

**COL. ROSS OF
PIEDMONT.
A NOVEL**

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Col. Ross of Piedmont. A novel by John Esten Cooke

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JOHN ESTEN COOKE

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PIEDMONT.
A NOVEL**

COL. ROSS OF PIEDMONT'.

A Novel.

BY JOHN ESTEN COOKE,

AUTHOR OF

"SURRY OF EAGLES NEST," "MOHUN." "HILT
TO HILT," ETC., ETC.



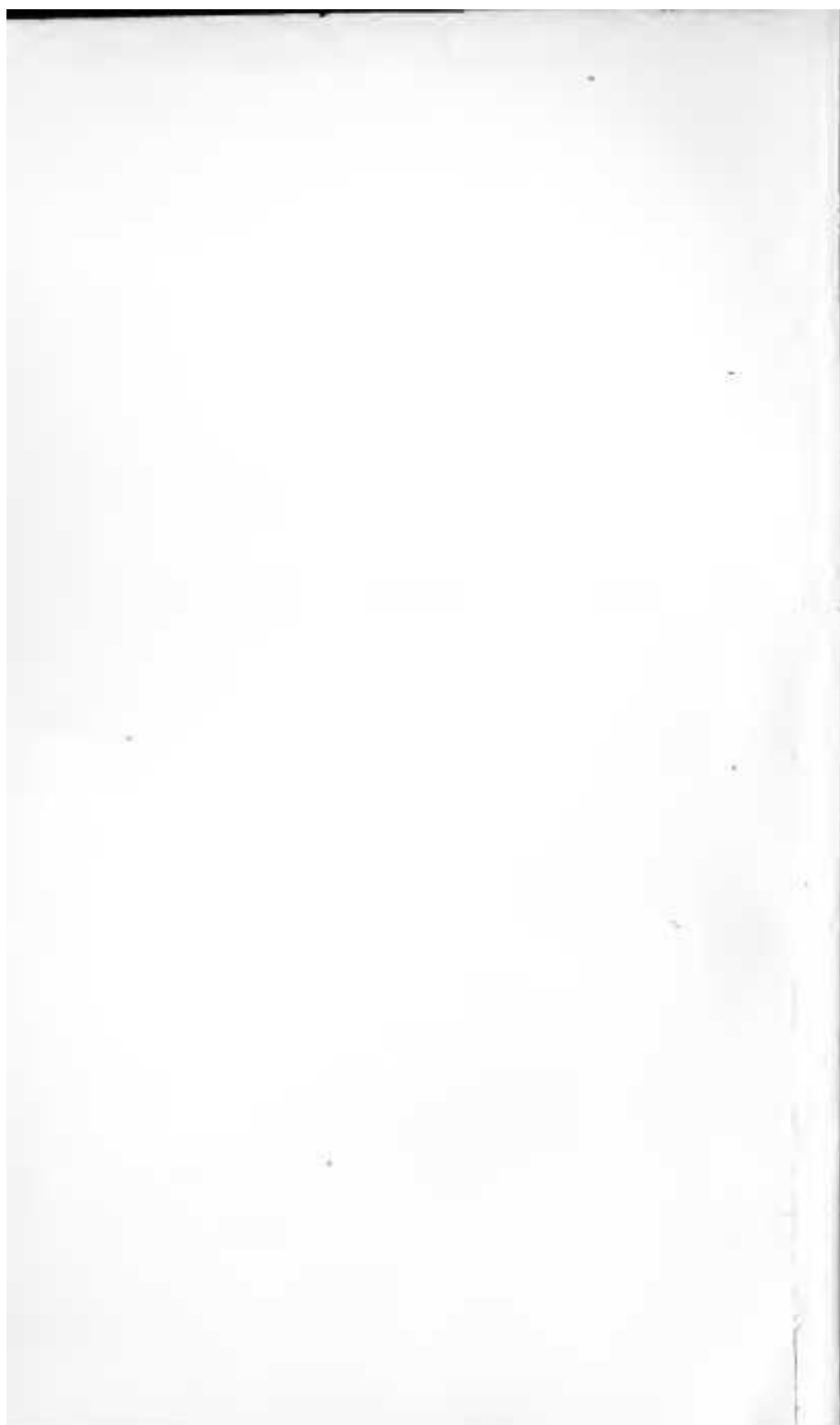
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COL. ROSS OF PIEDMONT.

PART I.

THE STORY OF A CRIME.

I.

BROUGHT TOGETHER.

AT the end of September, 1880, the steamer Argentine Republic, direct from Buenos Ayres, arrived at New York, and one of the passengers, registered as Dr. Haworth, Lima, was driven to a hotel on Fifth avenue, where he made his toilet and dined at his leisure.

