

The Secret of the Old Chateau

By DAVID WHITELEW.

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Vivian Renton and Eddie Haverton, modern soldiers of fortune, have been gambling with Hubert Baxter, a prosperous attorney, in his London apartments. After their departure late at night Renton returns to the house, murders Baxter and hides the body on the roof. While waiting for night to come again in order to make his escape, he finds in a desk a curious old yellowed document telling of a mysterious chest left in the care of one of Baxter's ancestors by a French nobleman, the Marquis de Dartigny, of the Chateau Chauville. The chest has been handed down from one generation of Baxters to another and carefully guarded in the hope that some day its rightful owner will be found. Renton decides to pose as the missing heir and claim the chest. He goes to France to make some useful inquiries about the Dartigny family. The story of the mysterious chest goes back to the troubled days of the French Revolution and the escape of the Marquis and his little granddaughter to England, where the chest and document were given to the Baxters for safe keeping. Now, more than one hundred years later, Hubert Baxter's body is found, but the police find no clue. Meanwhile, Renton changes his name to Baptiste Dartin, and visits Canada; then he presents his fictitious claims to Robert Baxter, new head of the firm.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Cont'd.)

During the last twenty of my family has suffered many vicissitudes, but in the main we have prospered. From father to son the tradition of our motto has been handed down. It is said that the head of the de Dartigny family, a cousin of my great-grandfather, emigrated to England at the time of the Terror, and that this gentleman's son, who took an active part in the Royalist cause, on his way to the guillotine, had time to whisper to a man dressed as a peasant in the crowd that he should go to Baxenton, in London, and that his credentials should be the motto of our house. That peasant, Mr. Baxter, was my great-grandfather, Armand, who went to Canada in 1801.

"Why he did not choose to act upon the advice I do not know. They were times of stress and when anyone showed signs of gentle birth was hounded from pillar to post. I imagine, too, that he was very short of this world's goods, and I expect the party of young bloods about to start for a new land appealed to him more than the vague utterances of a man about to die. He, no doubt, thought it better to join them than to take what might be a fruitless journey to England.

"In later years, however, he had not forgotten, and the Baxenton affair was looked upon as rather a joke. A message was once sent addressed to 'Baxenton—Notary—London.' This was, I think, in the early forties, and it elicited no response. There were no directories then, and it was I who had the idea that perhaps a mistake had been made and that the name was Baxenter."

Mr. Baptiste Dartin leaned down and picked up his hat and gloves. "That is all, Mr. Baxter. I felt I could not return to Canada without calling on you—one never knows, does one? If I have taken up your valuable time needlessly, I can but apologize."

The solicitor smiled. "There would be no call for an apology in any case, my dear sir—also, I think you have hit the right nail on the head. Even if it were not so, it would have been worth while to listen to your story. There is so little romance nowadays in this old world of ours that we welcome anything that savors of it. May I ask you a few questions? You can answer them or not as you like."

"Certainly; anything that I can answer you may be sure I will."

Robert Baxter leaned down and pulled out a drawer in the right-hand pedestal of his desk. He took from it a few papers, which he placed upon the blotting-pad before him. He was not looking at the man in the chair as he did this or he would have noticed a sudden pallor bleach the tanned cheeks. The gray eyes fixed themselves with a fascination upon the parchment endorsed in the angular writing of Adam Baxter. In his mind's eye Vivian again saw a darkened room, the winter sunshine cutting through the drawn blinds. He again seemed to hear the tick-tack of the clock and to breathe the foul air

of the shut-up house in Mortimer Terrace. There was a clock upon the office wall, and to Vivian's ears it took up the monotonous refrain of that other clock—tick—tick—mur—de—tick—tick. And then the cool voice of the solicitor came through the maze of his reminiscences, and, with an effort, he braced himself to listen.

"And so," Robert Baxter was saying, "perhaps you may have heard of the name of this ancestor of yours, whom, you think, came to London?"

"I have—it was Marie Brissac de Dartigny."

"And can you produce any papers—any documents of family affairs?" His visitor had been evidently expecting that this question would be asked him soon or later, for he answered readily: "Ah! there I'm afraid I have only my bare word to give you. Before I was fifteen my father joined an expedition to the Yukon. He had had heavy losses, and the tales of gold to be found in the North tempted him. He never returned, and I was taken care of by a good woman of the village. I had a little money, and when my protectress died I rounded the world. I visited Australia and India, and finally drifted back to Canada, where I have built up a good little business. It is this business which has brought me to London—not this other 'pig in a poke,'" he added, with a laugh.

Robert Baxter had referred to the parchment when the old aristocrat's name had been mentioned; now he put the papers back and sat for a moment drumming the tips of his fingers together. He reasoned rapidly. Perhaps it was unwise to part with this trust to a man without written credentials; but again, his visitor in mentioning the motto had done all that was required. The transaction was a little loose legally, but the solicitor was more than half anxious to see the end of the white elephant in his strongroom—and he told himself that this man was beyond all doubt the legitimate descendant of the aristocrat who had visited old Adam more than a century ago. His mind made up, Robert rose and held out his hand.

