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## The Secret of the Old Chateau

By DAVID WHITELAW.

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### How the Story Began:

Vivian Renton and Eddie Haverton, modern soldiers of fortune, have been gambling with Hubert Baxter, a prosperous attorney in his London apartments. The two lose heavily. After their departure in the early morning hours, Renton returns to the house with the idea of recovering the lost money. He chloroforms Baxter and makes a vain search for the money which is lying in an envelope on the desk, addressed to a hospital. Finally Renton starts to search the inert body lying on the hearth-rug and discovers to his horror that Baxter is dead. The clock chimes half-past five.

### CHAPTER II.—(Cont'd.)

He shuddered at the calm horror of the room. The ticking of the clock seemed to him so loud that he felt it would be heard by people outside. The sounds seemed to call out mur—tick—tick—mur—der—tick—tick—He crossed the room hurriedly and blew out the flame of the candle, and stood there in the gray light, trembling pitifully. He heard the tread of policeman on his beat, and for one tense moment the light from a lantern flashed on the windows and across the ceiling.

There would be workmen about and milkmen on their early rounds. They would take notice of a figure in evening dress which was seen leaving a house at that hour, and would remember it afterward to his undoing. He recalled to mind cases in which such evidence had placed the rope round men's necks.

Besides there was the body—he could not leave it there staring up at him. He could just make out the shapeless figure on the white square of the rug. He knew that Baxter had intended leaving for Paris in the morning, and that he had already sent his servants away—the countess, his home, and his man to execute a commission for him in the country. After all, perhaps the body would be as safe where it was as anywhere.

But some force was compelling him, telling him to hide from the coming day his ghastly handiwork. Vivian told himself that he had not meant this—it was not the first time he had used the chloroform pad which he carried always in his little case in his breast pocket. It had been his intention only to drug the solicitor, and he felt a seething resentment against the fate which had made him a murderer in spite of himself.

With noiseless steps he crossed the room and opened the door, looking out fearfully into the dim and lofty hall. The staircase, wide and carpeted, led away up into the gloom, and taking his courage in his hands, Vivian ascended. The stairs creaked and cracked like pistol shots through the silence.

He passed from the room to a ghostly room, the gray dawn giving to the shrouded furniture and chandeliers strange and unwanted shapes and gleaming weirdly in the looking-glasses. Ascending further, he found attics crowded with lumber. A window grimy with dirt led out on to the roof, and Vivian saw that there was the hiding place he had been seeking. Among the chimney stacks and hidden by the cables, a body might lie forever undiscovered.

He performed the task vaguely and as though in a dream. The burden was not a heavy one, but it seemed an eternity of unquiet life before Vivian leant back against a chimney stack and said that his labor was over.

Vivian crawled with a shudder back through the window and so down to the card-room. The air here was chill and the fire was long dead ashes. The man seemed to miss the figure that had been on the rug. He shivered and had recourse to the whiskey bottle again and again.

The thought that was now uppermost in his mind was that he must spend the whole day in this house of death. It was now close upon eight o'clock, and, peeping through the blinds, Vivian saw that the life of the terrace had begun in earnest. Clerks were hurrying past on their way to the tube station, and the postman was at the house opposite talking through the area railings with a pretty servant-maid. He noticed all these things with a curious detachment.

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dressed to the hospital. The peculiar crackling noise given out by its contents awakened his curiosity and caused him to open it. He gave a little gasp of pleasure as he thought how useful this windfall would be in assisting him to leave the country, and, again, more to pass the time than anything else, fell to examining the drawers of the desk and bureau.

There were many papers, legal and private, and a few jewels—these latter of no great value and barely worth the taking; Vivian interested to leave these as being articles easy of identification. A glance at the numbers of the bank notes told him that they had mostly been won from Eddie and himself, and no one would ever know they had left the possession of their original owners.

It was about four o'clock when he made his great discovery. He was putting back into its place a little drawer to the right of the pigeon-hole in the bureau, when, unknowingly, he must have released some hidden spring, for another drawer, cunningly concealed in the paneling at the back, sprang out. Vivian's nervous system was already shattered by the work of the night and he fell back, his heart beating strangely, and it was some moments before he could bring himself to touch the papers which he saw exposed.

There were but two. One was evidently the last will and testament of the man who now lay dead on the roof, the other—a parchment yellow with age and creased with much usage. It was folded lengthwise and was endorsed in an angular handwriting. Vivian Renton took this over to the light which came thinly through the blinds.

At first, as he read, he showed no particular interest in the matter set forth in the cramped, faded calligraphy on the parchment. It was when he had reached the second folio of the document that a look of interest came into the keen eyes. After that he read to the end without raising them.

And, when he had finished, he dropped down in the easy chair and sat, the parchment sheets hanging down in his listless hands, his eyes fixed, unseeing, on space. From the street outside came the movement of the life of the afternoon, the rumble of vehicles, the shrill laughter of children. The only sound within the room was the eternal ticking of the clock.

"If I only dared—"

The man in the chair breathed the words. A fortune in it, perhaps—and a lost identity—at one stroke! If I only dared!

He rose to his feet and took a blotting-pad from its place on the desk, and, choosing the spot where the waning light was strongest, placed it on his knee and commenced to write. Word for word he made a copy of what he had been reading—a very rough copy—partly in a shorthand of his own, for the light would not last long now and he dared not risk a candle.

The scheme, if what was nebulous, forming in his brain could be called that, necessitated, above all, that the original document should be returned with the will to the secret drawer in the bureau. It was necessary that, when the heir to the dead solicitor came to take possession, they should be found intact and show no signs of having been tampered with.

