

The Castle Comedy

By THOMPSON BUCHANAN

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CHAPTER III—(Continued.)

"You impudent hussy!" he cried, and started toward her, but she met him half way with a glass of water snatched hastily from the table.

"Dad, dear dad!" her tone was all anxiety now—"do be careful. You'll have a spell. Nothing could be worth that, dad. Here, drink this," and she forced the water on him. Sir Henry pushed it aside and sat down heavily in a chair.

"Mar, little girl, you'll break your old dad's heart."

Defiant and beaten at every point by the child, whose will was the stronger, the old squire could only sit and shake his head mournfully. It was new tactics for him. Like a little girl, May Percy climbed on his knee, put her arms about his neck and her cheek against his. "Not for anything, dad," she whispered.

John Wilmerding looked on and wished himself a thousand miles away. The father began to talk once more, piteously, beseechingly, mournfully.

"It's my honor, little sweetheart, you see. The Percy honor—think of that. I pledged Sir Elmer my word that you should marry John. The happy union of you two children was to be the fruit of our lifelong friendship. We pledged ourselves to it and even drew up an agreement. When you were girl and boy you were sweethearts, and then you both promised us that you would marry. Don't you remember that, May?"

"Yes, dad, yes," she said.

He waited, silent, for some time. Then he began hesitatingly:

"If—if there is any other, girlie. If—if you are in love with another and he is a gentleman of good stock and fortune, I will not come between you. I would even give up my cherished plans of a lifetime to see you married happily to a brave gentleman. Are you now in love with any one else?"

She sat up suddenly on his knee and looked at him with her eyes very wide.

"Why, no, father. Whom could I love? Captain Thorncliffe will marry Ethel. Sir Harvey Johnston snipers. James Bate is a prig. There are no other gentlemen in the neighborhood."

Sir Henry gave a satisfied grunt. "Right you are, dearie, every time. You say, yourself, there are no other gentlemen here. Certainly I know of none eligible. Why, now, sweetheart, can't you marry John? Make him happy. Let me keep my word to my dear friend. Preserve the Percy honor. That will save your old dad's heart, and you will be happy besides."

With a suspiciously husky gulp the old man turned to John Wilmerding.

"You young fool," he exclaimed fiercely, "talk for your own happiness. I've done enough for you."

Then, sitting on her father's knee, with her arms about his neck, May Percy listened to the avowal of the childhood lover, whom she had repulsed a dozen times. He made it with all the stilted stiffness of a frightened, embarrassed Englishman. When he had finished, the girl buried her head on her father's shoulder.

"Yes, dad, I'll do it for you," she whispered. And the only betrothal kiss was Sir Henry's.

"The agreement gives me two years, and I intend to have every day of it," she said, and to that the men were bound to agree. When she started to go, Sir John tried to kiss her. But he fell back quickly, for she had snatched up Sir Henry's riding crop and brandished it in his face.

"When you are my husband my lips will be yours—possibly," she said, and strode out with her head very high. Sir John could only curse under his breath, while Sir Henry roared at the Percy spirit.

"She's a girl worth having, my boy, and we'll announce it at the birthday party, that you may be sure of the prize."

In the great hall Mistress Percy met her friend Ethel Courtleigh, still flushed from dancing.

"Why were you not at the lesson, May? M. Dubarre was teaching a new dance. He says we must both practice it this afternoon."

"I don't intend to practice. There's no use in it, and I'm tired," answered May Percy crossly.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR quite a minute all looked at Sir John Wilmerding in well bred astonishment.

"A stupid game!" He jerked the bandage from his eyes and threw it on the ground. "I won't be a donkey for you all," he added in disgust, which only gave the smiling Mistress Courtleigh opportunity to murmur, "If one could always choose!"

It was May Percy's birthday party, and the game of blind man's buff had come to a sudden end. They were playing out on the big lawn beside the castle.

That lawn, a green, clear spot tucked away in a mile of thick studded forest, was just large enough for the ancient turreted structure in one corner, with the five acres of roses to the right of it, and the small, green velvet playground beyond. Representatives of all the neighboring families were there—Alice Harmon, Elizabeth Hampton and Dorothy Stanfield, with Sir

John, Captain Thorncliffe, Sir Harvey Johnston, the rich baronet "who sniped," and James Bate, the exquisite down from town, who had a most excellent figure to display his clothes.

