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THE

COUNTERSTROKE

By AMBROSE PRATT

Author of "Vigorous Daunt, Billionaire."

(Continued.)

"Then," said Cressingham, "I withdraw my statement and beg permission to agree with you. May we not therefore change the conversation, sir?"

"Not yet, for it is a propos of my intentions with regard to you."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Granted. You see, my lord, the motto of my house constrains me to declare myself. 'Bis dat qui cito dat.' As a sane man I have no desire to torture you unless you wish for torture. Do you catch my meaning?"

Cressingham lifted a mouthful of dainty to his lips, and answered presently: "I think I understand you, sir, but I cannot see the need of such immediate haste. After the ladies have retired we might resume the conversation."

"You must allow me to be the best judge of that necessity, my Lord," said the Count, and he slowly bit off and munched a piece of bread and caviare.

Madame and Miss Elliott stared at the two men silently, and without evincing a desire to eat.

Cressingham's nerves were on stretch, but his blood was up, and he ate quite heartily, as though enjoying himself, at perfect ease.

"You see," went on the Count, "I have determined that the incident we spoke of shall visit you tomorrow. There only remains to arrange the manner of your dissolution."

"I understand," said Cressingham. Miss Elliott grew of a sudden very white and her eyes glowed like stars.

"If you would prefer a lingering death," resumed the Count, "I have no desire to thwart your wishes. I have on hand a large assortment of tortures from which you are at liberty to choose. Some would postpone the final moment for a week, thus allowing you full scope to put your theories to the test."

"My dear sir—I told you before that you had converted me."

"Ah, I beg your pardon, I did not take you literally. In that case it would be as well perhaps that we should now discuss the more painless modes of death. Have you given the matter any thought?"

"Well, I can't say that I have." Cressingham could hardly comprehend that the man was really serious. It occurred to him that this was a gross and frightful jest, a bitter device for the testing of his nerves; but a glance at Madame discounted such an explanation. Her face was ghastly pale, and her hand which rested on the table trembled spasmodically.

The Count observed the ladies with delighted eyes. "Kate, Miss Elliott," he cried suddenly, with well acted concern, "you eat nothing."

Madame took up her knife and fork, but Miss Elliott shook her head. "I am not hungry," she muttered.

The Count ordered wine, and when it had arrived sat back and sipped a glass. Cressingham followed suit; his appetite had fled, but he forced himself to appear indifferent, vowing inwardly that he would not let this monster have the satisfaction of discerning in him one single sign of terror or confusion.

"Perhaps, Kate, you could oblige your friend with an idea culled from your experience," suggested the Count with a cruel smile.

Madame colored slowly. "I beg you to excuse me," she answered.

"You then, Miss Elliott?"

Francine turned if possible paler than before. "This is all some horrid jest," she cried.

The Count smiled again. "My dear young lady, I never jest," he said; "I am too old to play the fool. Come, have you no suggestion?"

"None except that you kill me too!" she seemed about to faint and swayed towards Cressingham, but he sent her a glance that gave her sudden strength.

The Count bent upon her a countenance of severe reproach. "What, you dare to say that you are tired of life! Ah, bah, you have scarcely tasted it, besides you are a woman. You think now that you love this young man, perhaps. Believe me, that will pass. You are beautiful, young; there are many years before you. Death, no! I have other views for you."

She was silent; he eyed her a moment, then turned to Cressingham. "It seems that we shall be obliged to decide the matter between ourselves, my Lord."

"Best, I think," said Cressingham.

"Ah-m," he cleared his throat and gave the young man a burning, searching glance. "What of a bullet through the heart or brain Death would be almost instantaneous."

"Brutal," objected Cressingham.

"True, quite true! Science has of late years so refined these matters for us! We shall therefore pass by suffocation, drowning, the rope, the dagger and the coarser poisons. There remains to consider a few comfort-giving powders and to choose one or some of them."

"Exactly. I have heard that morphia—"

"A good groundwork, my Lord, wherewith to induce sleep, but a death-dealing dose often causes pain. Now if you will allow me to offer a suggestion?"

"Why certainly; are you not master of ceremonies?"

"Ha, ha, ha! quite so. Well, morphia first to bring you sleep and dreams, visions glorious, my lord, for morphia is nothing but a form of that hashesh of which the ancients were so fond. But mingled with the morphia a little aconite and then in the midst of splendid dreams will come death, a darker dream than the others, but who shall say less sensuous or beautiful!"

"Excellent!"

"It is agreed then?"

"Why yes."

"I see you handle that knife, my Lord, with, what shall I say—a murderous intention in your eyes. I shall spare you the trouble of attempting to use it fruitlessly. Mark this button on my chair. Observe, I turn it—thus. Ah, you see!"

As he turned the button, Cressingham and the two ladies were on a sudden rendered rigid and helpless as stone figures where they sat, and they endured moreover tortures unspeakable.

"You hear that clicking sound?" said the Count. "It scarcely is necessary to explain the matter to persons of your intelligence. You are all seated on electric chairs, this button controls the circuit. So! I switch it off, you are released! But beyond that, my Lord, these negroes about us are my servants. You must surely have thought me lavish of display to require so many to wait on us at table." He laughed a long, low, hideous chuckle of fiendish mirth it was.