It was all but dark when Vivian put away his fountain pen, and, folding what he had written, placed it in his breast pocket, together with the blotting-pad. He experienced a little difficulty in replacing the drawer, but at last he told himself that all was as he had found it and that No. 9 Mortimer Terrace showed no signs of his stay. The bank

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notes were safely in his possession, and nothing remained for him but to take the first opportunity of leaving the house.

He noticed with a keen satisfaction that with the coming of night the fog had again settled down over the district, and although not so dense as before, still would serve as a curtain to cloak his departure. He buttoned his coat closely round his throat and felt his way out into the hall. He had his hand on the latch, when he started back and stood motionless with fear.

There came the creak of the gate and then footsteps on the gravel path. Vivian had, for the moment, lost all power of movement. Had the person coming up the path possessed a key, the game that Vivian was planning would have had but a short life. The steps came to a stand on the top of the flight of stone stairs that led from the door to the garden. To the man on the mat the time seemed an eternity; his nerves were in no fit condition for this.

There was a rattle at the door and with a wave of relief flooding over him, Vivian could just discern a white envelope—a circular—being pushed through the letterbox. He nearly shouted with laughter as he heard the postman's steps die away down the path.

It was a small matter in itself, but Vivian Renton returned to the room he had left and drank off the remainder of the whiskey. He told himself that he must pull himself together; it was not usual for him to be frightened at a shadow. But then Vivian Renton had never killed a man before.

An hour later the man closed the door of No. 9 Mortimer Terrace softly behind him and walked quietly, out into the darkness.  
(To be Continued next week.)

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### To a Discouraged Man.

You would resent it if anybody should intimate that you were not the author of your own success; that it had been due to outside influence, to pulls, or to outside capital. You claim that there is nothing mysterious, no secret about the success you have had up to the present time; that it is due solely to your own effort, your own hard work, your own intelligence. Now, what reason have you for thinking that a larger success, a success magnified a thousand times, would have any special secret back of it?

The same processes you have employed, if extended, accentuated, intensified all along the line, will increase your success tremendously. The matter lies in your own hands. Nobody else can do this work for you.

If you have accomplished all that you have done without any remarkable effort, without any terrible strain, without thinking so very much about it—what could you not do if you should fling into your endeavors all the force you could muster—the whole weight of your being? If ordinary efforts have accomplished what you have accomplished—what would not extraordinary efforts do? What could you not do by putting your whole heart into your work, bringing a superb enthusiasm to it, coming to it with a determination to be a winner, coming to it in the spirit of a master instead of an artisan? Perhaps only half of you has been in your efforts in the past; think then what you could do if you were all there!

Don't think so much about the big boost that may come to you from some mysterious source; just better your best each day. Concentrate a little more, have more courage, more self-confidence, intensify your application, your dead-in earnestness, and before you realize it you will have multiplied your powers tremendously. —O. S. Marden.

### Completing the Job.

Man has circumnavigated the globe, has penetrated the Arctic and the Antarctic to the two poles and has explored the great depths of the ocean—not indeed by visiting them, but with his sounding instruments. But he has never yet attained the summit of the loftiest peak. That task is about to be undertaken. If it shall be accomplished, no grand problem of geography will remain unsolved. Under the patronage of British Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club an expedition is to be organized that will next year attempt to climb Mount Everest, the unconquered giant of the Himalayas and the highest mountain in the world.

Although Everest is in latitude twenty-eight degrees north, which is only four and a half degrees from the tropic of Cancer, and therefore lies to the Torrid Zone, it is situated in a region of such altitude, roughness and isolation, and in such a climate, that no white man has ever yet within forty miles of the base of it. The difficulties that the expedition will encounter even before the actual ascent begins are almost inconceivable, yet they will be multiplied with every stage of the climbing. Intense cold, blinding storms, avalanches falling rocks, crevasses and deceitful snow bridges over chasms are not the only discomforts and dangers that will be experienced; and all the time the diminishing supply of air for the lungs as greater heights are attained will render success almost, perhaps quite, beyond human power.

The summit of Everest is, as trigonometrically ascertained, 29,141 feet above sea level. That makes a perpendicular of more than five and a half miles to be overcome. The greatest height hitherto attained in the Himalaya region, and probably anywhere in the world, is 24,500 feet, reached by the Duke of the Abruzzi on the Bride Peak, which is the third highest of the range.

The expedition is not to start until next year. Preparation for it will take a long time. Heretofore the government of Tibet has not permitted access to Everest from points where approach is easiest. It has now given permission, and we are about to see whether it was obstructive human laws that kept man from completing his knowledge of his terrestrial dwelling place by reaching the "roof of the world," or whether it is human endurance that is unequal to the task.

### Inaccurate Thermometers.

Even thermometers become old, and consequently inaccurate, with age. Mercorial instruments reading too high and spirit instruments too low. In the former case the bulb appears to shrink, thus forcing the quicksilver too far up the stem. This gradual shrinkage is supposed to be due to the fact that the external pressure on the bulb may be considerably higher than the internal pressure, the air as far as possible having been removed before the glass is sealed.

On the other hand, the spirit thermometer is sealed with the bulb covered in a freezing mixture, in order to lock up in the glass as much air as possible. The instrument thus starts with the internal pressure which in time appears to be reduced either by expansion of the glass under the internal pressure or by leakage.

The pearl industry has taken up the X-ray as a money saver. Oysters are radiographed without the shells being opened, and those containing no pearls are not considered. Those showing signs of small pearls are put back to give the jewel a chance to grow up.