"I am more than satisfied, Mr. Dartin. True, I would have preferred some documentary evidence as to identity—just as a matter of form. I offer you my very sincerest congratulations. Please come with me."

As the solicitor crossed the room he drew from his pocket a key-chain, and selecting a flat key from the ring, proceeded, followed by Mr. Baptiste Dartin, through the clerk's office and down a flight of stone steps. At the foot, great double doors guarded the entrance to the strong-room. Each of these, fitted with combination locks, delayed the solicitor for a few moments; then he switched on the light of a couple of green-shaded bulbs and Dartin saw that they stood in what was practically a large safe. The chamber was some seven feet in height and the air was hot and heavy, and even the electric fan, which the solicitor set in motion, did little to dispel the odor of musty parchments and old leather bindings.

Above the men the traffic of the Strand rumbled and rolled, and the confined feeling of his surroundings acted strongly upon the already disturbed nerve-centres of the visitor. But he mastered himself with an effort and looked around him. It was difficult to keep calm, now that the scheme upon which he had worked so hard had come to fruition and was about to receive the reward.

Ledgers, rose, tier upon tier, to the height of, perhaps, six feet, and ranged upon them black jannaned dead-cases, like vaulted coffins of dead secrets, frowned down upon him. Baptiste noticed that the names painted in white block letters on their sides had among them some of the oldest and proudest in the kingdom. Along one side of the chamber a bench had been seated at writing height, and a pad of blotting-paper, together with quill pens, an inkwell and a round box of wafers, were placed at one end. At the other a stack of heavy ledgers reached nearly to the roof.

The solicitor had bent down in the far corner and was dragging from its obscurity beneath the bottom ledge a small wooden chest. It was a plain affair, bound strongly with iron corner-clamps, and on the lid a rough device of the de Dartigny arms had been branded with a hot iron. Dartin pointed this out and at the same time held out his hand and showed a signet ring bearing the same device on his finger—a stone that Vivian Renton had had engraved in Paris and set in a circlet of dull gold of antique workmanship. Had Robert Baxter felt any doubts of his visitor's good faith it would have needed but this to dispel them.

A few formalities over and the bold signature of Baptiste Dartin was put to the receipt which the solicitor then and there prepared—a document setting forth briefly the history of the trust and the manner of its claiming. The signet ring was pressed into red wax at its foot and the men ascended to the offices above.

To Robert's disappointment the new owner of the chest did not suggest opening it at once. Instead, the clerk and the boy were requested to put it carefully into a cab, and, with an arrangement to dine with the solicitor the next night to hear the result of the inheritance, Mr. Vivian Renton, alias Baptiste Dartin, drove off to take his place in the ranks of the ancient nobility of France.

Left to himself, Robert Baxter placed the documents of the case to-

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gether in an envelope, endorsed it, and gave it into Cattle's keeping. With a smile he crossed the room and made an elaborate bow to the picture of Adam Baxter. Then his eyes rested upon the girl's photograph on his desk and he looked hurriedly at his watch.

CHAPTER IX.

Stella.

On the evening of the day when Baptiste Dartin drove away from the offices in the Strand, Robert Baxter was sitting taking tea in a well-appointed flat situated not a hundred miles from Malda Vale. He was sunk comfortably among the cushions in a wicker-chair beside the open window, looking out upon a raised square of lawns and paths in which some children were at play. Their voices rose shrill in the evening air with the abandon of little ones who know that bedtime is near and that the best must be made of the flying moments. At the other side of the window a small, middle-aged lady, delicately pretty, was crocheting lace, and a black kitten dabbed hopefully at the ball of cotton at her feet.

"I didn't know Stella had a rehearsal to-day."

As he spoke Robert stole a glance up at an oval frame which hung on the wall between the two windows. It contained the portrait of a girl, young and adorable. A determined little face it was, squarely built, with a chin that spoke of a will-power strangely at variance with the roguish eyes that laughed out from beneath the level brows.

"And so, of course, Stella"—the little lady was speaking, and the man came back to earth with a start. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Benham, I didn't hear what you said—I was watching the children," he lied. "The little one

with the pink snail has lost her nurse. You were saying."

Mrs. Benham resumed her ball of cotton from the kitten and placed it beside her on the table.

"I was saying, Robert, that Miss Foster was taken ill very suddenly, and Stella has to play her part till the end of the run. I thought she telephoned to you. Perhaps she forgot; she is very excited, and there is so much to be learnt."

There came the rattle of a key in the outer lock and the drawing-room door was burst open and a whirlwind entered—a storm of muslin and flowers and smiles.