Cressingham commenced to despair, for he now fully realized how utterly helpless was his position, but with a violent effort he kept his self control and asked: "At what hour, sir, do you intend that I shall die?"

"At noon tomorrow!"

Cressingham was about to speak when a loud rap came to the door and a tall negro servant entered.

"What is it?" asked the Count.

"A cable, Highness."

"Read it aloud!"

The man unfolded the paper in his hand. "Khan Barbaroka—Perigord—Eruted—Semaphore."

"The translation fool! do you think I carry ciphers in my head?"

"Pardon, Highness. 'Expedition sailed this afternoon. Perigord commanding. Cressingham blamed for Katherin's escape. Elopment suspected. Police of all nations awake. Orders given for European coastlines to be searched for secret cable stations, commencing east. Have warned Peluchi. Keep Cressingham alive without fail till I arrive. He is my prisoner. Frederick.'"

The Count d'Attala uttered a grim laugh. "The fool presumes to give me orders, he shall see! Really, my Lord, I feel quite a humanitarian in your regard. The Prince will undoubtedly be here tomorrow evening anticipating a fine feast of revenge. The fellow is a coarse brute at heart, who would put you to all manner of inconveniences. We shall, however, forestall him."

Cressingham shivered. "Thanks, sir; I perfectly appreciate your amiable intentions," he said with satire; "you will kill me painlessly at noon tomorrow, less to save me tortures though than to spite your son-in-law."

"Pardon me, spite is a bad word, and discourteous—say disappoint."

"Ah, a thousand apologies — disappoint."

"Until noon tomorrow, my Lord, everything I have is yours."

"Including liberty?"

"Everything," interrupted the Count, "with the single exception of my daughter's company. I need her, for we have many matters to converse upon—eh, Katherin?"

"Yes, father." Madame's manner was painfully subdued; she was pale and pensive, and Cressingham, observing her narrowly, thought her a little fearful too.

The Count nodded to the manacled attendants, who at once lifted him to his feet. "You will excuse me, my Lord. I seldom eat much supper, and I have business. Come, Katherin!"

Madame arose too and took his proffered arm. The Count turned at the door: "My servants will show you to a room when you are weary"—he gave here a coarse chuckle—"That is if you need separate accommodation, my Lord. Here is a lady who was just now anxious to die with you, possibly she will be disposed to lighten your latest hours. If so do not hesitate on my account, for on this demesne exist neither conventions, prejudices, morals——"

"Nor manners, sir!" interrupted Cressingham hotly, starting upwards as he spoke, his face ablaze with passion.

"Tut, tut," said the Count, smilingly shrugging his shoulders; "manners are conventions; here we are always natural, and say what we think if it amuses us. I am sorry my suggestion failed to please you, for beside Miss Elliott there is no other woman on this isle but Kate, and her I need tonight, unhappily. You must try to forgive me, my lord."

"Ah, bah!"

(To be continued.)

TENNYSON SMITH AT YORK THEATRE

York Theatre was crowded to the doors again last evening, when E. Tennyson Smith gave his last general temperance lecture. C. B. Lockhart acted as chairman and referred to the fact that he came from a part of the city where prohibition existed. "If we can have prohibition in two wards why can't we have it in thirteen?" he asked.

Mr. Smith said that it was easy to make a temperance speech, but hard to do what he had set out to do. That was to convince some of the people that he was right and that they were wrong. He would not get up and talk every night unless he knew that the divine spirit was sending the truth home to the hearts of his hearers.

The secret of the great success of the meetings was that he was being sustained by the prayers of Christian people. Children all over the world prayed as they knelt at their bedside at night: "God bless Tennyson Smith." He was glad to have the prayers of God's angels upon earth.

A hand stained with blood is a sign of a certain house in England. If I had my way I would make every brewer saloonkeeper and wine merchant or Christian man who rents his premises to liquor dealers put the sign of a blood-stained hand upon his front door."

Again he said: A story is told of Daniel Webster that when he was a boy he went to school with very dirty hands. One day he put out his right hand to show that he could answer a question and the teacher, seeing it, declared that he would punish the boy unless he could point out a dirtier hand in the school than the one he had raised. Daniel slowly put out his left hand, saying: 'Here it is, master.'

"If there is anything worse than the right hand of the saloon keeper, stained by the blood of countless thousands it is his vile, dirty left hand, befouled by corruption and bribery in connection with elections and officials."

In the United States, bribery of police was wholesale. In England such a thing could not exist, but he was sorry to see that the people of Canada would wink at the non-enforcement of laws.

Mr. Smith here repeated his interview with the drink fiend, so successfully delivered in Carleton last Monday night.

Tonight the trial of alcohol will conclude Mr. Smith's campaign. The officials will be:

Judge, E. R. Chapman; counsel for prosecution, E. Tennyson Smith; counsel for defense, Herbert J. Smith; clerk of court, Charles F. Ledford; constable, to be announced; jury—J. Willard Smith, J. Hunter White, C. H. Hutchings, J. A. Johnston, G. M. Calhoun, P. H. Green, R. A. Courtney, S. E. Logan, L. A. Belyea, E. M. Spragg, Joseph A. Johnston, W. O. Slipp, F. E. Morrisey. A number of people will appear as witnesses.