Dr. Haworth was a man of about thirty-five, with a face of the American type, brown hair and heavy mustache, a broad forehead and remarkable eyes, which seemed to slumber, but were plainly on the watch. His dress was plain and neat; the carriage of his person erect and firm. As he walked down the avenue in the afternoon, people more than once turned to look at him, which is unusual in so large a town as New York.

Near Madison Square he came into collision with a personage hurrying in the opposite direction—a gentleman of about his own age, dressed in an elegant business suit, with a handsome face, smiling lips, hair parted in the middle, and wearing eye-glasses.

"Why, Haworth! What good wind has blown you to New York?" exclaimed this gentleman.

"The south wind, my dear Burdette," replied Dr. Haworth, cordially shaking hands. "Come and stroll with me, and tell me the news."

"In a moment." And, having called to a person whom he had been in pursuit of, Mr. Burdette exchanged a few words with him, returned, and he and Dr. Haworth walked down the avenue together.

They were evidently old friends, and it was obvious from their conversation that smiling Mr. Burdette had visited Dr. Haworth at his hacienda near Lima, and retained delightful memories of the visit. To his question now what had brought his friend to New York, Dr. Haworth replied quietly :

"To keep an appointment."

"Is it down town?" asked Mr. Burdette.

"On the steps of the City Hall at seven."

"Well, I am going in that direction, and am glad to have your company. I am looking up an old gentleman whose work on the 'Opium-Habit' I am publishing. I am afraid he is not practicing his precepts, and I think I shall find him at one of the 'joints' in Mott street."

Dr. Haworth made no comment, and, turning out of Broadway, they were soon near Chatham Square, where, in one of the subterranean opium-dens, they found the person of whom Mr. Burdette was in pursuit. He was a gray-haired man of about 60 in appearance, and of mild and benignant countenance. A simple smile made his old face attractive, and he quietly yielded to Mr. Burdette's guidance, and left the joint. Holding his arm, Mr. Burdette turned to Dr. Haworth and said, in a whisper :

"This is a melancholy business. The poor old fellow came from the South to correct his proofs, and fell back into his vice. I have tried to look after him, as some friends of his placed him in my charge—Col. Ross and Mrs. Maurice."

As these names were uttered Dr. Haworth turned his head suddenly.

"Col. Ross?" he said,

"Yes; do you know him?"

"I believe so."

"Well, the name of this poor old party is Prof. Lesner, and as his friends are back from Canada on their way South, I will turn him over to them. They will no doubt be at the opera to-night, and I will see them."

Dr. Haworth had listened in silence, but it was plain that he was not losing a word.

"Come and go with me," said Mr. Burdette, "and I hope it is distinctly understood that my humble cottage on the avenue is to be your headquarters during your stay in New York. My coupe won't compare with that splendid affair of yours at Lima, but—"

"Thank you, my dear friend ; but I leave New York by the morning train."

"Well, we'll sup after the opera, and I'll try to talk you out of that resolution."

And the friends parted, Mr. Burdette bearing off the poor old Professor, and Dr. Haworth going in the direction of the City Park.

On the steps of the hall a young man of 18 or 20 was standing, evidently on the look-out for some one. He was a slender and graceful youth, with black curly hair and ruddy cheeks.

As Dr. Haworth approached, and the gas-light fell upon his face, the youth rushed up to him, seized his hand, and seemed about to kiss it.

"Excellency!" he exclaimed, with a French-Spanish accent ; "Oh, how glad I am to see you!"

Dr. Haworth's face had softened, and a bright smile made it winning.

"I really believe you are," he said, looking with great affection into the youth's face. "So you expected me?"

"I knew you would be here between the 20th and 25th, as you said."

"Well, here I am. Now come with me. I have something important to tell you, my dear Jean."

On the same night Dr. Haworth, Mr. Burdette, and Jean were at the opera. Mr. Burdette was evidently in his element, and exchanged nods with a hundred friends ; but Dr. Haworth was evidently waiting for something.

As the curtain rose he turned quickly and looked at one of the loges. An elegantly dressed man of middle age, tall and commanding in person, had just entered with a lady in black silk, and a young girl with a face full of freshness and attraction. The escort was relieving the young lady of her cloak when Dr. Haworth looked at them, and his air was that of a lover.

"These are old Prof. Lesner's friends," said Mr. Burdette indicating the party.

"Yes," said Dr. Haworth quietly.

He touched Jean, who sat beside him, on the arm and said :

"Do you recognize anybody yonder?"

The youth looked in the direction indicated, and his smiling face suddenly overclouded. His smooth brow contracted and his eyes flashed.