In the game Sir John caught Mistress Courtleigh, then insinuated her Percy and quickly lost temper at the laugh upon his love so easily displayed. "Sir John is such an ass!" Mistress Courtleigh had observed slyly as she slipped from his arms, and that precipitated the storm.

Choking with anger, he faced them while for a moment wonder kept the rest dumb. Sir Henry, who had come out, essayed it, but only Mistress Percy could quell the storm.

"Come, come," she said easily, "Sir John is tired. I don't blame him for stopping. I would not have any gentleman weary himself against his will for my pleasure. We'll find another for the bandage. Gentlemen, volunteers—step forward."

She paused for a reply. The men seemed yet too wonder struck to move. "Such modesty I have never seen."

There was sarcasm in her tone now. "Let us find one ourselves, then. May," suggested Ethel Courtleigh. The girls looked at each other for a moment, then both nodded.

"M. Dubarre?"

"The very one," Ethel Courtleigh's was the seconding voice. The others were silent—that is, all but Captain Thorncliffe. Had Mistress Courtleigh proposed the devil, the captain would have fought before another should serve. Now he spoke simply:

"Where is Dubarre?"

"Polishing his pumps in the house, most probably, captain," Sir Henry could not better conceal his anger at his daughter's ill timed suggestion. Mistress Percy reddened ever so slightly. "I'll go fetch him," she answered quickly and took two steps to ward the house, then paused. "Eff, come with me." And the two girls went hand in hand along the narrow path that ran beside the edge of the lawn through the roses to the house, hunting for a willing blind man.

The others looked at one another and at Sir John. It was too good an opportunity to let pass. Sir Harvey Johnston opened the play.

"Mistress Percy picked a strange one," he sniggered.

James Bate, the exquisite, glanced at his own well turned legs. "A good dancer should catch any girl."

"Perhaps he will beat Sir John," remarked Elizabeth Hampton innocently.

Then Alice Harmon's enthusiasm overflowed. "M. Dubarre is very handsome."

"And bright," added Mistress Dorothy Stanfield, looking at Sir John.

"His low birth is a pity, though," said the first speaker, in tones that implied a doubt of it.

Dorothy Stanfield tossed her head. "Oh, that makes him so interesting."

If I were a man I'd fear him for a rival. Rumor had it that Mistress Stanfield kept an anxious eye on the Wilmerding acres.

Sir John still showed his irritation, though he tried bravely to talk to Sir Henry as if undisturbed.

"All Frenchmen are sad flirts, are they not?" inquired Elizabeth Hampton, apparently alibi for information.

Mistress Stanfield answered her, "For shame, Bess! Why, he's only French enough to be fascinating. He talks English like an Englishman. Don't you think so, Sir John?"

Before the lover could reply Sir Henry Percy's spleen put his discretion clean to flight.

"Sir John could scarce be jealous of the antics of a renegade French jig stepper!" he exclaimed fiercely.

And when they all looked up the jig stepper, with the girls beside him, was at hand. The faces of two told that they had heard. The Frenchman's well trained countenance seldom spoke but on orders from within. Now it was blank.

As though accustomed, Dubarre assumed easily the dominating place. "Schottische!" he questioned. And they entered straightway into the spirit of it.

"No, no," they cried.

"Value, then?"

"Never, never."

"Polka?" with shrug.

"Not today."

"Or minuet?" he asked. Then, most persuasively, "The stately minuet?"

They laughed at him.

He threw up his hands in despair.

"What, then, can the poor dancing master do? What is it that you want?"

The question was to all. The look for May Percy alone.

"Blind man's buff," she said.

"Well, to the victim the bandage."

And with his usual nonchalance he placed himself obediently in the hands of Captain Thorncliffe and Mistress Courtleigh, the arch persecutors.

"Is it tight enough?" asked Mistress Courtleigh.

"Close as your image to my heart, fair lady," he answered gallantly.

"So loose as that? Captain Thorncliffe, we must pull harder." The captain did his best.

James Bate's pro-British must out. "Frenchmen work well in the dark."

