The Secret of the Old Chateau

By DAVID WHITELAW.

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Synopsis of Later Chapters.

Dartin, in possession of Dartigny fortune, has to pay Haverton silence money. On Stella's birthday Baxenter gives her the Dartigny locket. Stella's mother recognizes the crest it bears as the same as that on a ring handed down from Stella's great-grandmother, the long lost Sylvia Dartigny.

CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd.)

"May I ask, Mrs. Benham, where this ring came from?"

"It has been in my husband's family for many years. I believe it was originally in the possession of the girl who married Stella's great-grandfather, I think a year or two before Waterloo. As far as I can recollect, the story, as my husband told it, was that the girl had been adopted by the uncle of the man who married her. Joshua Benham was a doctor, and it seems that he was called in to a case in which the patient died, leaving totally unprovided for a little girl of about four years of age. Joshua's wife, who had no children of her own, took the child to her heart and, all inquiries failing to establish her identity, they brought the girl up as their own. Beyond this ring and the few French words the child could prattle they could learn nothing concerning her.

"There is little doubt that she belonged to some French family in hiding, but Joshua, perhaps, did not press his inquiries as much as he might. I suppose the child grew dear to them, as adopted children often do, and they had the excuse that the political state of France prevented them from pursuing their inquiries on the spot. Then there came the war between the two countries and the chance of finding out the history of the lonely little girl passed."

Robert was standing gazing out over the gardens. It seemed to him that what Mrs. Benham was telling him was all ancient history and that he knew it all before. Truly, fate had marked him out as an actor in a romance that was stranger than any stage drama. He turned to Mrs. Benham.

"Does Stella know anything of this?"

"I was going to tell her to-day, her birthday, and give her the ring."

A look of relief passed over the young solicitor's face.

"Then I want you to wait a little while before you tell her. I have good reasons for what I ask. Your story took up his hat and held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Benham."

"But you will stay and take lunch? Stella will be—"

"I think not, Mrs. Benham; I have a busy day before me. The flowers are for Stella and there is a letter with them. In the light of what you have just told me I want you to remember that that letter was already written before you showed me the ring."

"Yes, Robert; but what's all the mystery?"

"Because, Mrs. Benham, the letter is my capitulation, my unconditional surrender to Stella. In it I have ignored our year's contract, which is not quite up, and have asked her to marry me. Had I not written it before hearing your story I could never have done so without laying myself open to a grave misconstruction. I have told her that I will meet her at the theatre to-night. Please do as I wish and tell her nothing of the story you have told me."

And Mrs. Benham promised, and after Robert had left she locked the trinket away again in the dressing-table drawer. Stella's roses she placed in water in the centre of the table, daintily set out for luncheon, and the letter she put by her daughter's plate.

Robert walked most of the way back to his office. He felt that exercise was what he needed if he were to unravel the romantic tangle of the Dartignys. Stella, evidently, was the legitimate heiress to what was in the chest left by her great-great-grandfather, Marie Brisac de Dartigny, more than a century ago.

But Dartin had come upon the scene in the nick of time, and his present possession gave him the nine proverbial legal points. It would be no easy matter now to dislodge the owner of Adderbury Towers. That the inheritance had turned out better than Dartin had hinted was apparent from the style kept up at Barchester. He wondered why the man had been so reticent as to what the chest had contained.

Robert had seen little of Dartin during the last year. He was not one to whom he was attracted, and although the owner of the Towers had tried to be friendly, the solicitor had not unduly encouraged him. At that moment there was an invitation on the desk at his chambers asking him down for a few days to Barchester, an invitation which Robert had made up his mind to decline.

