The Secret of the Old Chateau

By DAVID WHITELAW.

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Vivian Renton and Eddie Haverton, modern soldiers of fortune, have been gambling with Hubert Baxenter, a prosperous attorney, in his London apartments. After their departure late at night Renton returns to the house, murders Baxenter 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 Baxenter's ancestors by a French nobleman, the Marquis de Dartigny, of the Chateau Chauville. The chest has been handed down from one generation of Baxenters 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 needful 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 little granddaughter to England, where the chest and document were given to the Baxenters for safe keeping. Now, more than one hundred years later, Hubert Baxenter's body is found, but the police find no clue. Meanwhile, Renton changes his name to Baptiste Dartin, grows a beard and passes himself off as a Frenchman. He visits the old Chateau.

CHAPTER VII.—(Cont'd.)

A stone bridge spanned the half-frozen surface of the moat and led to the main entrance of the chateau, a massive gateway flanked by little white flowers. Above it, on a block of stone, were the remains of a carved escutcheon, battered and defaced almost out of all recognition. The caretaker, who had been nodding over his fire in the little gateroom, welcomed the landlord of the "Three Lilies" and his guest effusively. To show a stranger over the great house of which he held the keys was to him a source of never-ending delight.

As he led them through the courtyard his tongue was busy recounting snatches of the romantic history of the Dartignys. The old fellow seemed to live in the glories of the past. Here, from the doorway, the Marquis and a Monsieur Perancourt took their departure, disguised as a wine merchant and his clerk. Yes, they reached England; but the nobleman returned, and he was not seen again after the death of his son. Ah! it was a sad time, that of the Revolution."

The old caretaker shook his head as he recounted the history.

"No, monsieur, there are no Dartignys left now. There was one who appeared as a claimant in the early part of 1800. He was an emigre, monsieur, and he had no money and could not fight his claim. He disappeared at last, monsieur, and went with two or three other ruined nobles to Ottawa to begin life again."

The chateau, the visitor learned, had been attacked by a mob of patriots led by a friend of Carrier, the infamous butcher of Nantes. This gentleman, with an eye, no doubt, to personal plunder, restrained the fury of the attackers, who, after demolishing the chapel and the carving and armorial bearings over the gates and fireplaces and finding no living being on which to gratify their blood-lust, passed on to more exciting game. The castle ultimately fell into the possession of a prominent Jacobin, who, shortly after the fall of Robespierre, followed his illustrious leader to the scaffold.

The estate after that had fallen into a state bordering on decay, until, in 1860, it was restored by a Monsieur de Barron, a financier, in whose possession it now remained. The building had changed but little in style since the days of the last marquis, and the new owner had so far respected history that he had left the battered escutcheons and restored only what was quite necessary to comfort.

The traveller from Blois was a good listener, and on his return to the "Three Lilies" he was able to fill two pages of his notebook with useful data pertaining to the ancient family of the Dartignys. The gentleman who had gone to Canada particularly interested him, and reference to the notes which he had accumulated in Paris easily located him as the only child of a certain Yvette, sister of the Marquis. This lady, Vivian noted with satisfaction, ascended the scaffold in the Carrousel quite early in the days of the Terror.

He told himself that it was through this emigrant to the New World that his path lay to the chest reposing in the strong-room of the firm of Baxenter. For a few days he lingered in the neighborhood of the chateau, then returned to Paris.

On the 20th of February the good ship Touraine left Havre for Montreal. On its passenger list figured the name of Baptiste Dartin.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The Claimant.

The sun of mid-June beat fiercely down from a brazen sky, and striking the big polished reflectors outside the windows, made the atmosphere in the offices of Messrs. Baxenter well nigh insupportable. At his desk in a far corner Cantle nodded over a specification, a page of which he had not turned for the last half-hour.

The second clerk, a young man whose attire showed a continual conflict between law and sport, was marking with a pencil the finals in an evening paper, which, doubled up small, protruded from under his ledger. The office youth, whose desk faced the windows, had skilfully disarranged the wide screen, thereby making it possible to catch ravishing glances of the little actresses tripping daintily in their high-heeled shoes and muslin draperies along the Strand to visit their agents.

