

# The Castle Comedy

By THOMPSON BUCHANAN

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(Continued from last week.)

A girl muffled in a cape, with the hood drawn over her face, slipped quickly into the room. Astonished, Pierre started back. Dubarre put his finger to his lips.

"Until tomorrow night," he muttered to Pierre, and, bowing, the man slipped from the room. Dubarre closed the door after him and turned to face his visitor.

### CHAPTER VII.

"UNTIL tomorrow night?" The girl repeated it as a question. Then with a quick flit she threw the shrouding hood aside, and May Percy stood before him. A drizzling rain was falling without, and somehow a dozen drops or so had stolen under her hood to sparkle amid the black hair like diamonds. Her cheeks were red from hurrying. Her eyes, big, eager, questioning, sought his.

Dubarre drew a long breath. "Yes," he said. May Percy gave a quick, relieved laugh. "Why, I need not have hurried so. You did not speak to me, so I came to tell you goodby."

She extended her hand. After a scant moment he dropped it, as something not to be safely held.

"Mademoiselle knew I was going?" he asked. "Yes, Captain Thorncliffe told me."

Dubarre frowned. "The captain! I asked him not to tell."

"So he said. You were to leave early in the morning, and what a shame it was none of us would get to tell you goodby after you had been so kind. He was coming tonight, he thought, and I decided I would, too, because I was afraid I might not wake up in time and you would be gone."

She had rushed through it all in a breath, for Dubarre was still frowning. Now he bowed to her ceremoniously.

"Mademoiselle is very kind, but also very imprudent. Did mademoiselle bring her maid along?"

At that Mistress Percy's face showed only startled, innocent surprise.

"No. Why should I? I was not afraid. Besides?" She hesitated.

"Besides?" he asked. "I did not want them to know," she blurted out impulsively.

"Want whom to know?" "My father and Sir John."

"Sir John is mademoiselle's affianced husband," suggested the dancing master, with just a shade of reproof in his speech.

Blazing with sudden, splendid anger, Mistress Percy turned on him. "That does not entitle him to hold authority over me. I am not yet crumpled within a wedding ring, thank heaven!"

"Mademoiselle!" His tone was wholly reproving now, but that served only to enrage her the more.

"Oh, you needn't take his part. I believe all you men are alike. I hate you all. I'm sure I do." And, whirling away from him, she stood drumming her fingers on the table. Dubarre shook his head despairingly. When he spoke it was in a suave, soothing tone.

"Mademoiselle is excited. May I get a glass of water for mademoiselle?" May Percy turned back impatiently. "Now, don't take that tone. You'll be

Then with a quick flit she threw the shrouding hood aside.

Like my father next. I say some one has been kind to me, and I will see him to say goodby and thank him, and then, forsooth, Sir John!" she paused, then went on with sneering contempt—"the righteous, proper Sir John, who has lost half a fortune at cards and fought once about a girl, must throw up his hands in holy horror and my father grow sarcastic and suggest that I go over tonight to pay a formal visit to express my thanks in person for a paid service. Oh, I despise you men!"

She was miserably angry, but of a sudden her old April self predominated. An arch smile broke through the clouds on her face, and a gay laugh at some new thought swept away all trace of gloom.

"Do you really suppose, monsieur, my father meant that seriously? Am I not a dutiful daughter?" She stopped, struggling to contain her laughter.

At the angry outburst Dubarre had started to walk up and down the room. This last change was too much for a man helplessly, hopelessly in love. There was but one salvation. He stopped and bowed stiffly.

"I know one thing, which is, mademoiselle must be going."

It was a command. Mistress Percy drew herself up proudly. "And you, too, M. Propriety—forgive me. I had not properly estimated the dancing master. He fairly bristles with unexpectedness. Possibly—with the dainty, sarcastic smile that only made her face the more adorable—monsieur has lost a whole fortune at cards and fought two duels over two girls."

Plagued, tempted past all endurance, the Frenchman lost his head. "A dozen would be nearer," he blurted, in sudden anger.

For a moment May Percy looked at him helplessly. Then the meaning of it all swept over her. She drew a long breath, while her eyes grew big and anxious.

"Then monsieur is—" He interrupted quickly. "Gaston Dubarre, poor French dancing master." Next he drew back and, with a low bow, added, "To Mistress Percy, grand lady."

Slowly the eagerness faded out of the girl's face. Her head drooped as she held out her hand kindly.