In the light, however, of what he had just heard, he changed his mind and decided to accept. There might perhaps be an opportunity of finding out how the land lay, and in Stella's interest he felt he was justified, if not in spying, at all events in keeping his eyes open. There was no shadow of suspicion in his mind against the claimant to whom he had surrendered the chest. He accepted as a fact that Dartin was in truth a descendant of the Dartignys, more distant than Stella, certainly, but the solicitor told himself that he had fulfilled to the letter the condition of the trust. He felt a bitterness against the man, or, rather, against the luck that had given him a fortune to which he had no moral right, but that was all. Doubt as to the honesty of the man at Adderbury Towers had, as yet, not crossed his mind—that was to come later.

CHAPTER XV.

The Seeds of Suspicion.

Robert Baxenter was a happier man than he had been for months as, at half-past ten that evening, he approached the stage door of the Gardenia Theatre in Hackney. In his own mind he felt but little anxiety as to the result of his letter to Stella, and, as the stronger, he told himself that it has been his part to hold out the branch of peace.

As he noticed the neighborhood he told himself that he had not taken the step any too soon. The crowd that had infested the stage door of the Odeon had been neither intellectual nor desirable, but it had at least been fairly clean. The solicitor shuddered as he glanced at his present surroundings. The place which gave access and exit to the artistes taking part in the Gardenia productions was a narrow, low door set in a high brick wall, covered with ragged posters and worn shiny near the doorway by the shoulders of the loafers who nightly gathered there. Just within Robert caught sight of an untidy individual behind a little window, reading the evening paper by the light of a wire-globed gas jet.

The denizens of the place were there now, filling the narrow pave- [illegible] hats were thrust back from oily foreheads, cheap cigarettes hung from their expressionless lips; they seemed waiting—and always waiting. Perhaps the crowd changed sometimes in its individuals; if so, it was not apparent; the type remained.

At the end of the little lane in which the stage door was, Robert could see the night life of the crowded suburb, the teeming mass of people and the dusty atmosphere lit up in yellow patches by the glare of huge naptha lamps flaring over the costers' barrows. The cries of vendors mingled harshly with the roar of traffic. At the corner the lights of a great gin-palace shone out, and Robert wondered, as he saw the mob of humanity through its large plate-glass windows,, to which atom of it belonged the tiny little girl who sat half-asleep on the doorstep, a ragged doll clutched in the crook of her fragile arm.

It was a scene sordid in the extreme, and the waiting man felt as though he were a stranger in a strange land—a land in which it was hard to breathe. The cigarette-smoking youths, too, seemed to resent his presence in the domain they had made their own, and Robert had difficulty in keeping to what he knew was the wiser course of ignoring their audible remarks.

The chimes of a nearby clock tolled eleven. Already two or three tawdrily dressed girls had come through the stage door, attended by their cavaliers. Robert could see that in some cases they had not quite removed the make-up from their faces. As they stood beneath the gas laps they seemed consciously pleased at the attention they received from the gilded youth of Hackney. Then Stella same.

She stood for a moment, framed in the doorway, looking out, before she caught sight of Robert. Then she ran to him and gave his hand a little squeeze and looked up with a great gladness in her gray eyes that told Robert that all was right with their world and heedless of the remarks of the interested spectators, he bent and kissed her as he hurried her away.

As they passed the corner Robert saw that the child was still on the step of the public-house. She was asleep now and had covered over the little doll with a corner of her threadbare jacket. He tried to hide the sight from the girl by his side, but Stella saw the pathetic little figure and she clutched at the man's arm.

"Can't we do something? Oh, Robert, what was that you said once about little children and that a woman's life should be found in their eyes? I have thought of it so often since you said that, and I have grown to hate my audiences—the people who pay to see me."

She broke away from him, and he watched her as she went to the sleeping child and placed something into the little lap; he recognized it as a box of chocolates he had sent her that evening to the theatre. When she joined him again Robert saw that there were tears in her eyes.

Mrs. Benham was still up when they reached the flat, and one glance at Stella's radiant face was all that she needed to make her completely happy. The three did full justice to the dainty supper that was awaiting Stella's return from the theatre. It was good, after the sordid surroundings of the suburbs, to sit here with the little shaded table-candles showing their rose light in the silver and glass and on the scarlet lobster in its bed of tender green, and on the gilt neck of the bottle of champagne—for was not this a betrothal feast, one to be honored and remembered for all time?