The Baxenter cat, doubtless from force of a long-established habit, dozed in front of the empty fire grate. It was very peaceful, very somnolent and very stuffy in the domain of the firm of Baxenter.

But upon the handsome face of the young head of the house there was a look of deep intent as he paced restlessly to and fro on the carpet of the inner room. Now and again he would stop and gaze out over the green half-curtains on to the shady side street, then would turn to the letter which he carried in his hand. He had found it among his correspondence when he returned from his lunch, and he had read with curious sensations the echoes of the long-dead past which it contained. It seemed to him that someone was writing to him across the ages, and, involuntarily, he raised his eyes to the painting by Hoppner of the founder of the firm which hung on the gray-green expanse of wall facing the windows. From it they returned to the papers on his desk, resting finally upon a portrait of a lovely girl, who, from her silver frame, seemed to smile upon the young solicitor.

Robert Baxenter crossed to his chair and sat there in a reverie, telling himself that it was in this very room and sitting in this very chair that his ancestor had listened to the romantic story of the Marquis de Dartigny. In his mind he pictured the old nobleman as he leaned forward, eagerly telling of his hopes and fear; saw the candle-light upon his face and upon the ruffles of lace at his throat, and imagined the professional air of old Adam Baxenter nodding sagely over his stock at his visitor.

As he gazed at the portrait on the wall he could almost swear that a new look had come into the painted eyes; that the old man seemed to smile down upon this descendant who was taking on the work begun so long ago. Perhaps there was something after all in the theory that spirits of the dead returned to the scenes of their earthly strivings.

Then the young man pulled himself together and, turning to his desk, struck twice on a bell. There was a little interval—easily understood by anyone who could peep into the life of the outer office—a tap on the door and Cantle entered.

Robert Baxenter looked up from the papers on his desk.

"Ah, Cantle," he said; "shut the door, will you, and come right in. Pull up a chair—that's it. I am going to read you a letter which came among these when I was out. I want you to listen carefully and not interrupt me until I have finished."

The old man was all attention as notepaper. "It is dated," he went of papers before him a sheet of thin the solicitor picked out from a litter on, "the 2nd of this month, and is headed 'The Dominion Hotel, Quebec.' Listen.

"'Dear Mr. Baxenter—I hardly know how to address you in this letter, which at best is but an arrow shot into the air. It relates to a tradition, very vague and nebulous, but which has survived in our family for a hundred years and more—in fact, ever since my ancestor Armand, son of Yvette de Dartigny, landed, together with other emigrant French nobles, in Ottawa, in 1801. The story—I can imagine it to be nothing more—is, that should a member of the house of Dartigny (now, alas! corrupted into Dartin) be in London, he should call upon one Baxenton, a notary in that city, using as his introduction the motto of our ill-fated house.

"Referring to a London directory, I can find no trace of a solicitor of that name, but there is, I see, a Baxenter. I venture, therefore, sir, to acquaint you with the fact that, business taking me to England, I will do myself the honor of waiting upon you at eleven on the morning of the 18th inst.

"'With my respects, I am, my dear sir, yours very faithfully,

"'BAPTISTE DARTIN.'"

As the solicitor put down the letter Cantle half rose to his feet, but sank back onto the chair as Robert Baxenter held up a silencing hand.

"There is a rough drawing," the solicitor went on, "below the signature—some heraldic device—and the motto, 'Cherchez avec l'epee.' What do you make of it, Cantle?"

"Make of it, sir?" the old clerk's eyes were round with wonder, "only one thing, Mr. Robert, that the claimant has come at last." As his master had done, Cantle raised his eyes to the portrait on the wall. "It is very strange, all the same, sir—uncanny."

Robert Baxenter placed the letter in its envelope.

"It is, Cantle; but, to me, it looks straight. You see, Mr. Dartin does not even seem to know that there is a chest; you see, he puts forward no definite claim—he is evidently taking a sporting chance, on some vague tradition. The 17th, why, that's to-morrow. We'll know more then. I'm going to put it out of my mind till to-morrow. Now, we'll look into that matter of the Marsden settlement. The Mackinnon affair is postponed until Mrs. Mackinnon returns from Scotland."

