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### <del>\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*</del> ROLFF -:= -:- HOUSE

::: BY :::: G. H. BENEDICT. \*\*\*\*\*

The officers of the law and a few assistants soon made ready and proceeded to the scene of the strange occurrence. They were well provided with lights, and, on investigation, the hurried surmises of Anthony Saybrook in regard to the cause of Leb's death were fully confirmed. He had evidently made an attempt to break in the old vault, but, failing in his first efforts, had drilled holes in the massive door had drilled holes in the massive door and attempted to blow it out with a blast of powder. The only result had been to jar the heavy masonry, and loosen a huge stone that rested as a sort of projecting cap above the door of the vault, and, as he had approached and man make his occupied in the ed and was probably occupied in ob-serving the effects of the blast, the stone had given way from its position and fallen upon him, forcing him backward and crushing him beneath its

The corpse was carried away, an inquest held upon it, resulting in the usual verdict of accidental death. So the would-be robber had been caught

in his own trap. To the general public, however, Leb.'s tragic ending was proof positive that Rolff House was possessed" by evil spirits, and that the tradition that the old vault was protected by the Evil One was the sober truth. His recklessness in risking himself in such a foolhardy contest with the powers of evil was commented on with many sober shakes of the head, and all the old, well-worn stories in regard to strange occurrences at the old mansion were revived and retailed with impressive earnestness to groups of interested listeners.

As he had surmised, Anthony Saybrook could secure no one to take the place made vacant by the death of Leb. Sackett. He would not have old Carl Crum; so, trusting in the protection which the popular belief that the house was the abode of evil spirits would af-ford, he had it carefully closed up and left to only such occasional inspection as he and Ralph should together make.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Events drifted along a few weeks without any event to startle the community in regard to Rolff House.
The old place remained locked up
and deserted, but it was better protected by the superstitious dread in which it was held than it if had a score of guards. Mr. Saybrook had sent off letters to Claude explaining and smoothing over the late events, and also taking occasion to drop him certain hints that would lead him to infer that to him continue and that he had used his influence to prejudice Rosa against him. He did not say this directly; in fact, he was careful not to let Claude suspect that he took any interest whatever in his love affairs; but he deftly managed to weave certain facts and hints in his letter, as if by the merest inadvertance, which the young man could not well help interpreting so as to arouse his suspicions that Rosa's love for him was already becoming sold. The wily lawyer argued that if he could arouse in the young man a feeling that he had been slighted, his naturally high spirit would probably lead him to express his resent

ment by affecting coolness and reserve himself. He knew that he must be anxious by this time on account of the neglect with which his letters had been treated, and full of fancies as to the reasons for it; and, by skillfully misleading him, he hoped to so arouse his sense of injured pride as to incline him to dismiss all thought of Rosa from his mind. Amid the novelty and excitement of his new life, he inferred that Claude, like most young men, would easily forget past impressions, and that, could his thoughts and feelings be turned into a new channel, his pas-sion; for the old farmer's daughted would soon be so far erased from his mind that Ralph would be left a clear, field to woo and win her, no matter

what turn events might take.

But Anthony Saybrook had no opportunity to learn the effect of his letter upon Claude, or whether, in fact, the young man received it at all. It was a period when the mail service between this country and Europe was particularly irregular and slow. The world was being shaken by the throes of the gigantic contest between Eng-land and the France of Napoleon, which had involved nearly all Europe, and the consequences of which were slowly but inevitably dragging the young New World republic into war. The seas were harried by the hostile fleets of the belligerents, and commerce was practically interdicted by the de-crees the proud hostile nations hurled at each other, commanding the world to cease from commercial intercourse with their enemies under threat of the capture and confiscation of all ships venturing to do so. The spirit of the aspiring young Western nation illy, brooked this arrogant dictation, which was destroying its growing commerce; and it had long been evident to care-ful observers that the outrages committed against American commerce particularly by British cruisers would particularly by British cruisers would sooner or later result in hostilities. In fact, the spirit of the people was already aroused to the highest pitch, and was pushing a peace-loving administration forward to the bold course of recommending the young republic to unsheath its sword as the champion of