The night was warm and the young people stood on the little balcony overhanging the gardens. The man was leaning over the shoulders of the girl, and Stella was drinking in the love-talk of which her heart had so long been starved. They had so much to say to each other, these two foolish persons who had wilfully cut from their lives nearly a year of joy—so much time to make up.

"I will be away this week-end, Stella. I'm sorry, but it's a client in Lincolnshire; he's got a lovely place, and some decent golf and fishing. By-the-way, it's at Barchester; weren't you there on the tour?"

"Yes, the week before last—who is the client?"

"His name's Dartin; there's a bit of romance about the fellow, he—"

"Why, I met Mr. Dartin, Bobby; we had a kind of picnic at his place. Fancy you knowing Mr. Dartin!"

"I expect he knows theatrical people through Haverton, the man who finances your company. Dartin says in his letter that he will be there, too—just the three of us."

Stella stood silent for a moment, twisting a lovely half-loop of diamonds round the third finger of her left hand. She remembered the sudden illness which had come over Dartin when Haverton's visit to Adderbury Towers was announced. She was certain that he was acquainted with the theatrical manager.

"He didn't seem to know Mr. Haverton on that day, Bobby. But Mr. Dartin knew quite a lot about theatres. He must have seen everything worth seeing for ever so long. He said he remembered seeing poor me, even, in that small part in the 'Prince's' pantomine; he said I shaped well then, and—oh—a whole lot of nice things about me."

Bobby smiled indulgently.

"I can well believe that [illegible] had a little song; how did it go—?" He broke off with a start. "When was the last time you played that?"

"Why do you speak like that, Bobby—sharply?"

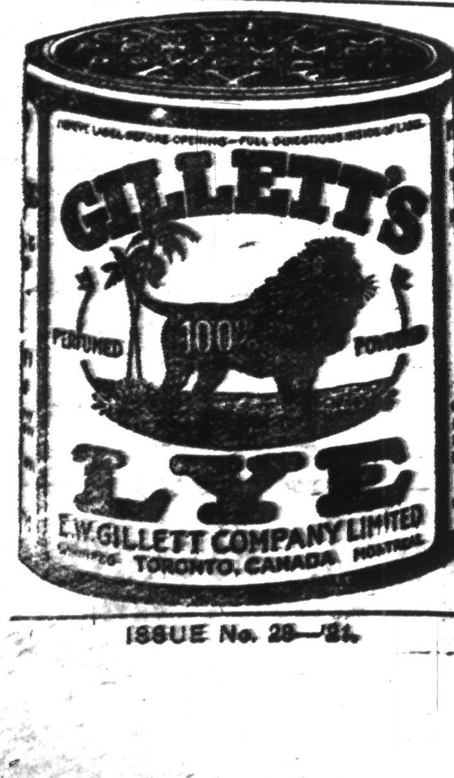
"Did I, dear? I was only thinking of something—when was it?"

"The first week in March, last year—there's Mother calling, Bobby; poor dear, we're keeping her up. Good-night, dearest—dearest and best! I'm so happy."

Robert walked the first part of the way back to his chambers, intending to pick up a late taxi when he reached the Marble Arch. The night was very still and he paced the deserted pavements thinking of what he had just heard.

It had been a day of strange happenings. The ring which Mrs. Benham had shown him had quite put beyond doubt, in his own mind, the right of that lady's daughter to the Dartigny inheritance. But Robert's legal training told him that there was as yet nothing upon which he could act against Mr. Baptiste Dartin. The man had done all that he was called upon to do in order that he should claim the chest; and although Stella was in the direct line, whilst Dartin was only—

(To be continued.)



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Johnnie's Essay on the Peacock.

