

The CASTLES

BY ANTHONY TREMPER VANDY
 ILLUSTRATED BY J. B. COOPER

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

Locke was the ghostly portrait was vividly suggested. The nostrils of the two heads together formed the eyes of the death-mask; the mustache of the father made the eyebrows; and the brow and the eyes of the boy prince formed the nose and mouth. And more horrible than the death-mask itself was a wound in the temple, from which flowed a streak of blood.

"This wound," I asked, shuddering, "is it merely a coincidence? The look of agony—the staring eyes—is that meant to be a menace, a threat of a violent death?"

"Can you doubt it?" demanded Locke, replacing the envelope carefully in his pocketbook. "That death-mask is regarded by a large portion of Ferdinand's disaffected subjects as a 'heavenly sign.' That little Heaven, I venture to say, is a death-knell for Ferdinand—it introduces into Bulgarian politics an awful and solemn note."

"A heavenly sign?" I asked, shuddering again. "But he still lives!"

"Yes; at present he is in Paris. I suppose he is awaiting Sir Mortimer when he returns to his capital at Sofia."

"And the woman—this Countess Sarahoff, is she one of the revolutionaries who regard that stamp as a 'heavenly sign'?"

"Yes," I said, "she was supposed to be the friend of Prince Ferdinand."

"I did. But is she? She is a woman of mystery. Is she really in earnest in seeking to entrap Sir Mortimer into influencing Bulgaria to stand behind Macedonia? Is she ignorant of the existence or at least the significance of this stamp? Or does she, as a friend of Ferdinand, having ready access to him at any hour, will here be the dagger plunged into his breast at the fatal hour? Perhaps Sir Mortimer is not the guileless victim I think him to be. Perhaps the king's messenger does not have two sets of dispatches to be presented at his discretion. Perhaps this death-mask is a ghastly coincidence and not a menace. Perhaps Countess Sarahoff, alias Sophie de Varneris, is a lamb of innocence. Perhaps! But, my dear chap, don't trust that 'perhaps'."

Locke rose and pulled on his gloves. I stared at him in sudden comprehension.

"I understand now. You had more than one object in coming to see this morning," I said, soberly.

He lit a cigarette, looking down at me in deep thought.

"In America the game of politics is a fair game and above board. We show our cards; they are on the table for all the world to see. The very frankness of our methods puzzles the diplomats of Europe. Here in Europe things are managed differently. There are wheels within wheels. No pawn is too insignificant to be made use of. This pawn may be a simple citizen, even a tourist—"

I shook the hand he held toward me, and retained it, bewildered.

"But that is absurd on the face of it. In what possible way could I be of use to this Countess Sarahoff?"

Locke shrugged his shoulders carelessly, and blew a ring of smoke with precision at the chandelier.

"Nothing is quite absurd," he returned, calmly. "Two days ago I read of an unfortunate accident of a fellow-countryman and an old college acquaintance. Today I am surprised to find this countess's mine on excellent terms and above board. I have every reason to believe in a dangerous adventure. I come to see my fellow-countryman, to offer him my sympathy. I remain to warn him."

"But why?" I demanded, still skeptical.

"There are three facts that should make you think, Haddon. First of all, you have made the acquaintance of the mother and the sister of Sir Mortimer Brett. Secondly, Countess Sarahoff has made your acquaintance. Thirdly—contradictory as it may seem—she has already interested you more than that, I venture to say that you have made an appointment with her."

He looked at me keenly. I was silent.

"These, my dear Haddon, are simple facts. Perhaps there is no relation between them. Again I say, 'perhaps.' But don't let the mysterious machinery of intrigue catch you in its meshes. Its wheels may crush you. You have had enough trouble and lock out for Countess Sarahoff."

"I shall try to remember your advice," I said, struggling to control my excitement, and placed his visiting-card in my pocket. "Yes; I shall see you again before I leave Locerna."

"Oh, but remember about that," said Locke, softly.

Not until afterwards did it occur to me that I had treated him rather cavalierly—indeed, had myself open to suspicion by my silence.

A life for a life, Helena had said. But it not honor sometimes dearer than life itself? At least the honor of a loved brother.