It was a well set-up man of some thirty years of age who entered the offices punctually at eleven o'clock the next morning. He was dressed in a well-fitting suit of light gray tweed and he carried himself athletically. His beard was neatly trimmed to a short point, and his bronzed skin and the low cut of his collar give him the unmistakable look of a Colonial. In one hand he held a soft felt hat, the other he stretched out to the solicitor.

He greeted Mr. Baxenter with a smile that had something of nervousness in it and that lent a twinkle to his rather grave eyes. In his speech was a suggestion of a Canadian accent. At the solicitor's invitation he took a chair beside the desk, and beneath the seat he placed his gloves and the soft felt hat.

"Well, Mr. Baxenter, here I am—a mighty hunter of wild geese—eh? I appear before you, like Ali Baba, and I say, 'Cherchez avec l'epee'—presto!"

"Meaning—?" said the solicitor, with a smile.

"Literally, I think it means 'Seek with the sword.' Yet I come to you unarmed. What it conveys beyond that I cannot guess. Nothing, eh?"

The solicitor's face was non-committal.

"I didn't say so, Mr. Dartin."

"Well, well, it's no good fencing, anyway; either there is something in it or there isn't. Shall I tell you my story?"

Robert Baxenter bowed assent. The man seated opposite him cleared his throat and prepared for the effort of his life.

"You will have had my letter," he began, "and you will know where I hail from, and what I have called on you for. I was born in Winnipeg twenty-nine years ago. My father, a simple and somewhat ambitious man, had made a little fortune and seemed very well content with his modest pleasures.

"Our family, Mr. Baxenter, had been settled in Canada since the early part of 1801, when a certain Armand de Dartigny, after a vain fight to recover the estates and position lost to the family during the Revolution, shook the dust of his country from his feet and, together with a small party of ruined nobles, set out to make a new home over seas, and swearing never to set foot again in France."

The narrator paused. He had rehearsed his tale until there was no point on which he considered he could be tripped, yet he found it difficult to keep cool under the keen eyes of his listener. He took a cigarette from his case and, having asked permission, lit it; then he went on:

(To be continued.)

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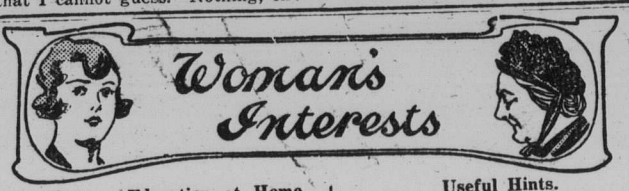

Getting an Education at Home.

There are, unfortunately, a number of women who have a sense of inferiority because they lack an education. They would like to take part in the social life and the club work of the community, but are afraid to do so for fear of making mistakes. Their ideas may be just as good as the ideas of the women who "do things," but they do not know how to express them.

Such women can not enter into a discussion nor prepare a club paper, and they have not the courage necessary for taking part in a program. They are forced to acknowledge their inability by their inactivity, and so must sit by, feeling that they are "out of it all." I know the feeling, for I once belonged to that class; and I want to tell how I overcame my inadequacy and thus possibly help others to overcome their difficulties.

My education, in so far as schooling is concerned, ended before I had finished the seventh grade. I married and for several years was so busy with my work and with the "bringing up" of a good-sized family that I took little part in neighborhood affairs. Later, however, I had more time. I attended the Parent-Teachers meetings; but aside from "honoring the meetings with my presence" and paying my dues, I might as well have stayed at home for all the good I was able to do.

Finally, I became so sensitive concerning my mental lameness that I determined to do something about it. I had two eyes and a mind, and there were books. With such a combination, why remain ignorant?

There was not much time for study; but the housewife performs a number of duties that do not require constant application of thought, and I could at least use the time given to those duties for thinking to some purpose.

I wrote on paper the particular thing I wished to learn, and kept it before me when washing dishes, doing other kitchen work, and when ironing. When on the move, I carried my "lesson" around in my apron pocket, glancing at it when I could.

