——"

"Out with it, man!"

Adams gave a desperate glance at the doorway and a frown which scattered the faces in the passage. "The fact is, my lud, Miss Elliott went out last night to sing at a concert—and—and—she hasn't come home yet."

"But," stammered Cressingham, "she—she—I have an appointment to see her here at four."

The butler's face lighted up immediately. "Ah, then, my lud, she'll be back directly I expect. And oh, my lud, I hope as how you'll not mention to her what I said. You see, we all got anxious about her, 'specially as how she's never stayed away before without lettin' us know aforehand—and she sent the coachman home early with the 'osses and said as how she wouldn't keep 'em waiting in the cold, but she'd come home in a cab."

Cressingham scarcely heard him, He was tormented with a sudden wild, madly fanciful idea, which, however, he presently put from him as past the bounds of possibility.

"I expect she has spent the night with some lady friend, Adams," he said kindly. "Certainly I shall not mention what you have said; your anxiety for her does you credit."

"Thank you my lud." Adams went slowly out and closed the door.

"Strange," thought Cressingham; "she left me intending to go home. I told the cabman to drive to Bruton street. Perhaps she changed her mind and went elsewhere, but it's queer she didn't send a message or something to her servants all to-day. She's so methodical in her habits, too, does all the housekeeping and all that sort of thing. Perhaps she's ill."

He paced the floor for a quarter hour distractedly, reflecting, listening anxiously to every sound without, often going to the window and attempting to peer into the street below. Then he could stand it no longer, and violently rang the bell.

Adams appeared with disconcerting promptitude. "Ah, er — I'd like a glass of whiskey, Adams, please."

The butler opened a cabinet and produced glasses and decanters, also cigarettes; afterwards he loitered hesitatingly.

"Well, what is it?" said Cressingham.

"It's half-past, sir, and still no sign of her. We've been wondering in the servants' hall if a accident might a happened."

"Have you the papers, Adams?"

"Yes, my lud, and we've gone through 'em all that careful. There's nothin' in 'em my lud, 'cept about the concert. The Countess o' Hobstein was with her, sir."

"Ah!"

"Besides, if she'd been took to a hospital, my lud, word would a been sent here at once."

"So it would. It can't be that then that has detained her, at least it's not likely."

"No, my lud—as I says to Richards, what is the coachman, my lud—it's no use jumping to look at the black side o' things, though in general it's the black side as turns up."

"Quite so, Adams. By the by, Colonel Elliott is expected home shortly, is he not?"

"Tomorrow, my lud which, if you'll pardon me mentionin' it, my lud, is what has made us feel more anxious like, my lud for Miss Elliott allowed to her maid yesterday as how she was goin' to do up his rooms herself this morning, the Colonel being a rather fidgetty old gentleman as doesn't like his things touched or put out of their places. And his rooms have been locked up ever since he went away, and we not bein' able to air them the whole day, seein' as Miss Elliott has the keys herself."

(To be continued.)

ORANGES

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HOTELS RAIDED IN MONCTON

Moncton, N. B., Nov. 4—There's more doing in Scott act circles. Last night Chief Chappell and officers raided ten places and secured evidence upon which to lay information. The places visited include the Brunswick, American, Windsor, Minto hotels; Boudreau's Hotel, Duke street; Park Hotel, Telegraph street; Bourgeois House, W. McDougall, D. Hogan, R. Hebert, on Main street. The names of many witnesses were taken by the officers to be used against the houses.

The raid created some excitement and is the subject of much comment today. The action was taken by the chief in consequence of the numerous drunks locked up by the police of late.

Much interest is taken in Moncton Scott act appeal cases to come before the supreme court at Fredericton this week. Among the cases to be argued are several in which the parties are sentenced to a month in jail without the option of a fine. Another question to be decided is the jurisdiction of the Shediac magistrate to try certain Moncton cases.

Rev. F. S. Bamford, formerly of St. John, preached his inaugural sermon this evening as pastor of the Lewisville Baptist church, being at Dover in the morning. He was greeted by a large congregation tonight.

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For over three years I suffered with pains under my left breast and my nerves were completely unstrung. I purchased two boxes of your pills and before I had the first box finished I felt much better and now I am cured."

Price 50 cents per box or three boxes for $1.25 at all dealers or will be mailed direct on receipt of price by The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

FRANK B. STREET DIES AT FREDERICTON

Fredericton, N. B., Nov. 4—The Orangemen of the city and Gibson celebrated Guy Fawkes' day and the 235th anniversary of the birth of King William III. by attending divine service at the George street Baptist church this afternoon. The turnout was a fairly large one, there being about sixty of the brethren in line.

Rev. A. Rideout preached an eloquent sermon, appropriate to the occasion, and was followed with great interest. The Seventy-first Band led the procession to and from the church.

The water in the river here has risen about a foot during the past few days.

Frank B. Street, a Montreal commercial man, widely known throughout the maritime provinces, expired very suddenly at Miss Allen's boarding house, Waterloo row, shortly after 1 o'clock this afternoon. Mr. Street has made Fredericton his headquarters for some time, and, with Mrs. Street, boarded at Miss Allen's. Mr. Street returned to the city a few days ago and intended remaining over Sunday.