That I could exert any influence over the mind and actions of a man as famous in affairs as Sir Mortimer Brett was absurd. Even had there been possible Helena would have been the last to intrust his honor in my hands. And yet, as Locke had said, what if it were a pawn in the game of Countess Sarahoff?

Then why not be an intelligent pawn, to be moved if you will, carefully here and there in the game of intrigue, but to be moved with my eyes open?

"No pawn is too insignificant to be made use of," those were Locke's words. He had believed that she would attempt to make use of me. Heaven grant it, I thought, with a thrill of hope. We should then see what she would see. Yes; I would look after for Countess Sarahoff. But scarcely in the manner Locke had suggested.

Early in the afternoon a message came from her, as if I had felt confident it would. A cousin was with her; they were to leave Locerna that evening on route to a little village in the Bernese Alps, where she had taken a chateau for the summer. She would

Before the trees across tomorrow we must be off—up, up, up the mountains to my chateau. It will break my heart if we are delayed."

"Your chateau has great attraction for you," I said, smiling.

She came toward me impulsively, her hands clasped.

"Oh, you would like my chateau, wouldn't you? It is strong and rugged; and so high that you can see the towers through the branches of the pine trees, as you climb the hillside. It seems a dream, a fantasy. And before, very far below, there is the noisy little river that rushes toward its base, and an adorable village that crouches close to its protection. And within, there are great shadowy rooms with gleaming bare floors and tapestries. Oh, yes, and there is my beloved piano. When the thunder rolls terribly over the lonely mountains, and the storm beats against the curtain, windows, and the fire of huge logs in the hearth does not reach the summer corners—oh, it is then that I live. I am inspired. In the night the passionate soul of Chopin speaks to me. And in the morning wherewith the sun is shining again, and the little river is gay and turbulent, there are my flowers and my books and my poor. And there is peace. My cousin is a Countess of Innocence, and it is a Castle of Happiness."

"That is the castle where we are all looking for," I said wistfully.

She moved restlessly to the piano. She struck the opening chords of that prelude of Chopin which is at once a suggestion of a funeral march and a procession in a cathedral. I watched her, fascinated, though I had sworn I would not be fascinated by her.

She stopped abruptly in the midst of a phrase. Her white arms dropped to her lap. She looked over toward me. Then she leaned her elbow on the keys; she nodded to me, half in entreaty, half in command. I stood opposite her, leaning toward her, across the piano.

"But sometimes I am lonely in my

How the trees were trembling, and yet she smiled—a smile mysterious, tragic, pitiful.

"Monseigneur, I am not a female. I am a woman of the world. Fate has called to me. I must follow; I must meet my destiny somewhere; I must walk in the dark places. The world, your world, let it think what it will. Bah, it is not my concern what it thinks of me. Perhaps last night, this morning, I wished you to fall in love with me. Perhaps now I am asking you to give me a little respect, a very little, monseigneur. But what does it matter?"

I looked at this strange woman in astonishment. It was a curious plan. Perhaps she had wished to make me fall in love with her? She made the frank confession with a childish naïveté. And in the same breath she asked for my respect!

"You speak in riddles!" I exclaimed impatiently. "Tell me your purpose."

She looked up at me swiftly, half in defiance.

"Tell me yours."

"My purpose?" I cried. "I have none."

A moment she scanned my face keenly. Apparently she was satisfied that I spoke the truth. But that she should have even a glimmer of a suspicion was startling.

"Look, my friend, I speak no more in riddles, but I did not tell me, for my chateau because there you can do me a service, a great service. Voilà, I have told you everything."

"Not quite everything," I replied calmly. "I would like to know, for instance, the nature of the service that you ask of the first stranger, your guest?"

"When you are my guest I shall tell you more expressly, my friend."

She plunged into a stormy monologue to draw my protestations. I watched her, irritated and yet half yielding, as she battled with the brilliancy and eloquence of her tongue. Then I walked to the window.

To reach it I passed a pier-glass paneled in the wall. A man's face was dimly reflected there. Though I did not look I knew that he must be standing behind a door leading into another apartment. He had been listening of course.

I betray my surprise. I stepped out on the balcony, looking down on the street below.

This incident banished my last shred of reluctance. These adventures were spiced on me; it was equally fair that I play their game. Yes; I determined to meet them with their own weapons.