"Forgive me, monsieur. I did not mean to intrude upon a possible secret."

"Mademoiselle's own heart's kindness makes her forgiveness," he said brokenly.

"And I shall think—" Dubarre shrugged his shoulders. "Twere a foolish man who would try to curb a woman's thought, mademoiselle."

She continued, "That a French gentleman, a soldier perhaps, has honored a little English girl by teaching her to dance."

Now he shook his head, smiling slightly, but when he spoke his tone was deeply serious.

"And a poor French dancing master will know that the bon Dieu permits sometimes one of his own bright children to steal down from above to give those struggling below just one little foretaste, a promise of the kingdom of the bon Dieu. Then—he snatches it away."

With a shrug, the man walked to the mantel and leaned against it, dejected, hopeless beyond further speech. The girl's face was a reflection of his attitude. After a pause she spoke timidly, "But the children from above, as you call them, they stay on earth, monsieur."

He turned and came to her quickly, sudden resolve in every movement.

"Mademoiselle," he said, and now in turn his tone was eager, "could a man pretend to be what he is not?"

"That would depend, monsieur," she interrupted softly.

"Suppose, mademoiselle"—Dubarre spoke more carefully, weighing every word—"suppose a man had sworn an oath to her he loved best in the world?"

"May Percy started—"suppose, mademoiselle"—He smiled. "Ah, this is all a little game of suppose—that young man gets release from his chief, forswears his friends, for a time gives up his life and, meanly attired, at great peril attempts to follow out the oath made to her he loved most as she lay dying."

The Frenchman paused. His quick eye had noted the girl's signs of embarrassment.

"Is the little game of suppose too long, mademoiselle?"

"Go on, monsieur." Her tone was ample encouragement. He took up the game again more eagerly.

"Suppose, then, mademoiselle, he fulfills his oath. Could you—a moment he paused for a word—"respect that man?"

"Yes—yes, monsieur," she cried impulsively.

Dubarre shook his head, smiling sadly.

"You speak too quick, mademoiselle. The game, our little 'suppose' game, is not finished. Suppose, mademoiselle, that young man met danger, great danger, greater than he knew. You know the danger, mademoiselle. It is the light that the bon Dieu puts by life's sea to save or wreck men—a woman. If he steers headlong, reckless, willing to die on the rocks, if only struggling for that light, could you—could you think such a man worthy?" He paused for a reply.

May Percy stood at the edge of dreadland, looking into the far away. At last she spoke, and it was very soft. "You say the danger is sent by God, monsieur? Then man should try to conquer it."

He stepped toward her, his arms outstretched impulsively. "Mademoiselle, you are—"

She straightened and looked at him quickly. He stopped, for in that look there was some strange mingling of weakness, of sad determination against desire and of appeal that awed him. When she spoke, in so far as it could the tone echoed the look.

"As you were about to say, the affianced wife of Sir John Wilmerding, and you a French gentleman, monsieur."

He stepped back and bowed deeply, then moved toward the door.

"May I have the honor of seeing mademoiselle safely to the house?"

And then, almost as he said it, the door shook from a mighty pounding.

### CHAPTER VIII.

AGAIN the door rattled and shook under the weight of a hammering sword hit. Within the room the man and girl, struck still, stared blankly at each other. Surprise, dark anger, quick blushing shame and, last, white fear succeeded in her face. Her lips trembled, the hands clasped and unclasped nerv-

ously, and she began to speak and could not. Only the eyes spoke plainly her fright and her appeal. Dubarre recovered first.

"Who is there?" he shouted, and the tone was not that of the humble dancing master in the least.

From without sounded a voice, hoarse with anger. "Open! Open! 'Tis I! Open quickly!"

"Sir John!" It came at last, a low, faint gasp of horror from May Percy. Now she realized her false position—Dubarre's consideration of it. "What can I do?" she begged, low.

Silent, lightly as a cat, the Frenchman sprang to the door and noiselessly turned the key. Another second and he was back beside her.

"Sh!" he whispered. Then aloud: "And who may 'I' be? No unknown 'I's have entree here." Again he whispered to the girl, "Try the window." As in a dream, she tiptoed to it, but the heavy shutter was closed and barred.

"Open! Open at once; I say!" Sir John's voice bore wild rage now. Every instant the door threatened to give way under his furious assault.

May Percy had stolen back to Dubarre. "The shutter—I can't manage it," she whispered faintly.

