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, and visits Canada; then he presents his fictitious claims to Robert Baxenter, new head of the firm, and receives the treasure chest. Robert calls on Stella Benham whose heart is set on making a great success on the stage. She tells him he must wait a year for her answer. Dartin is at first greatly disappointed to find only a paltry thousand pounds in the chest. He is relieved to discover later a large key and a parchment telling where the real treasure is hidden. Giving Baxente a quaint locket and chain which he found in the chest, Dartin goes to France. By posing as an artist he gains admittance to the Chateau Chauville, and in a secret vault finds an immense fortune in gems, gold and rare pictures. In the meantime Eddie Haverton has become the manager of Stella Benham's theatrical troupe and motors to Barchester to see her.

CHAPTER XIII.

Blackmail.

The long, straggling High street of the cathedral town of Barchester lay somnolent in a Sabbath calm. The Barcastrians, for the most part, were within doors, but a few who put devotion before digestion were hurrying off in answer to the call of the bell in the gray cathedral tower to afternoon service. At one of the bow-windows of the Angel Hotel, and with the debris of an excellent luncheon before them, Eddie Haverton sat with the manager of the little Theatre Royal, whose decorative facade of red brick was visible a little way up the High street.

The spin out from London had given Eddie an enviable appetite, and as he sat there, gazing through the smoke of his cigar over the roofs and spires of the beautiful old town to their background of shadow-stained downs, he felt that the world was a very desirable place—to those who were appreciative and who had the wit to find out its soft places.

He emptied what remained of his liqueur into his cup of black coffee and looked across at the clean-shaven face of the manager.

"So Miss Benham has not gone on to Maystone?"

"No; she and Wally Burns and two of the others are out at Adderbury Hall—oh, of course," and Reggie Danson laughed, "you don't know 'the good thing.'"

Haverton looked puzzled. "The good thing?" he queried.

"That's what we call him at the theatre. Pots and pots of money, and a patron of the arts as portrayed at the Theatre Royal, Barchester. He has a lovely place about two miles out on the London road, and he looks in at the show twice or three times a week. Most towns have a man like him, else I don't know what some of the actors would do for beer—"

"What they call a 'mug'—eh?"

"No, Mr. Haverton, that's just it. Mr. Dartin's no 'mug.' He just likes to be around with the crowd, and doesn't mind paying for the privilege. I imagine he came into his money suddenly and had some sort of an idea that the county would take him up. Lord! he didn't know the Barchester crowd. They won't look at him, and, as he likes company, he finds it at the theatre."

"What's on to-day, then—garden party?"

Reggie Danson laughed.

"That's the sort of thing—lobster-scramble. Oh, he'll do them well, all right. I can see Wally wading into the Mumm—what?"

Eddie Haverton was silent for a moment, then:

"Wonder if I could join them? It sounds rather alluring, and I want to see Miss Benham about a new topical song to slip into Act II. Think that's excuse enough? Besides, I don't feel like going back to town yet."

"Sure. I'll ring him up; it's more the merrier with him. He wanted me to go over, but Sunday's the only day I can catch up with my correspondence." The young manager did not say that there was another reason in the shape of a very pretty little Mrs. Danson and a five-year-old little Danson maid to whom Sunday was "Daddy's Day," and as such was to be respected.

He crossed the room and took down the receiver of the telephone.

"Seven x 1—yes—that's it. Dartin's place, that's 7x1—right, I'll hold on. Good afternoon, Mr. Dartin—it's me, Reggie. The manager of the company has turned up here in his car and wants to see Miss Benham. What—come over to you there? I'll ask him." Danson turned and put his hand over the mouth of the instrument. "You're to go at once, Mr. Haverton." He turned again to the telephone: "Hullo—Mr. Haverton's compliments, and he'll start right away. No, thanks all the same—my car experience, you know. Good-bye."