the rights of commerce. We have seen that Anthony Saybrook had anticipated the outbreak of war. So certain was he of it, that his plans and schemes for months past had been almost entirely governed by the antici-pation of its speedy occurrence. Po-litically, he belonged to the party that litically, he belonged to the party that opposed such an extreme course as war, and sneered at its advocates as "French sympathizers." Personally, however, Mr. Saybrook was not a man to let his political prejudices interfere with his interests in any way. With the young heir of Rolff House away in Europe, and himself holding mortgages on portions of the estate, and with fraudulent deeds in his hands covering the most valuable parts of the property, a war would furnish an opportunity to carry, out his schemes at his leisure and with the utmost chance of safety. There-

are simply kidney disorders. The kidneys filter the blood of all that shouldn't be there. The blood passes through the kidneys every three minutes. If the kidneys do their work no impurity or cause of disorder can remain in the circulation longer than that time. Therefore if your blood is out of order your kidneys have failed in their work. They are in need of stimulation, strengthening or doctoring. stimulation, strengthening or doctoring. One medicine will do all three, the finest and most imitated blood medicine there

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and in his letters to Claude, the law, had deprecated war and affected to doubt its probability, at heart he was eager to have it occur, and strongly convinced that its outbreak was inevitable.

So joy was brought to the household of the Saybrooks, when, with the early days of summer, the tardy mail brought the news of the actual declaration of war against England.

"You see, Ralph," remarked the elder Saybrook, after they had carefully read every word referring to the all-important topic contained in the modest news letter which brought the good news, "that my throw has been a successful one; even if it was risky, and we have won our game. Ah, my dear boy, I never did a finer piece of work in my life. This news clears every obstacle our path, and the extent to which we shall take advantage of our opportunity rests entirely within our own discretion. The war the administration has plunged into will not be a short one, I opine. There is no coubt that it will be continued till the country is pretty well exhausted and the war spirit of the people has evaporated, and that means three or four years, in my opinion, at the least. Look at our chance. Claude is in Europe, and there is no possible chance of his either getting back to this country or communiknow, covering the homestead and adjoining property, all regularly drawn and signed, and nobody to question their validity while he is absent. What prevent our taking adva our good fortune, and coming into possession of the Rolff property? Nothing, that I see, unless it is our own imidity. And why should we be timid? It is not likely that Fortune will ever offer us another such a chance. The isk is comparatively small. I am in avor of taking the fullest advantage of our position, and of acting prompt-

"But what if he should come back?"

"Well," replied the parent, "I don't think he is very likely to come back at all. Still, the question is a fair one, and will bear consideration. Suppose the comes back to find us in possession of Rolff House. He can bring suit, of course, but what can he prove? The nortgages will have matured, and we shall be the purchasers. As for the leeds, there is no possible ground to challenge their regularity. His only sourse would be a suit to dispossess on the ground of fraud; but with what hance of success? Our defence would be that the deeds were given as collatral security for money furnished, and he has absolutely no testimony to offer against us but his own. Don't you see ow beautifully all my plans have been

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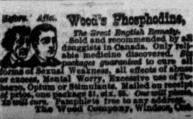
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arranged? I can see no possible chance for failure. The probabilities all are that Claude will soon be left penniless in Europe, and, by the time he is affordan Europe, and, by the thine country, and a chance to return to this country, a thousand things may have happened to take him out of our way. The longer he is away, the better for us, of any event, as soon as course; but, in any event, as soon as we are in full possession of the prop-erty I am ready to take the chance of

ir keeping it."
"I quite see the weight of your arguments," replied Ralph, "and, of course, I'm in favor of a bold course. When

will you record the deeds?"

"Oh, there is no immediate hurry,"
was the reply. "It will be well to wait
the turn of events for a few weeks, My only object in hastening at all is to advance you in old Bruyn's favor. As

soon as you are the recognized heir of Rolff House, you need worry no more over your interests in that direction.