And now from beyond the door another voice broke in upon them. "'Tis Sir John Wilmerding and I, Captain Thorncliffe. We wish to speak with you, M. Dubarre."

"Captain Thorncliffe! Oh, I'm lost!" and, moaning thus piteously, May Percy seemed about to faint. Dubarre caught her almost roughly by the arm.

"Keep courage, you must hide," he muttered. His touch restored her. The Percy pluck began to assert itself. Her mouth set, and she looked at him understandingly. Aloud he cried:

"Pardon, monsieurs, pardon. I'm coming," and he started noisily for the door. The pounding without ceased.

"Well, hurry," shouted Sir John Wilmerding. "We can't wait all night."

May Percy rushed behind the bed. Dubarre darted after her. "Not here," he muttered fiercely, "the closet." Then he sprang to the mantel, knocked off the candlesticks and kicked over an andiron to make a big crash.

"Mon Dieu," he cried, loudly angry, "there goes the candle. That comes of being in a hurry." Next he was beside May Percy, opening the closet door and shouting all at once.

"Patience, messieurs! In a moment—when I get a light."

Sir John Wilmerding was becoming wilder every second of delay.

"We'll make light enough when we get in," he roared.

Dubarre had stepped into the closet with May Percy. Now they came out, he shaking his head.

"Hopeless!" whispered the girl in low tones of agony.

Again the man shook his head. "I can't kill both." Thus they stood gazing at each other, twin statues of despair.

From without the stern voice of Captain Thorncliffe punctuated their lethargy.

"Open, Dubarre, immediately or we'll force a way." And again a sword hit began playing upon the door.

As at a deathblow one looks for the time, now Dubarre raised his eyes. His searching gaze, wandering from the girl, found the face of the big clock. Suddenly his own face brightened. Aloud, in laughing tones, almost triumphant, he cried:

"Mon Dieu! Don't, captain! I'm coming."

Seizing May Percy by the arm, he hustled her with desperate speed over to the big clock. The door of it came open easily. "Be quiet and trust me," he whispered. A moment more and the girl was locked in behind the wooden door. And the face of the clock above told nothing of it.

"I'm coming, messieurs; I'm coming." Dubarre was leaping across the room for the other door. And as he sprang by he jerked off his coat and threw it on the table. Quickly he turned the lock and threw open the door with a grand flourish.

"What has brought the humble dancing master this honor?" asked the obsequious, bowing Frenchman as Sir John Wilmerding and Captain Thorncliffe crossed the threshold.

"Are gentlemen to be kept waiting by a paid jumping jack?" demanded Sir John Wilmerding, striding to the center of the room.

"For the fifth time the dancing master bowed to his waist.

"But see, monsieur," he protested, "I did not stop even to finish dressing."

Captain Thorncliffe turned impatiently to his companion.

"Come, Jack. We are not here to bandy words. State what you want."

The Frenchman looked from one to the other. "Messieurs, what has happened? You are wearing swords. Do you expect attack? What can be the matter?" In surprise and sudden anxiety he piled questions one upon another.

"Matter enough!" roared Wilmerding. "We are searching for Mistress Percy."

Dubarre was the picture of horrified astonishment. "Mon Dieu!" he cried. "Has some beast stolen her?" He rushed to the table and began slipping on his coat. "For her I, too, could wear a sword." He ran back and, seizing Sir John by the arm, began pulling him toward the door, all the while crying: "But come, come, monsieur! We are losing time! Your betrothed may be—"

"If it only were a jest!" roared Wilmerding. "I tell you, I saw her come."

Straightway Dubarre was swept into equal rage. With his hands twitching, he stepped close to Wilmerding and thrust his own blazing eyes within a foot of the angry lover's. "If you say that, Englishman, like many another spy, you lie!"

Sir John sprang back and half drew his sword. Captain Thorncliffe leaped beside him in time to catch his arm.

"Steady, Jack, steady," advised the captain soothingly. "I knew there must be some mistake."

The Frenchman's anger had changed to cold contempt now.

"And a mistake monsieur will rue when Mistress Percy hears of it," he sneered.

Sir John Wilmerding shook off the restraining arm bitterly.

"Loose me, Hal. I tell you I saw her come not twenty minutes ago. I watched the door and sent for you that I might have witness when I killed the low born lover."

He turned again fiercely on the sneering Frenchman.

"Quiet, Jack. Be calm," soothed Captain Thorncliffe.

Dubarre bowed with most exaggerated politeness.