"Frenchmen work well in the dark," "They must, to ferret English plots," came the quick answer.

"A nation of runners," sniggered Sir Harvey Johnston.

"Trained by chasing the world's arm-

Then they spun Dubarre off into darkness. Now he went groping about, this way and that, all the while complaining aloud of the high English courtesy that made them stand aside for the humble dancing master.

Perhaps it was the chance of the game that brought Sir John Wilmerding beside May Percy.

"That was a pretty scene," he whispered, sneering. She looked at him, surprised.

"Laughing in a French nobody," he explained, angry. "I had to stand by and see—"

"Look out, monsieur is coming this way."

She cried it to stop the foolish lover, only tactless jealousy would not let him evade.

"Who is he?" was the next demand, when the flurry was past. His tone was now low, eager, angry, but the girl paid little attention. Instead of replying she cried to the blind man:

"Be careful, monsieur, you'll take the bandage—you'll be a judge!"

"And should I not, mademoiselle?" he answered, laughing. "Justice is blind. Beware yourself. I'll catch you."

"He suddenly appears at your father's home," exclaimed Sir John, "and, like any other menial, begs a position." He was too angry to be careful now. The girl pulled at his sleeve to make him cease.

"Be quiet. Don't you see monsieur is coming?" she whispered. That was the last straw.

"A tockle!" cried Wilmerding aloud, and May Percy started forward, away from him.

"Oh, I'm not afraid you'll catch me," she laughed in Dubarre's face; then, dodging weakly, almost fell into his arms. There he held her as men hold their dearest possessions.

"Who is she? Guess who she is?" the rest shouted.

Dubarre straightened. "My—I mean Miss Percy," he said, and, releasing her, bowed with the deep reverence of a subject before his queen.

"Good! Good!" cried the others.

Sir John strode for comfort over beside Sir Henry.

The blind man came back to light. He stood in the midst of them all, smiling slightly and holding the bandage in one hand. May Percy was beside him. The others stood about, but these two seemed in some way to be off to themselves, apart from the rest. The girl looked at her captor with a sort of troubled archness. Something it was of the same look she had worn when he made her dance the minuet. At last she spoke, and the tone was troubled, uncertain, questioning.

"I tried, yet I could not escape you. I have got past all our gallants easily. I don't understand."

Then evidently the dancing master forgot himself. He bent toward her, eager, earnest to explain.

"Mademoiselle had slipped a little. My good fortune caught her. Mistress Percy is handicapped always, for no man can stay long away."

The glance that flashed about the circle showed amazement then.

Sir Henry Percy, already black as midnight, grew ponderous in his rage. "Come, come, children," he belittled.

As their hands met in the dance: "And does the house—Oh, what do you call it?" asked Dubarre.

"Housewifery?" prompted the girl.

"Yes, that's it. Does that give the grand air, mademoiselle?" he questioned, most innocently.

"Does dattery come within your province, M. Dubarre?" she answered.

"Twas brave of you."

"Even a poor dancing master can be brave for the truth, mademoiselle."

There was no reply for that.

"You said your countrywomen do not care for the minuet. Why is it?" she asked after a pause.

His face lighted. "Because their hearts pump warm blood, mademoiselle, not freezing water that boils only from anger. For such, the minuet, but for women of heart, the dance."

"The dance?" She stopped and looked at the question. "One we English would like. What is the dance?"

The time, the scene, the maid had all combined to make the Frenchman reckless. The poetry of his French nature was uppermost.

"It is a world's music throbbing in one's feet—this dance! Ah, mademoiselle, to a man!" He paused.

"Yes, to a man," she repeated slowly.

"It is sometimes to carry heaven in his arms until his very heart sings in its joy."

"Carry heaven in his arms, monsieur?"

"I mean the ralse, mademoiselle. Would you value?" His eagerness was overwhelming.

To her cheeks there came the quick flush that faded quickly again, in her eyes that look of sweet yet arch surrender. "You are the dancing master, monsieur."

"Pierre, a valso!" he cried.

Then Dubarre stepped close and put his arm about her.

"With all respect, mademoiselle."

She yielded, and they began waltzing slowly.

Now Dubarre spoke. "One, two, three—one, two, three. Ah, mademoiselle, 'tis the poetry of life clothed in the joy of motion. Can you not feel, for thus 'gainst each other hearts talk, throbs to throbs?"