The peacock is a bird. The peacock is not a bird of pray. The peacock is a vain bird. Girls are vain. It is very wicked to be vain. The peacock is not like the ostrich. It wears its own feathers itself. The ostrich does not. Girls do not always wear their own hair themselves. The peacock is not like the cuckoo. It lays its own eggs itself. The cucko does not.

The peacock is a bird. The tail of a peacock is dreadful useful. The tail of a peacock is made into fans. There's a dreadful lot of different kinds of fans. There's baseball fans, movie fans, fan tans, fan dangoes, fan ciers, fan tails, and fans to fan with, but as for me give me an automobile!

Tricked!

A conjurer was performing in a Durham village. Addressing a group of pitmen, he asked for the loan of a halfpenny.

The coin was produced, whereupon the conjurer threw it up. When it returned, the modest coin had taken the color of a sovereign.

Up stepped the pitman who owned the halfpenny and asked to see the coin. The conjurer placed the sovereign in his hand.

"And this is really my ha'penny?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Well, then," said the owner, as he slipped the sovereign into his pocket and walked off, "I'll not trouble ye to change her again."

We are coming down the inflation stairs, step by step.

Woman's Interests

Let Us Be as Beautiful as We Can.

I watched her drive up to the store to make some purchases. I could tell by the fresh wholesomeness of her, the capable way she handled the car, that she was one of us and so I kept my eye fixed on her as she brought the car to a stop, leaned over and picked up a basket from the tonneau and got out.

And what a disappointment!

Perhaps she had come away in a hurry, perhaps the mirror in her room was not large enough for her to see herself completely; but even so, she was not justified in presenting herself thus for friends and tradespeople in town to see.

Nature had been good to her but—she had not done one thing for herself, had not taken care of and completed what nature had begun.

Her hair was blown and wispy—a ten-cent hair net or a veil would have kept it in place; her blue serge skirt hung unevenly around the bottom and was splashed with mud—old mud, for it was not a muddy day; her heels were run over and we know that it is not only unforgivably untidy but it is bad for the feet; and the briefest glimpse of her hands showed me that she bit her fingernails!

I had wanted to like her and be interested in her and now all I could think of was, why would she neglect herself so?

You and I want friends, both men and women friends, but they have to judge us at first by externals and few outside of our own families will patiently look below the surface for our likeable qualities, after that first impression has repelled them. To attract people at the first impression means just thought and care given to our bodies and our clothes.

Let us see, what are a few of the general principles of this essential care? As you read them over, check them off and see how you live up to them.

First the frequent bath that opens the pores of the skin, keeps it fragrant and gives us the clean look that must be the foundation of the most elaborate beautification process in the world. Cleanliness is beauty.

Then the hair. It need not be done in extreme fashion but it must be kept clean and smooth and glossy by lots of brushing; and since we have the blessing of nets, it can be kept in place and need never be wispy or stringy.

Then the complexion. If the face is washed carefully once a day [illegible] the pores closed with cold water, it will be healthy looking, unless we stuff ourselves with rich food and do not take lots of exercise.

Five minutes each day with an inexpensive manicure set will do wonders for hands that are engaged in the roughest work.

An outward tidiness makes for an inward tidiness. When our bodies are as well cared for as possible, we shall do our work better, think more clearly, have more self-respect and be able to command more from others. Keeping our bodies clean and wholesome and our clothes neat and orderly is a part of character building. Some people put it the other way about and say that untidiness and uncleanness in the outward come from bad mental housekeeping. Surely one works on the other. If the mind is not spruce and fit, the body will show it; if the body is neglected, the mind will feel it.

Earache.

Earache is so painful that the person suffering from it thinks of little except the pain. The physician, however, is interested in it as a symptom. It may have various underlying causes. Although it is generally owing to the state of the ear itself, it may be what we call indifferently a reflex, a sympathetic or a referred pain; that is, one caused by trouble not in the ear but in some other part of the body.

Earache may attack either the young or the old, but it oftenest attacks children. When babies are in acute pain the doctor should observe them closely until he discovers the seat of the pain. If the ear is at fault, the baby will scream or start when any-one approaches it; or it may roll its head on the pillow or lift its hand to the ear.