I began to study my old school dictionary to find the meaning of words I was using but could not define. I studied words alone and in their relation to other words, tried to form ideas on chosen subjects, and sought the proper words to express the ideas.

When I read I endeavored to get the meaning of each sentence or paragraph before going on to the next. By doing this I was able to fix in my mind what I had read and to remember it. I had my children bring their language and rhetoric books home so that I could study them at night.

I kept, and still do keep, a paper and pencil at hand, and any original thought is welcomed as a fortune would be and is quickly written down. Many times I have taken my hands out of dish-water to do this; I have even jumped out of bed to write down a thought which I feared would be gone by morning.

The more I thought and studied, the better became my understanding; the more I used my mind, the more useful it became. I do not think I possess greater intelligence than the average woman, but I can say without any intention of boasting that the result has been truly amazing. "My mind" has come to life and grows constantly more lively, for I have acquired a hearty appetite for learning, and I find the means of nourishment everywhere.

TENTS

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Useful Hints.

A screen door for the outside cellar entrance will keep out flies, cats and other intruders when you open the hatchway in order to ventilate the cellar.

The unsightly marks made by striking matches on the wall can be removed by rubbing the spot with a piece of lemon. To prevent a repetition of the offence, apply a little vaseline and rub the spot with a cloth.

Remove iron rust by rubbing the spot with a piece of rhubarb until the juice of the rhubarb has thoroughly saturated the cloth. Allow the article to dry, then wash it out in cold water, when the spot will have entirely disappeared.

To clean a Panama hat, take off bands and linings and prepare a warm (not hot) suds, made with Castile soap. To each quart of soap-suds, add one teaspoonful of ammonia. Use a nail-brush to scrub the hat with this mixture, not neglecting the under side of the brim. Rinse off with clear water and scrub again with the soap-suds. Rinse again in clear water, then rinse with a combination of one quart of water, a tablespoonful of glycerine and a few drops of bluing. Rinse well, using the brush to work well into the straw. The glycerine prevents the hat from getting hard and out of shape. Pat the hat with clean, dry cloths, then lay it in the sun on a flat surface which has been covered with a clean towel. When the hat begins to dry, shape it as desired, then let it alone for two or three hours and it will be as nice and fresh as when new. Straw hats can be cleaned by rubbing them with cornmeal dampened with peroxide.

Our Children's Eyes.

What of our children's eyes? Recent investigations into the condition of Canadian school children reveal that about one-fifth—twenty per cent.—are handicapped by defective vision, and in a considerable number of cases these defects are serious.

The first essential is to insure the soundest possible health at birth. This depends in a certain measure upon the health and diet of the mother before the baby is born. Proper food and care for the baby throughout infancy and childhood when the structures of the body are growing at the most rapid rate are necessary. Improper or insufficient food, neglect and illness are among the causes which interfere with growth and healthy development of the body in every part and no doubt affect the growing eyes in the same way.

But even when the fundamental laws of good health have been observed and when the eyes are strong and healthy to begin with, they should have very special care from the moment of birth. Directions for this are found in The Canadian Mother's Book by Dr. Helen MacMurchy, supplied free on application to Department of Health, Ottawa.

Babies are often allowed to lie in their carriages with the sun shining directly into their eyes, or are permitted to look straight into a bright artificial light, thus working harm to the delicate nerves of the eye. As children grow they often strain their eyes by reading or other close work in a poor light, or too soon after illness, when the eyes are particularly subject to injury.

A Little Wisdom.

A lazy spirit is a losing spirit.

Creditors have much better memories than debtors.

The best is the cheapest in the end, and in the beginning, too.

What we are to-morrow is what we make of ourselves to-day.

It's more the years than the fingers that give the musician his skill.

To have a good face is good; to have a good reputation is better; to have both is best.

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Pitfalls For Foreigners

Sir Ian Hamilton tells a good story of when he was the only foreigner with the Japanese General Staff in the Russo-Japanese War. A geisha, whose name in English would have been Miss Sparrow, sang to the company, and he proceeded to compliment her on her skill.

Proud of the little Japanese he knew, he tried to say to her in the florid Eastern style that he would like to keep her always with him in a cage that she might sing to him. He told her so—or thought he did—and she went away quite crestfallen.