Over beside the tree Pierre began to show signs of uneasiness.

May Percy's head was bent down. Her breast moved with deep breathes, a dawning pink had stolen to her cheeks. Dubarre looked at her.

"Pardon, mademoiselle. I was wrong. 'Tis far more beautiful when the warmth of an English heart melts the mask of ice from off the face." He half whispered the words.

Pierre coughed sudden warning.

The man continued eagerly, "Then, then, mademoiselle—"

Again Pierre coughed.

He glanced that way. The harpist, with his head, was making violent signs of disapproval.

The hands of the dancing master fell. He stepped back suddenly and bowed. When he spoke it was in quite altered tones and very sad.

"But, mademoiselle, I forgot. There is another dance, quite another dance—the dance of the sword, where men choose honor for a partner and go down to meet death at the end. And that, mademoiselle, is the grandest dance of all."

They stood apart, looking at each other. In his face she watched struggling resolution gain hard mastery, while he saw but blushing wonder and the questioning softness of her eyes. And as they stood thus there floated over from the harp the air of an old French love song, a song of parting. But louder from the direction of the house came the hearty voice of Sir Henry Percy, calling: "May! Oh, May!"

CHAPTER V.

MAY! Oh, May!"

Again the big voice of Sir Henry Percy bawled across the lawn. The noise of it shattered the air of the French love song and broke in rudely on the man and girl standing there silent, looking at each other. They dropped again from the cloud world of fine romance to hard earth with a jar. The wonder, the blush, the softness, all faded from the girl's face as she turned toward the house.

"Here, father; here!" she cried.

Then Sir Henry Percy, Sir John Wilmerding, Captain Thorncliffe and two strange men appeared. The old squire was plainly perplexed.

"What am I to do with these, May?" he questioned helplessly, indicating the strangers. "Another pair of beggarly Frenchmen."

Dubarre bowed and bowed. "Your kindness preserved one beggar Frenchman, monsieur. He will be always grateful."

One of the newcomers, a man of about Dubarre's size and general appearance, seemed to think it was time for his appeal. With a wanderer's skill he went straight to headquarters.

"Will ze kind lady help ze poor Frenchman?"

"What can I do?" asked May Percy gently.

The stranger became instantly visible.

"My name, Jacques Fourney. My cousin, Jean." Then he indicated by signs that Jean was deaf and dumb.

"We run from ze la belle France, from ze leetle Corsican. He hate us. We look for comrades, les bons comrades, who came before. We meet, zen we be so happy, but—" as he noted the tables which the servants had begun to spread for the feast—"so hungry."

May Percy's mind was already made up. "Father, no person shall go hungry from here on my birthday," she cried. "These men must stay, eat and rest tonight. Tomorrow you will give them a little money to help them on their way to find their comrades."

Then Dubarre spoke.

"Mademoiselle, may not all the beggar Frenchmen be together? I will gladly share my room with my compatriots."

At the words Jacques Fourney looked quickly at the speaker. For a moment their eyes met. Then Fourney's glance fell.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Sir Henry Percy.

"Yes, a good plan—all together," echoed Sir John.

Mistress Percy turned to Dubarre. "Certainly, monsieur. If it gives you pleasure," she said. And so the matter was settled. As Dubarre led the newcomers off toward the house Captain Thorncliffe was coming to the lawn. At sight of the smaller Frenchman the soldier checked suddenly, looked in puzzled fashion, then came on, evidently wondering. The little Frenchman ducked his head and hurried after Dubarre.

The tables had been set, the feast brought on, and the guests came trooping back. May Percy, from her post at the head of the table, seated them.

"On my left, captain; Ethel, next to him; next to Ethel, James; and you, Alice, on my father's right." Then she motioned for Sir John to sit at her own right hand. "Dorothy—Sir Henry—Elizabeth."

"I'm sorry the bishop is not here to ask the blessing," quoth Sir Henry. "You should have brought him, Sir Harvey."

"His grace's gout prevented," answered Sir Harvey Johnston, "but he hopes to be over in a day or two."