"Oh, mamma, it went splendidly! Old Mossenthal says—why, Bobby, I expected you to meet me. Oh, I forgot, I couldn't get on to your number. I'm crazy, Bobby, crazy with happiness!"

Robert had risen and was leading the radiant girl to the chair he had vacated. She threw herself into it and fanned herself with her long gloves. Mrs. Benham was handing the kettle to the trim maid who had followed her young mistress into the room.

"And so you have got your chance, Stella?" An observant man might have noticed a lack of enthusiasm in Robert's voice.

"No, Bobby, I've got the chance of a chance. If all goes well to-night I'm made, Bobby, made. The world will—why, what's wrong?"

The young man was leaning forward and looking up into the lovely gray eyes.

"I'm glad, Stella, that you are so happy, but—"

"You're thinking of my promise—my answer, Bobby?"

"Morning, noon and night, dear. You see, I wouldn't like you just to taste the delights of power, to inhale the incense of applause. You might not feel inclined to leave it all—for me."

The girl turned and looked out over the garden. She took hold of the cool muslin curtain and pressed it against her hot cheeks.

"Don't you think so, too, Stella?"

"Oh, Bobby, you know I think the world of you—you know I do. But my art, I do—like that, too. Life is such a little thing, isn't it?—and I do want to cram so much into it and squeeze so much out of it. Why can't I give you my answer and act as well?"

(To be continued.)



Woman's Interests

Mother and Daughter.

Usually, though not always, the intimacy between mother and daughter is greater than that between father and son. It is natural that it should be so; mother and daughter are in each other's company more than are father and son. Yet sometimes the very fact of such continuous association leads to impatience and to friction, especially in the years when the daughter is growing up. The restraints that the mother then seeks to impose are often either rejected outright or accepted with rebellious protests. The wisdom of the older generation appears folly to the younger. Between the soberness of mature years and the gaiety of youth there is always likely to be a clash. In order that home life may be happy and family affection unbroken, it is important that the clash be averted.

Of course the preparation to avert it should begin in the girl's infancy and should be carried on all through her growing years. The only preparation that will insure the safe passage of the difficult years is that of friendship, cultivated by love and intimacy. The mother who makes a friend of her daughter from the earliest days will not be confronted later by the necessity of "managing" her. When the relation of true friendship exists between mother and daughter no question of management arises. Sympathetic understanding and mutual confidence solve without difficulty problems that in less happy relations demand discipline and management and leave a sense of soreness or pain behind.

Just as the boy should get his chief lessons from his father in the qualities that should assist him to make his life useful and measurably successful, so the girl should get her chief lessons to the same end from her mother. To share with her mother the homely household tasks, to acquire from her through intimate association cheerfulness, sympathy and courage, to be inspired by her with ideals that a girl can have for a happy life in a home of her own. The success of the preparation depends, of course, on the kind of mother the girl has. Mothers should feel—and most mothers, we think, do feel—that their children are an incentive to them to be more admirable persons than they were before they had children. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that until they had children they never fully realized their faults and deficiencies, or strove so faithfully to correct them.

Destroying Household Insects.

To aid the housekeeper to rid the home of insects the following directions are mentioned:

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of brown sugar, two tablespoons of butter, one teaspoon of cinnamon. Work to fine crumbs and then spread over the top of the betty and bake in a slow oven for three-quarters of an hour.

Caramel sauce—Place one-half cup of sugar in an iron frying pan and cook slowly until a dark mahogany color and then add one and one-half cups of cold water, five tablespoons of cornstarch dissolved in the water, two-thirds cup of sugar, two tablespoons of butter. Bring to a boil and cook for five minutes. Strain into a bowl and add two teaspoons of vanilla. Cool and use over the betty.

Lullaby.

The mother bird sits in her nest and sings. Under the twilight sky; And her babies cuddled under her wings. As the night time breeze creeps by. But I hold you close in my arms, dear heart, And I sing you a little tune; And kiss your cheek, that is like a part Of the pinkest rose of June.

The mother bird sits in her swaying nest, In the top of a tall old tree; And her babies cuddle close to her breast—

But, oh, little heart of me, I hold you tight till your eyelids fall; And I rock in a comfy chair— And, dear, as the evening shadows fall, I whisper a little prayer.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

Qualities for the Housewife.

Recently a noted lecturer summed up the necessary qualities for the successful housewife as follows: Sense of personal responsibility, power of initiative and a real ability to distinguish between the essentials and non-essentials.

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"Where's the rest of your uniform?" he demanded.

"Back where we came from."

"Go back and get it."

The private vanished and later reappeared, correctly uniformed, but without his rifle.

"Where's your gun?"

"Left it back where we came from."

"Listen!" bellowed the captain.

"You're a fine soldier. What were you in civilian life?"

"Plumber's assistant."

Good Financier.

He—"Yes, darling, and it shall be the purpose of my life to surround you with every comfort and to anticipate and gratify your every wish."

She—"How good of you, Harry! And all on \$15 a week, too!"

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