It was a merry little party that splashed the vivid lawns of Adderbury Hall on that Sunday afternoon in May. Stella Benham, radiant in a tussore dress and shady hat, big with roses, was sharing from the depth of a wicker chair a plate of strawberries with Wally Burns, the genial little comedian of the company, who, seated on a cushion at her feet, kept the party in high spirits with his small witticisms, trivial little remarks we'll suited to after-lunch ease on a sun-bathed lawn. Louis Derril, the "hero" lay at full length on the daisy strewn grass, listening to the small talk of Ada Clairton, the sprightly little lady who played second parts and understudied the "lead."

"Half a quid a pound, if they cost a penny; and to think that I started this glorious day on a cup of cocoa and an elderly haddock!" and Wally sighed as he popped the luscious fruit into his large mouth. "Ups and downs, ups and downs—no, Miss Benham, I absolutely refuse to take the last one. I—oh, here's our host come back."

It would have taken a keen eye indeed to have recognized the Vivian Renton of eighteen months ago in the trim-bearded man who, in a suit of well-cut flannels, came smiling across the lawn to join his guests.

"A thousand apologies, good friends, for leaving you. It was the telephone—I swear I'll have it cut off on Sundays. It's Danson; he says that your manager has turned up at Barchester. I've asked him to come over. Is it all right? I mean, he won't spoil sport will he? I didn't catch his name—Harton, isn't it?"

Stella looked up from under the brim of her hat. "Haverton, Mr. Dartin, Eddie Haverton."

For once the nerves of Vivian Renton played him false. For the life of him he could not repress the start of fear and all the will-power of which he was possessed was unable to force the blood back to his cheeks. The danger was so near, so present—and he had thought it dead. Even at this moment the motor containing the man he desired last in all the world to meet might come through those great gates which peeped out among the trees. He glanced in the direction of the road as he dropped limply into a chair.

Wally Burns was the first to notice that all was not well with their host. He jumped up from his cushion and laid a hand on Dartin's arm.

"You are ill, Mr. Dartin, the sun—?"

The fear-stricken man seized on to the excuse. It was an ordinary one, and, had he had time, he would have thought of something more convincing. He tried to smile. "Yes," he said weakly, "it's the sun. I had a touch of sunstroke in China once. I—I think I'll go in and lie down. No, Mr. Burns, don't you come. I'll be all right with you again in an hour. Barker will serve tea to you here." He rose from his chair and turned to the girl: "Pray make my excuses, Miss Benham, to Mr. Har—Harberton—this is a shabby way to greet him, I'm afraid, but—"

Dartin put a hand to his throat and, turning, walked slowly toward the house. The party rose to their feet with murmured sympathy, but he waved them aside. They watched him enter through the French windows into the dining-room.

Once inside the house Dartin showed little sign of illness in his movements. He gazed rapidly round the room, his brain working speedily. On a side-table a photograph of himself, taken a year previously, stood in a silver frame. Vivian whipped it up and hid it away beneath his coat. Then he hurriedly mixed and drank a brandy-and-soda.

As he put the glass down the distant sound of a hooter came to him from the direction of the road. Another hurried look around the room then the man leaped upstairs to his bedroom, from behind the curtains of which he watched the arrival of the newcomer.

And Mr. Eddie Haverton, when he joined the members of his company on the lawn, expressed his regrets that Mr. Dartin, who, as Wally had told him, had done them so remarkably well, was not there to meet him and receive his thanks. Then, with a little sigh of content, he sank into a chair beside that of Miss Stella Benham.

It was some months since he had set eyes on the girl, and he could not but admit to himself that there was a difference in her. He could not say that she had actually lost any of her beauty; there was nothing that would not be quickly remedied by a holiday and happiness.

It was such a different life from the one she had imagined. The little flat shared with her mother—the dainty little mother who had found it beyond her strength to tour with her daughter, whom she now saw at such long intervals—compared disastrously with the dingy lodgings changed each week. The men she was thrown into touch with, too—decent enough fellows, good-hearted to a fault—were so different to Robert Baxenter, whose serious gray eyes and clean-cut face were seldom absent from Stella's thoughts. Small wonder that the emptiness of her life and anxiety over her own suggested year of probation were reflected in the girl's looks.