What he had really said to the girl was: "My good sparrow, I wish you would shut yourself up in a box!"

During the war the following advertisement appeared in the "Times": "Jack F. C.,—If you are not in khaki by the 20th I shall cut you dead.—Ethel M."

The Berlin correspondent of the "Cologne Gazette" was so greatly struck by this terrible threat coming from an English maiden that he telegraphed it to his paper as an example of the brutal method of English recruiting. But he managed to translate it into: "If you are not in khaki by the 20th I shall back you to death!"

That is the result of trying to translate the peculiar idiom of one language into another, and it is not the only instance. There is the old story of the Frenchman who said he had "a cow in his boy," when he meant a cough on his chest.

During the war a well-known French general, who was trying to pay a well-deserved compliment to the British Army, made just as bad a blunder. He compared the Army with a vast machine. He said the privates were the wheels, and that the officers were the cogs who put the wheels in motion as long as they were "well oiled." He little knew that to be well oiled, in slang English, means nothing more or less than to be intoxicated.

Missionaries have found the translation of hymns into barbaric languages a very ticklish task. "Go, Labor On" in the dialect of the Congo became to them, "Go Blunder On"; but it did not interfere in the least with the gusto with which the blacks sang it.

Physical and spiritual ideas are a good deal mixed up in the case of the cannibal islands, and food and life are interchangeable terms, meaning exactly the same thing. So when the missionary set about the task of translating the hymn which says "Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life," he thought the natives sang it with particular appreciation. He learned later that they were really singing "Wonderful words of stomach."

Another missionary found that the closing hymn: "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing" was sung very charily, with a little chirping voice, whereas any other hymn they sang with might and main. He found presently that his translation meant to them, "Lord, kick us out softly, softly."

Once the great Sir Walter Scott made a wilful and very witty mistranslation of a Latin sentence or motto which appeared over the gateway of an old baronial mansion which had been taken over by the Edinburgh Law Society as their headquarters. The motto carved in stone was, "OLIM MARTE, NUNC ARTE," which means "Once by war, now by skill."

When George IV. visited the city Sir Walter acted as showman. The king observed the motto and inquired its meaning. Sir Walter said: "It means, your Majesty, 'Once robbers, now thieves.'"

The Rust Record.

The greatest waster in the whole world is rust. It costs Britain alone $160,000,000 yearly!

When the oxygen of most air combines with the sensitive surface of a metal it produces an oxide. This is rust and nothing else.

Aluminium is the only metal that will not rust. Gold is generally taken to be a rustless metal, and it is true that it will not combine with oxygen of itself—without air, that is. Given the aid, it will rust.

Ornamental steel—that with a purplish or liliac color—is the worst rustler, because the color tinge has been produced by part-oxidisation, and the process begun artificially is continued naturally.

Dry air will cause rust, but the metal has to be at a high temperature. A poker which has been made red-hot will rust when it cools. Grate-bars do the same. The flakes that come from red-hot iron when it is hammered are but rust.

The best preventive of rust is fat-oil varnish (one part) mixed with rectified spirits of turpentine (five parts), and applied with a sponge. The highest steel polish on mathematical instruments remains absolutely unaffected if this solution is applied.

Tinware is rendered practically immune from the rust fiend if, when new, the ware is smeared with pure lard and baked in a hot oven.

Expected Too Much.

Citizen—"Unless I am mistaken you are the party I gave ten cents to yesterday."

Beggar—"I am, sir. Did you think a dime would make a new man of me?"

The Power of Music.

Music is frequently employed to restore lost power of speech and memory, it having been found by experiment that the neurasthenic and paralyzed are often able to sing, while they cannot speak.

Minard's Liniment for Burns, etc.

Workmen Who Are Prisoners

Most of the world's emeralds now come from the Muzo Mines in Columbia, where an emerald weighing 630 carats was found recently.

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Though the pointed bars with which they work weigh thirty pounds, a miner can strike exactly the same spot with the point of the bar fifty or sixty times in succession, deviating not one hair's breadth, and using just sufficient force to break the limestone without damaging the emerald or the calcite in which it is embedded.

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