"Monsieur greatly honors the poor dancing master when he admits him as a rival."

"And you, Dubarre, be silent!" ordered Thorncliffe sternly.

Again the Frenchman bowed humbly.

"The poor dancing master should always strive to please monsieur. Of a truth, if I'm to die for it, it pains me deeply that, dying, I cannot at the last please Sir John by producing the lady." His manner expressed only great sorrow that his failure to do so should give the lover pain.

Sir John shot black looks all about the room.

"If she's here we'll find her," he declared fiercely.

Eagerly Dubarre seized the opportunity for vindication.

"Yes, yes. Let us search." As he spoke he rushed to the bed and laid hold of the curtains. Sir John winced visibly at that. It did not escape the Frenchman. Still holding the cloth, he turned, blandly questioning.

"Pray, where did the titled lover expect to find his mistress? Was she discussing theology with the humble dancing master?" Then, without waiting for reply, he jerked down the curtains, drew them off the bed and began to shake them in violent style.

"Is the fellow mad? What are you doing?" demanded Captain Thorncliffe.

Dubarre looked up apologetically.

"One never can tell, monsieur. I thought perhaps a girl, a half girl or possibly a girl and a half might be hidden in the curtains."

Thorncliffe exclaimed sternly: "Dubarre, enough of this trifling."

The dancing master was all eagerness to please. "As monsieur le capitaine wishes," he said suavely, "but monsieur knows all manner of queer things may happen when a titled lover traces his affianced bride to the room of an object dancing master." Then, turning from the captain to Sir John, he made a gesture toward the mattress.

"Will monsieur thrust his sword into the bed?" The lover winced again.

"I'm sure," added Dubarre, with great earnestness, "she must scream if it touches her."

"Cease such unseemly jesting!" shouted the badgered one.

The Frenchman became mildly agitated. "I did not jest, monsieur. 'Twas your own suggestion," he said. "I wished but to make sure. Will monsieur lend me the sword?"

"No," answered Wilmerding shortly. "Enough!" said Captain Thorncliffe.

Dubarre drew a small knife from his belt. "Then by myself I'll make sure," he declared, and springing suddenly on the bed, thrust the knife repeatedly into the mattress.

"Is it enough?" he asked, after a dozen thrusts, looking up.

"Come down, Dubarre," ordered Thorncliffe, laughing in spite of himself.

The Frenchman climbed down. Then, looking at his work, apostrophized the bed regretfully. "Poor bed, it was cruel treatment after the many times you have comforted me, but," shaking his head sadly, "when ladies of fashion seek by night the rooms of renegade dancing masters, then all things must be changed about."

Sir John had moved over beside the mantel. "The window—she might have got out by this."

Then he and Captain Thorncliffe struggled with the bar. It took several minutes of tussling before the heavy shutter moved back. Dubarre laughed and thanked them for doing something that he had been unable to do for himself.



"The closet!" he exclaimed and rushed toward it.

riage, how difficult afterward it should be to hold the wife from gentlemen of fashion and soldiers.

Wilmerding still wavered before the closed door.

"Hal," he said at last, "I'm not myself. I can't face her. Let me watch the Frenchman. You open the door. And as for you"—raising his sword above Dubarre—"I'll—"

With a quick jerk Captain Thorncliffe had pulled open the closet door. "It's empty!" he cried in joyful tones.

Wilmerding's sword fell to the floor with a crash. The lover shook a moment for very joy.

"Thank God!" he said earnestly at last.

The Frenchman looked at both with a sneer. "Are you quite sure, messieurs?" he asked.

"I was before I came," declared Thorncliffe heartily.

Dubarre turned now on Wilmerding.

"'Twas a brave deed, monsieur, for the titled lover with sword on hip to insult the poor, unarmed dancing master."

"No harm was done," blurted Sir John, the more brutally to cover his confusion.

The Frenchman merely looked at him. "Doubtless Mistress Percy will be glad to hear that she was proved innocent," he said.

Captain Thorncliffe had to bite his lips at that. "Don't push Jack so hard, Dubarre," he urged.

The dancing master continued to Sir John: "But is monsieur sure—quite sure—that she is innocent? One never can tell of women. Is there not some other place to look? Possibly she may have hidden behind the face of the clock. It stopped this morning. A shaking up may do it good."

Captain Thorncliffe felt called upon to interfere. "Enough, enough, Dubarre!" he begged. "Don't you see he's sorry?"