"I don't worry," replied Ralph.
"Well, I am glad of it," was the reply. "Nothing is so sure to win the favor of Fortune as a cool and brave front. You have but to be cautious and persistent my box to retail." persistent, my boy, to win."
"I intend to be," asserted Ralph.
"No doubt, no doubt," responded the

elder; "and the prize is worthy of the highest effort. You must win, Ralph." "I intend to win," again asserted Ralph.

CHAPTER XIX. Wearly passed the days to Rosa Bruyn. Drearily the sun rose in the morning and as drearily set behind the western mountains at eve, She performed her accustomed duties with her usual alacrity, and perhaps with more than her usual conscientious care; but the light of happy content had gone from her sweet face and the buoyancy, from her step. For days and weeks she had wrestled with the doubts and surmises that had thronged continually, upon her, and this mental anxiety and conflict could not but leave its impression. But, through it all, she had not given up her faith in Claude. She was esolved that she would not question his fidelity till she was afforded better evidence than anything that could ome to her through the instrum ntality of Anthony Saybrook. She was strong-ly impelled to the belief that the defamation of Claude and the persistent pressing of Ralph Saybrook's suit were parts of the same plot, and a thousand explanations thronged to her mind to xcuse Claude's strange letter, which, as she recalled its words, seemed to her too ambiguous and too much like the high-flown expressions of one writing in a merry, mischievous mood, to be an acutal confession of falseness and guilt. She flattered her hopes with the thought that the letter had been drawn out by some subterfuge of the wily lawyer, and was evidence only of Claude's light and gay spirit, which she well understood to be prone to a certain recklessness of expression, easily misunderstood. Yet doubts would at times assail her, and the certainty that there was to be a long and perhaps total sepration, and that all chance of explanation was removed from her troubles to weigh most heavily up-

Mrs. Bruyn's watchful eye had detected her daughter's quiet, unconfessed grief, and she was the object of her anxious solicitude. Yet even she was unaware of the real nature and depth of her sorrow. The good lady had in an unwilling and half-hearted way admitted what seemed to her the over-whelming evidence of Claude's falsity. wheiming evidence of Claude's faisity. The absolute convictions of her husband had gradually broken down her last defense of the young man, and she was fain to admit the guilt she could not explain. This belief created a barrier as it was belief created as rier as it were between her and her daughter, and prevented her offering the consolation which would have been admissable had there been a more direct sympathy in their views of the matter. By her very position, Mrs. Bruyn was forced to stand midway between the barbara traces. tween her husband and daughter; and she deemed it best, under the circumstances, to let Rosa's grief quietly wear itself out. She was little aware, indeed, of the real depth of the wound that had been inflicted, so calm and patient was the brave girl's demeanor, but she could note the altered appearance and demeanor, and her anxiety and sympathy

were deeply excited. Ralph Saybrook continued his calls at farmer Bruyn's, and his attentions to Rosa. So delicate and circumspect was his conduct, however, that he had really made a quite favorable impres-sion upon Mrs. Bruyn, and even Rosa was forced to treat him with a con-sideration that she would gladly perhaps have accepted the opportunity to withhold. But the fact was, that so well had he ingratiated himself in the old farmer's good opinion, and so careful was he not to allow Rosa any opportunity to take or show offense without doing injustice to her natural good-ness of heart, that he had greatly strengthened his position as a suitor for her hand without her being really for her hand without her being really aware of it. At times the thought of the wrong that had been done to Claude smote her heart, yet she had no ground save her own suspicions to acouse the Saybrooks of a plot to injure her lover, and her nature was too suiteless and and her nature was too guileless and too generous to take the risk of doing injustice upon mere conjecture.

Thus ever-recuurring grief and doubt lay at the heart of the unhappy girl; and the fact that there seemed no one in whom she could confide, and that everybody appeared drawn into the plot to thwart her wishes, caused her sorrows to weigh more heavily upon her heart than they otherwise would. It seemed to her continually that if there were only some one to whom she could talk about her sorrows, if she only knew some friend of Claude's of whom she could simply inquire his welfare, even though it were to ask in vain, it would be some relief to the intense strain of anxiety and grief.

To be Continued. Imagination is never quite sure that the sugared pill has not a bad

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