In older children earache often means that the nasopharynx is in an unhealthy state or that the teeth need attention. It may mean that the child has adenoids, for a child with adenoids catches cold easily, and the cold may result in inflammation of the Eustachian tube.

Parents used to regard toothache as one of the inevitable ills of childhood and thought they had done their duty when they had applied some old wives' remedy, which did more harm than good. It is painful to reflect on the dreadful tortures that young children then endured.

If your child has persistent earache, you should call a specialist in ear diseases, for the pain caused by inflammation of the middle ear is relieved most quickly and peranently by making an incision in the ear drum. That not only gives relief to the sufferer but often prevents his becoming deaf in later life. The ear specialist is the only person competent to decide whether or not the incision should be made, and he is the only person who is competent to make it.

Butter for the Picnic.

Where it is desired to take butter on an outing the following simple plan will ensure that it keeps cool and firm, no matter how hot the weather may be. Get a small, wide-mouthed pot or bottle that has a good-fitting cork. The butter is then put into this. Now soak a large, clean duster in water, and when it is damp wrap it in as many folds as possible round the pot containing the butter. Take care to cover the top and bottom as well as the sides.

Finally make a parcel fit to put into the basket, by enclosing the wet duster in grease-proof paper. This is practically waterproof. It will be found that the butter keeps in perfect condition, very much as if it had been iced. Owing to the layers of wet cloth being poor conductors of heat, the warm air is not able to reach the jar at all.

Tips to Housewives.

Currant sauce is often served with baked ham.

A freshly whitewashed cellar will give butter a taste.

Wrap heaps of lettuce in waxed paper to keep them crisp.

Never serve a white pasty gravy with a roast of any kind.

When getting ready to dress a chicken, if the water is boiling hard in the kettle, it is too hot, and is apt to cook the flesh, so that the skin will come off and make the chicken hard to clean, and also spoil the look of it. I always put a half or two-thirds of a cup of cold water into the boiling water, and then it will be scalded just right. When I am dressing the chicken, I use warm water, as it cleans much easier than to put it in cold water. Some put some baking soda on the chicken and rub that over the chicken, as it has a tendency to clean easier. After dressing the chicken, I put it into cold water at once, and add just a little salt, as it helps to draw out the blood and makes the flesh white and clear.

World's Longest Aerial Tramway.

the Premier Mine, in British Columbia, to tidewater, has been awarded to a Spokane company. The line will be nearly twelve miles long, with a drop of about 120 feet to the mile. The train line, bunkers, and unloading devices will cost a quarter of a million dollars.

Argentina maintains a meteorological station at an elevation of 4,000 feet above the sea.

Woods Heavier Than Water

Wood floats. That is a fact so familiar as to need no comment. Nevertheless, there are certain woods so dense of structure, and therefore so heavy, as to sink in water.

One of them is the "mancono" wood of the Philippines—unknown to us until recently, but which, it is hoped, will serve as a substitute for the costly lignum vitae.

Lignum vitae is the wood of a tree native to the American tropics. Some of the best of it comes from Cuba. Its name, meaning "wood of life," was bestowed upon it by the early Spaniards, among whom a belief arose that it possessed almost miraculous properties as a cure for various diseases.

The best bowling balls are made of lignum vitae; also heads for golf clubs and other things requiring an extremely hard and heavy wood. But the most important use of this material is for the steering gear of ships. The propeller shafts of every warship and commercial steamship revolve in bearings of lignum vitae.

The great strength of this remarkable wood is due to the fact that its fibres are woven back and forth in layers that cross and crisscross. Its cells are filled with resin, which acts as a lubricant and enables it to resist saturation by water. Propeller bearings made of it are almost wearproof.

Lignum vitae weighs eigthy pounds to the cubic foot, and is therefore much heavier than water. It will not float. Good logs sell at fifty-two cents a pound.