"Yes," said Wilmerding angrily. "I'm sorry." He thrust his sword in its scabbard and stalked toward the door.

The Frenchman looked after the departing lover. "One would think he was sorry he had not found her," said the vindicated man sarcastically.

Captain Thorncliffe held out his hand. "I know you will say nothing of this, Dubarre. I am grieved mad jealousy should have led Jack to such folly. You have acted splendidly throughout."

Dubarre smiled as they shook hands. "You should know," he said, then added: "'Twas sad. Pierre came in wearing a long cloak 'gainst the rain, but went away again without it. That fooled him. Good night, monsieur."

Captain Thorncliffe followed Sir John Wilmerding out. Dubarre locked the door after them. Next he straightened, with a monstrous sigh of relief, and in the candle light his face was lined with a great fatigue. A moment he stood thus, then stepped quickly across the room. He turned the key and opened the door of the clock.

"They are gone, mademoiselle. Now I shall see you safely to the house."

From her narrow hiding place the girl looked out on him with her eyes full of a wonderful light that had never showed there so plainly before.

"For my good name what return can I make to the noblest gentleman I ever knew?" she asked.

Dubarre bowed low over her extended hand.

"None to the dancing master—just now, mademoiselle," he said, with meaning.

Then Mistress Percy stepped out from the clock, and as she did so the figures of two men passed the window. Sir John Wilmerding, on the outside, started forward, but Captain Thorncliffe thrust one hand over the lover's mouth and pushed him back into the shadow, and from the captain's lips came the muttered exclamation: "By gracious! She was in the clock!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Madison county in the western part of the State is fast developing into a mining centre. Fine specimens of silver ore have been taken from a new mine, also copper and coal. A large garnet mine, near Marshall, is quite an industry, and quartz is also mined.

### Dr. B. K. Hays

May be found in his office from 10 to 12 a.m. Only emergency calls answered during office hours. Two years special study in disease of the eye and fitting glasses.



### G. S. WATKINS, M. D., Physician and Surgeon, Oxford, - - - N. C.

Having located in Oxford for the practice of medicine, I desire the patronage of the people. Office at Hall drug store.

### Sale of Land.

By virtue of a deed of trust, executed to me as trustee for J. T. Cates by C. U. Thomas, I will on

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4th, 1907, sell at the court house door in Oxford at public auction for cash the following tracts of land situated in Wayne County, North Carolina, to-wit: bounded on the west by Tom Puckett, south by Robert Williams, east by ———, north and north by the heirs of Morris Smith, containing 140 acres, more or less, subject to \$25 to S. H. Jones.

2nd, 18 undivided interests in 450 acres more or less, belonging to Mrs. Charles Thomas for life and then to her children under the will of T. B. Coley, said tract lying in Oak Hill Township, Granville County, and adjoining the tract of Mack Royster, land formerly belonging to Dick Teart and others, said will of record in Granville County, and the prior deeds made part of this. This 4th day of January, 1907.

T. C. BROOKS, Trustee.

### Notice of Application.

Notice is hereby given that Geo. N. Beaton, who was convicted of embezzlement at the November term 1906 of the Granville County Superior Court and sentenced to serve 12 months on the roads of Granville County, will on Feb. 24th, 1907 apply to the Governor of North Carolina for a pardon. This January 21st, 1907. GEO. N. BEATON.

### Executor's Notice.

Having qualified as before the Clerk of the Superior Court of Granville County as Executor of the estate of M. D. Harris, deceased, I hereby give notice to all persons holding claims against said estate to present the same to me for payment on or before the 25th day of January, 1907, and this notice will be placed in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate are requested to make immediate payment. This Jan. 22, 1906.

MOLLIE HARRIS, Executor of M. D. Harris, deceased. Jan 25 6tpd.

### Administrator's Notice.

Having qualified before the Clerk of the Superior Court as administrator of the estate of the late Annie Smith, deceased, I hereby notify all persons holding claims against said estate to present the same to me for payment on or before Jan. 25, 1907, or this notice will be placed in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to the said estate are requested to make immediate payment. This Jan. 22, 1906.

E. L. SMITH, Adm'r of Annie Smith, de'd. Jan 25 6tpd.

### FURS, FURS.

Mink No. 1, small \$3, medium \$3.50, large \$4. You will not see this paid by any one else than J. D. PAYNE, nov.30 5m.pd. Burlington, N. C.



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