There was a good attendance at the meeting of the St. David's Y. P. A. last night. The distinctive features of the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches and their bearing on the projected union were ably and interestingly discussed by three of the city clergymen—Rev. W. S. Pritchard, Rev. Neill McLaughlin and Rev. Dr. Fotheringham. These addresses formed the principal part of the programme, which was under the auspices of the biblical committee, and were listened to with marked attention. There were a number of instrumental and vocal solos during the evening.

Dr. J. R. Inch, of Fredericton, passed through the city yesterday en route to Sackville, accompanied by his grandson, Harold I. Hunton, who has been spending the summer along the river for his health.

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Daily Fashion Hint for Times Readers

DESIGN FOR SILK OR LAWN WAIST.

A pretty way of using lace insertion is shown in the sketch, the model being suitable both for silk or wash material. In front a little square yoke of insertion and beading was set in, the insertion also being used to form a design about the upper part of the blouse. The sleeves were of elbow length, and were trimmed down the outer arm with a diamond pattern formed by the insertion. White or colored wash silk could be used for the blouse, or the design could also be carried out in dark colored or black crepe or silk, using black Val. lace or dyed lace insertion.

A ROYAL SET IN SABLES.

From far St. Petersburg, the land of the Russian sable, where one finds this costly pelt at its most luxurious best, comes this charming set, which presents several new and novel ideas. The chapeau, the corselet, the muff, are totally different to what we have been accustomed to seeing on this side of the water. A somewhat Spanish shape is presented in the turban, the crown being flat and the brim deep and setting closely to the crown all around. The shape projects prettily for just a trifle all around, the under part of the brim being made in a pale pink tulline that casts a most becoming glow over the face, and lightens up the somewhat heavy effect of the fur. This effective touch of pink is repeated in the loose-leaved velvet roses that are caught to the side, dull and faded tints of rose pink toning softly against the fur. The muff is one of the oblong and flat shapes that are repacing the pouch effects that have occupied a prominent place in fashion for several seasons now: and there is a flat fringe of the fur all around, a real lace ruffling underneath adding to the rich and elegant effect. The corselet is an absolute novelty on this side of the Atlantic, and is planned rather as a trimming for the gown than as a separate fur wrap or garment. The title describes its shape accurately, it passing around the waistline absolutely, as does a corselet. A broad stole is arranged to produce a bretelle effect, and there is a position of the fur at the back—where, incidentally, the fastening is effected—that adds much to its originality and charm.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Charlotte A. Drury

Announcement of the death of Mrs. Charlotte Augusta Drury, widow of Ward Chipman Drury, registrar of deeds, was received Monday. Mrs. Drury, who resided in Montreal, was in the 72nd year of her age. She was the third daughter of the late Col. Richard Haynes, R. A., and is survived by three sons and six daughters.

The sons are Lieut. Col. C. W. Drury, C. B., Halifax; E. Hazen Drury, C. E., now in Mexico; Harry Drury, C. E., with the railway commission. Mrs. C. E. L. Porteus, Montreal; Mrs. Curtis, widow of Capt. Curtis, R. N.; Mrs. Goosbe, wife of Capt. Goosbe, in India, and three unmarried daughters. Mrs. Drury was very active in St. Paul's church whilst a residence of St. John. Many old friends will regret to hear of her death.

Mrs. Chas. Bishop

Hopewell Hill, Nov. 25—Mrs. Henrietta Bishop, wife of Capt. Chas. Bishop, of Cape Station, died quite suddenly at her home there today, her death causing deep regret throughout the community, and a sad shock to her relatives. The deceased lady had been suffering from an affection of the stomach for quite a long time, but kept about until recently when she took to her bed. Although her condition was more or less critical, no immediate danger was feared, death coming quite unexpectedly. Mrs. Bishop, who was about 33 years of age, was a native of Amherst Point, and came to Cape Station at the time of her marriage. She was universally liked for her great kindness of heart, and had very many friends. The deceased leaves besides her husband, one son, Edmund, and two daughters—Mrs. Morley Turner, of Baie Verte, and Miss Beatrice at home. She is also survived by a sister—Mrs. John Bishop, and two brothers, Thomas and Dixon, of Cape Station.

Miss Margaret McLennan

Mrs. Margaret McLennan widow of John McLennan, of Dipper Harbor, died at Mace's Bay, on Nov. 20, in the 73rd year of her age. She is survived by one son—George McLeanman, of Dipper Harbor—and two sisters—Mrs. James Ellis, of Mace's Bay, and Mrs. Kate Thompson of San Francisco.

Mrs. W. H. Scovil, secretary of the Tourist Association, who has been confined to the house for some days, was able to be at her post again yesterday.

W. E. Jardine, of the staff of the Bank of New Brunswick here, returned yesterday from Boston.

Major Phillips, of the Salvation Army, came in on the Halifax express last evening.

Robt. Reid returned to the city last evening on the Boston train