The music reached a stormy climax. There was silence. I did not go back into the room. I was too curious. Would she again insist? If so, I determined to no longer refuse.

The heavy curtains at the window were parted. She stood beside me. Again I noticed the fervid light in her eyes; her bosom rose and fell tumultuously; her color came and went.

"Then you have no liking for an adventure?" she demanded in a spirit of desperate gaiety. "Ever since the adventure is to be shared with a woman—yes, a beautiful woman!"

"Not when adventures are thrust on me," I noticed the fervid light in her eyes; her bosom rose and fell tumultuously; her color came and went.

"Ah, you persist in being ungracious. Then say this adventure brings happiness for yourself."

"It should require proof of that."

She said that I was not to be won over by coquetry. She became serious, almost anxious. Instinctively I felt that she was about to play her last card. Had she known it, I was already decided. But she was ignorant of that, and risked everything to gain her purpose.

"You have set yourself a task. What it can be you shall find it!"

"Again you speak in riddles, madam."

"If I said I were listening last night!"

I frowned on her, furious, but I did not answer.

She felt no shame in making this confession. One she snatched on her hip, with the other she snapped finger against thumb.

"My dear monseigneur, you are not attracted when you look like that. Even I have heard the English proverb, 'All is fair in love and in war.'"

"And since this is not love, you wish me to infer that it is war? And you ask the enemy deliberately into the camp?"

"It is neither love nor war. It is a trap. Does that satisfy you?"

"Why do you say that? If you wish me to do you, it must be an armed truce. I interposed cautiously.

I emphasized the adjective.

"Hush! At Afternoon you shall know if I will be for you to do it if we are to be allies."

"Very well," I assented briskly. "I will go to your chateau with you. When do we start?"

She made my decision she grasped the railing of the balcony, exhausted. Presently I noticed that her lips were moving, and as I looked at her in wonder, I saw her turvily move her lips. She was speaking. She spoke again. It was languidly, as with an effort.

"Dr. Starva and myself are to go tonight to Vilmas, a little town on Lake Locerna, on board the journeyman here. To-morrow morning at the dawn we drive in diligence to Althoffen."

"Is it necessary that I go to Vilmas?"

"Yes," she said hesitatingly, winking her eyes. "The last boat leaves Locerna at 11. Your luggage, can I be ready then?"

I nodded assent.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

He may hope for the best that's prepared for the worst.

Supremacy of the Law Means Liberty

BY VICE-PRESIDENT CHARLES W. FARRAR.

Our fathers believed in a government of law—law written by representatives of the people, chosen by the people themselves acting in their sovereign capacity. They realized that this was to be a great country, and they knew that if it were to attain to the full measure of their best expectations, it must be a country where the law, and the law alone, should be supreme. They knew full well that to be great, it must be governed by just laws—laws which, so far as human foresight could devise, should protect every citizen in the enjoyment of the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

They knew, as we know, that in the final analysis, law is the very life of liberty, and without law and obedience to it, there is despotism, and despotism is tyranny.

We should inculcate a wholesome respect for law and for established authority. We should see to it that those who enact the law and those who administer it are fair, just and incorruptible men—men who neither wealth nor the blandishments of power nor prejudice can swerve from a high-minded, honorable course. Laws should be the concrete expression of the conscience and intelligent judgment of the people. Their purpose should be as broad and comprehensive as are the rights of all who owe allegiance to a common flag. The laws should be enacted so as to comprehend the welfare of the great body of the people. The laws simply protect us in the enjoyment of our rightful opportunities. It is left for us to work out our own destiny in the exercise of our own judgment and by the force of our own will.

We are placed here and must run our race together. We must have a regard for each other and beware that we do not trample upon the rights of our neighbor. While we care for ourselves, we must also have a thought for those about us, and, so far as we are able, help others who are worthy and in need, to bear their burdens. We cannot get on without each other if we would and we would not if we could. A man who takes no thought of his neighbor is not worthy of thought himself.

Democratizing the Church

BY RABBI CHARLES FLEISCHER, Boston.

Whatever the figures may indicate regarding the numbers of church communicants and the growth of church property, actual church-going steadily decreases, and hence, unadulterated and unratified acceptance of the existing formulations of faith grows less and less.