This forenoon he went for a walk up town and called upon a number of old friends, returning to his boarding house about 1 o'clock. He went up stairs to his room and was making preparations for dinner when he was seized with a fainting attack. Mrs. Street, who was with him, at once summoned some of the other boarders to her assistance, and a physician was telephoned for.

Drs. Atherton, Crocket and Bridges were quickly upon the scene, but when they reached the patient's side they found that he was beyond earthly aid. They expressed the opinion that heart failure was the cause of his demise

The deceased gentleman was about fifty-five years of age and is survived by a widow, one son, who resides in Montreal, and two daughters—Mrs. George H. Teed, now in South America, and Mrs. C. G. Musser, of Montreal. Another daughter was drowned in the Straits of Belle Isle a few years ago, at the time of the disaster to the steamship Scotsman. One brother and one sister reside in Toronto.

The late Mr. Street was a native of the South of England, but most of his days had been spent in Canada. For some years he had been employed as a traveler by Williams, Green & Rone, shirt manufacturers, of Berlin (Ont.) He was a man of splendid physique, and commanding presence, and was universally esteemed.

The son and daughter of deceased residing in Montreal have been notified and are expected here by noon train tomorrow. The body will be taken to Montreal Monday night for burial.

Belleville, Ont., Nov. 4.—At the opening of the high court Saturday morning, Ferdinand Kleingbeil, who was declared guilty on a charge of manslaughter, came up for sentence before Justice Britton. His honor said that owing to his age and the fact that the jury had made recommendation for mercy, he would sentence the prisoner to four years in Kingston penitentiary. The sentence caused big surprise and the prisoner sat down with a satisfied look. It was generally thought the sentence was very light.

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VANITY

From time immemorial moralists have railed at the vanity of woman. Here is a woman, and a beautiful one at that, who says that vanity is an imperishable instinct; that vanity, like love, is one of the great forces that makes the world go round; that to be vain is a duty to humanity and an essential of success.

It's an original view; what is *your* opinion? This defense of an old time sin is set forth in our new magazine—

WOMAN

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SYDNEY BLAST FURNACES ARE CLOSED DOWN

Sydney, Nov. 4—At noon on Saturday the Dominion Iron & Steel Company gave out the following statement for publication:—

"The blast furnaces of the Dominion Iron & Steel Company were banked at 4.15 p. m. yesterday for want of coke. The reason for the coke shortage is said to be that the coal received since the close of last month is unfit for the company's purposes and has been rejected. It is understood that the steel company is making arrangements for a supply of suitable coal, and expect that operations on a normal scale will be resumed in a few days."

The trouble appears to be over the supply of coal for the manufacture of coke. The steel company contend that they were being supplied by the coal company with an inferior quality. This became so pressing that they began the importation a few months ago of a supply from the Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Co. at Sydney Mines. They bought more than 30,000 tons and have ordered more. This coal cost them considerably more at the plant than the Glace Bay product, and the company, it is understood, charged the Dominion people with the difference in cost.

President Ross refused to pay this and went further by practically cutting off their supply. Such is the common version of those discussing the situation. It now looks as if, should this continue even for a few days, the entire plant will have to close down and throw 1,700 men out of employment. As it is, the blast furnaces are banked, but there may be coal enough on hand to keep the mills, including the coke ovens, going for a day or two, but not much longer, unless immediate arrangements are made for a fresh supply of coal. This is being made, according to a statement of the company.

Bishop Casey at Hampton

Hampton, N. B., Nov. 4—A confirmation service was held in the Catholic church here yesterday, when Bishop Casey admitted forty candidates to active membership. The candidates, who reside at the Village, Station, Norton and Nauwigewauk, were presented by the Rev. Father Holland.

His lordship followed the act of confirmation by an able discourse on the Christian duties devolving upon those who had taken upon them the solemn vows of a consecrated life.

In the afternoon his lordship and Father Holland were taken for a drive by Thomas Conway, whose guests they were during their stay.

FIRE IN AMHERST

Amherst, N. S., Nov. 4—At 1 o'clock today fire broke out in the residence of Fred. Fowler, of the I. C. R. freight department, and practically destroyed the whole building, entailing a loss of about $2,000.

The house is situated about a mile from the business centre of the town, and consequently there was some delay before the firemen reached it. The fire started from the kitchen chimney, and that part of the house was in flames before it was discovered. The furniture was nearly all saved. A terrific gale was blowing at the time, and the firemen did well to put out the fire without further damage.

The house, which was in splendid repair, was one of the oldest in Amherst, having been built nearly seventy years ago by the Methodist denomination for a mission house, being used for that purpose when the church occupied the site where Joseph Bosglass' house now stands. The church is owned by Mrs. Fowler's mother, Mrs. Atkinson, and is insured for $1,400. There was no insurance on the furniture.

Mrs. W. A. Rowley, of Brussels street, left Saturday afternoon with her aunt, Mrs. Charles Vincent, to visit friends in Boston, Waltham and Providence (R. I.)