

THE STRONGEST

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was always twirling, the chevalier de Vertprée was not malicious. Misery and pride of race had made him stingy, and he got so much satisfaction from his miserly administration of the Pannetier millions that he eventually forgave his nephew for his untimely birth. He even grew to like the boy, after his fashion, and once, between two games of bezique, conceived the idea of making a real gentleman of him. He discussed the project seriously with the abbé.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," the abbé would say, "there's only one thing to do. We will make our young marquis a perfect God-fearing Christian—a man who will serve the Church and do his duty faithfully to those whom Heaven has placed under him, and who will fight with fire and sword all those disturbers that flourish in our unhappy day, when heresy is no longer a crime."

"Your game is bad, my dear abbé, but you know what you are saying. Only, while you take care of his soul, I have to insure the honour and pride of a race which, before God, owes fealty to the Throne and to the Altar. You will form the spirit of the child; I, his heart. So long as you won't fill his mind with the impious trash of science, I will take care of the rest."

Then they would quarrel about tricks and count their points all over again.

The abbé fell in with his partner's ideas perfectly.