Another non-floating wood is "quebracho," which is only slightly less heavy than lignum vitae. It comes from a tree that grows over vast areas scattered through the forests in Brazil and other parts of South America.

This wood is so hard that highly tempered tools are needed to work it even when it is young and green. It will soon blunt the keenest axe. Nine railway ties made of it will weigh a ton. It is fine-grained and takes a beautiful polish, the sapwood being nearly white and the heartwood cherry red. In South America it is much used for furniture and interior finish.

But the greatest value of quebracho lies in the extract obtained from it for tanning high-grade leathers. More than one-third of all the tanning material used in North America is derived from this interesting tree.

Admitting Your Ignorance.

We are all ignorant, high and low, great and little, wise and foolish, educated and uneducated. Some may know a trifle more than others; but as compared with the vast possibilities of knowledge the difference between ignorances is too insignificant to be of much account, says Youth's Companion. Since that is so, it might be supposed that we should all be ready to admit our deficiencies, to acknowledge at once how little we know and to be only concerned humbly and patiently to supply the gaps in our information with such makeshifts as we may. On the contrary, it is amazing how most of us toil and struggle to conceal our ignorance. No device seems too petty, no pretense too mean, if only we can cover up from others the fact that we do not know any more than they do. Sometimes life appears to be spun over with a web of artificial culture that has no solidity and no permanence.

People seem to think that it injures their authority and standing to admit frankly that they have made a mistake, that their information was incomplete and that their calculations were incorrect. Teachers are possessed with this delusion. Ministers are led astray by it. Statesmen suffer from it. Parents constantly find that it vitiates their simple and natural relations with their children. They go miles round, evade, elude, palter and prevaricate, rather than say right out that they were wrong. They do not realize that what injures our characters and our usefulness more than anything else is to make a pretense of omniscience and have it exposed as only a pretense.

The truth is that nothing secures the confidence of all men so much as the humble, frank, free, straightforward admission of ignorance. The guide we trust is he who admits that our difficulties are his difficulties and that, if he can see just a trifle farther, it is only because he has toiled more arduously and has not obscured his vision by any undue assurance of more ample view. There is nothing that we admire more than such humility in others; nothing that we are more reluctant to practice ourselves.

If the majority of us gave half the effort to remedying our ignorance that we give to concealing it, we should think more of ourselves, others would think more of us, and the world would be a more practicable place to live in.

Some Temperature.

An officer in the medical corps of the army tells of a private who had pneumonia and had been for some time in a hospital where he had been so well treated that he was by no means ready to be discharged as "cured."

One day a doctor was taking his temperature, and while the private had the thermometer in his mouth the doctor moved on to the next bed and turned his back to the first patient.

The private saw his chance. He pulled the thermometer out of his mouth and popped it into a cup of hot coffee, replacing it, however, the moment he saw the doctor begin to turn back to his bed. When the physician examined the thermometer he looked first at the private and then back to the thermometer and gasped:

"Well, my man, you're not dead, but you ought to be!"

Noisy Starter.

Noise in the starter is a sure sign of trouble. This condition may be induced by broken or badly worn teeth, a bent armature shaft, a loose armature bearing or teeth badly meshed.

Every mile of unimproved highway is an opportunity to increase community wealth, which in the aggregate means national wealth. In the automobile and the motor truck we have the vehicle; the output of factory and farm gives us the load; now all we need is the roads. But a road built solely upon the principle of getting as much mileage as possible for the money does not suit the spirit of national growth. We do not want poorly built roads that will have to be torn up and rebuilt again in a few years; we need highways that will take care of the ever-increasing load that they must bear. We must build for permanence.

The Chamber of Commerce has issued special coins in aluminum and zinc of twenty-five, ten, and five centimes. Sometimes they are square or of hexagon shape, and made in nickel, iron, tin-plate, or stamped cardboard. These discs correspond to the English tokens issued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by bankers and tradesmen when change was rare.