This indubitable fact does not spell irreligion, but it at least hints at a larger religiousness than the world has known. Church attendance is no test of a man's religiousness. Even total abstinence in this regard would not prove him irreligious.

Many strays of tendency are uniting to swell the flood of seeming irreligion. It is worth while at least to name and to number these tendencies.

Men have largely lost their "dread of something after death," so that terror of other worldly punishment to follow so-called unbelief no longer is a compelling force toward real or pretended belief.

The Inquisition is dead, killed by the growing humanity of man. Therefore, there is no earthly means of enforcing the faith and practice of whatever church that still may dominate the life of particular sections of society. Excommunications and heresy trials are but weak and ineffectual echoes of once terrifying and fatal ecclesiastical thunders.

This is the day of democracy. That means hard times for survivors of monarchic days. Kings must go; the people will rule themselves; society must gradually be reorganized in all respects on the democratic basis.

The church is plainly monarchic and autocratic in its organization and in its attitude toward men. The process of democratizing the church has but just begun. The independent congregational organization is the only democratic form, and even then it is not democratic in spirit until all "tests" of orthodoxy are abolished and the society recognizes that the genuine church is rightly the church of one member.



The Tongue a Weapon of Power

BY DR. NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS.

Wise men have searched the world for images strong enough to set forth the full power of the tongue. Of the children of sympathy it may be said the tongue sheds forth healing balms and cordials; but of the envious man it is true that the poison of asp is under the lips. For, as of old, so now the tongue is a hand wherewith we lift men up or a mace wherewith we strike men down. With this instrument bless we God; with it curse we men. No other member carries such influence; and nothing taxes men like the skillful handling of the tongue and its bridling, even as the charioteer lifts the reins above his well-trained steeds. For the tongue gushes forth comfort like a cool, sweet spring; the tongue is a harp, piling up masses of melody; the tongue is a fruitful bower, full of bodily and delight; the tongue carries a glow, warming the soul like a wister's fire; it sends forth sweet songs to be sung in camp and wept over in cottage.

This noble use inheres in speech—it is the soul's reveller. The eye and ear, the taste and touch, are windows for letting the great outer world into the secret sanctuary, but the tongue is the one door through which the soul steps out. Only through speech is the invisible man beholden of his friends.

Pathetic, indeed, are the attempts of men lost in subterranean depths as they seek to find their way back into the open light. But the sorrows of imprisoned martyrs are as nothing to those of brave Helen Keller, with her dumb lips and blind eyes, who places her finger upon the larynx of some speaking friend while her soul struggles to find its way out into the light and sunshine where sympathy and friendship dwell. Once the lips begin to speak the soul stands forth fully revealed. For conversation is a golden chariot upon which the soul rides forth to greet its friends.



The Dinner at the Hotel National.

be charmed if I would dine with them in her apartment at the Hotel National. And would you pardon the absurd hour of 4:30? I was to come in my morning clothes, since neither she nor her cousin expected to dress.

I accepted the invitation with alacrity. That meant privacy—a certain intimacy. A cousin was to be there, it was true. But the presence of the cousin was, of course, a sop sweetly thrown at Mrs. Grundy.

The cousin had not arrived when I presented myself that evening. I struggled against a sense of shame. I was accepting her hospitality, and I had come to see my cousin. But I reassured myself with the conviction that it was to be a game of tit-for-tat.

The apartment of mine into which I was ushered was dimly lighted, and the air was heavy with the perfume of flowers. In the center of the room sat the white damask and silver of a table set for dinner gleamed under the soft light of candles. In some vague way, this room, one of a hundred others in the hotel, had lost something of its stiff formality. It had charm. Charm! That was the word that best described this mysterious woman. Well, I would stand myself against that charm.

She had been beautiful the evening before; this evening she was radiant. Her eyes burned with a fire that at once disconcerted and excited. She was the incarnation of what one calls the joy of living. Never for an instant was she still. Now it was to glance critically at the admirably set table; now to rearrange the covers. Presently she moved to the window and drew back the heavy brocade hanging, looking at me over her shoulder.

"Why does your cousin not come?" she demanded, pertinently. "As if to-night we go to Vilmas!"

She looked at me intently, very pale.

CHAPTER XI.

Countess Sarahoff gives an invitation. I stood quiet still after Locke had left me, lost in thought.