Now all were in place, and the feast began. Seated on the bench behind the big tree, a dozen feet away and almost out of sight, Pierre, at the harp, made music for the diners. Dubarre had gone to show the strangers his room. Such feasts were not for renegade dancing teachers.

Gradually, at the table, appetites surrendered, and there came that time when tongues were bowed in praise of host and hostess. Captain Thorncliffe had been decanting on the virtues and might of the Percys.

"Why, even the French have a Percy!" he exclaimed as a climax.

"Indeed!" asked Sir John Wilmerding, with interest.

"And he is the worst devil in the army," added the enthusiastic captain.

"Sedition! Sedition!" went the laughing cry about the table, and Sir Henry came quickly with explanations for his guests.

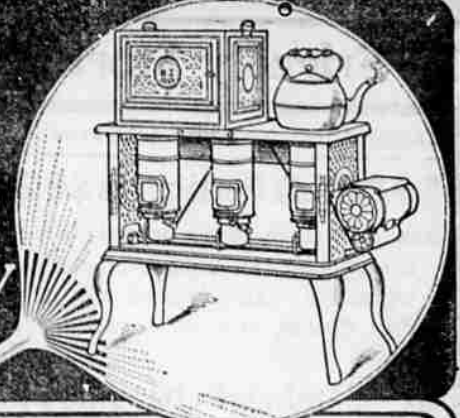
(Continued Next Saturday.)

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STANDARD OIL COMPANY

(Incorporated)

Notice of Final Settlement.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, administratrix of the estate of E. P. Coleman, deceased, has filed her final account in said estate and the first Monday, the 6th day of May, 1907, has been set for final hearing by the County Court of Lane county, Oregon.

Dated this 22d day of March, 1907.

MARY A. COLEMAN,

Administratrix.

Walton & Ness, Attorneys.

Registration of Land Title.

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Lane.

In the matter of the application of Jost D. Petrie to register title to the land in said application described, to-wit:

West one-half of the west one-half of section 26 in township 20 south range 5 west of the Willamette Meridian, containing 160 acres of land in Lane county, Oregon.

To all whom it may concern:—

Take notice, that on the 25th day of March, A. D. 1907, an application was filed by said Jost D. Petrie in the circuit court of Lane county for initial registration of the title to the land above described. Now unless you appear on or before the 29th day of April, A. D. 1907, and show cause why such application should not be granted, the same will be taken as confessed and a decree will be entered according to the prayer of the application and you will be forever barred from disputing the same.

E. U. LEE, Clerk.

By F. L. Gibbs, Deputy.

WILLIAMS & BEAN,

Applicant's Attorney.

Registration of Land Title.

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Lane.

In the matter of the application of Jost D. Petrie to register title to the land in said application described, to-wit:

Beginning at the NW corner of the Daniel Lucas donation land claim, being claim No. 48 in T. 20, S. 3, E. 5, W. in Lane county, Oregon, North 1/2, 3/4, 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 1/16, 1/32, 1/64, 1/128, 1/256, 1/512, 1/1024, 1/2048, 1/4096, 1/8192, 1/16384, 1/32768, 1/65536, 1/131072, 1/262144, 1/524288, 1/1048576, 1/2097152, 1/4194304, 1/8388608, 1/16777216, 1/33554432, 1/67108864, 1/134217728, 1/268435456, 1/536870912, 1/1073741824, 1/2147483648, 1/4294967296, 1/8589934592, 1/17179869184, 1/34359738368, 1/68719476736, 1/137438953472, 1/274877906944, 1/549755813888, 1/1099511627776, 1/2199023255552, 1/4398046511104, 1/8796093022208, 1/17592186044416, 1/35184372088832, 1/70368744177664, 1/140737488355328, 1/281474976710656, 1/562949953421312, 1/1125899906842624, 1/2251799813685248, 1/4503599627370496, 1/9007199254740992, 1/18014398509481984, 1/36028797018963968, 1/72057594037927936, 1/144115188075855872, 1/288230376151711744, 1/576460752303423488, 1/1152921504606846976, 1/2305843009213693952, 1/4611686018427387904, 1/9223372036854775808, 1/18446744073709551616, 1/36893488147419103232, 1/73786976294838206464, 1/147573952589676412928, 1/295147905179352825856, 1/5902