"I'm afraid, Miss Benham, that the rest of the tour will be dull after all this. Your host does things uncommonly well I"—Eddie stopped suddenly and sniffed the air; then he turned to Burns. "Where did you get that cigar?" he asked.

The little comedian looked surprised at the abruptness of the question.

"Why, Mr. Haverton, it's one of Mr. Dartin's. There's a box inside—shall I—"

"No, no, Wally, thanks; it reminded me of a man I knew once who smoked them—'La Renabas,' I think the name of the brand was; they—"

Eddie Haverton broke off and sat gazing across the stream into the freshness of the woods on the opposite bank. Barker came over the grass carrying a dainty tea-table. He was sorry to say that his master was not much better. If they would excuse him he would not rejoin them. A little sleep in a darkened room with entire quiet was all that was needed. No, there was no necessity to send for a doctor; his master was used to these attacks. Mr. Dartin hoped that his guests would make themselves quite at home—really, there was nothing to worry about.

As the man rolled off his message Eddie watched him narrowly. Into his eyes came a curious look. It was strange that the illness of Mr. Dartin should synchronize so with his arrival. The cigar, too—he didn't remember having seen one of the little-used brand since—Eddie turned suddenly on Stella.

"I suppose you didn't have prawns in aspic for lunch—oh, Miss Benham?" he asked abruptly.

The girl gave a little laugh.

"Why, Mr. Haverton, you're quite a detective. Yes, we did have prawns in aspic, but it can't be that which upset Mr. Dartin; we all had some."

"No, it's not that; I didn't mean it in that way—I—I—was thinking of something else. I say, you people," he turned to the others, "it's hardly the thing to impose on Mr. Dartin's hospitality. If you like I'll tel' my chauffeur to run you round to Ellington; it's a lovely drive. The road cuts through the downs. I'm going to walk back; there are a few ideas I want to work out—besides, I don't get half enough exercise. Wally, come up to the house to find Barker, and send our farewells up to Mr. Dartin."

He took the little comedian by the arm and set off across the lawn. When he spoke it was in a whisper.

"Tell me, Wally, what kind of a man is this Mr. Dartin, f'll—fair?"

"Oh, it's hard to—wait, there's a photo of him in the dining-room, here, through these windows—nice room, what!—well that's funny!"

Haverton had advanced into the room. He wheeled round on Wally.

"What is?"

"Why, the photo. It was here at lunch, on this little table—I saw it—it's gone."

Eddie thought for a moment. He was smiling.

"Do I understand you, Wally, that Mr. Dartin's photograph was here at lunch and has been removed since?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, never mind. Come, they'll be waiting for us," and the two men hurried after the rest of the party, who, having made a hasty tea, were gathered round the car, which stood near the gates.

(To be continued.)

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To Make Ice Cream.

To be successful in making ice cream, remember that liquids should have cooled off before being placed in the can and that the proportions of ice and salt for freezing (one part of salt to three parts of ice) should never vary. The salt water must not be drawn off until the mixture is frozen, for it is after the ice begins to melt and brine appears that freezing takes place. The ice used for freezing should be placed in a heavy bag and pounded with a wooden mallet until broken into convenient sized pieces. The handiest implement for packing the ice and salt in a freezer is a garden trowel; its curving shape fits it for the packing process.

Clean the can very carefully after using and keep it in a dry place where it will not rust. Before using the can again, scald thoroughly, no matter how carefully it was cleaned before being put away. Empty the tub, rinse and place it where it will not dry out and fall to pieces.

The best ice cream is made by scalding half the cream and dissolving the sugar while the cream is hot. When raw cream is frozen the flavoring is not so prominent, the cream has a frozen, snowy taste and is not so smooth and velvety; but raw cream sweets in making to nearly double the original bulk, so that the cheaper creams are usually made without scalding.

Evaporated cream can be used when fresh cream is unavailable, one large-sized can equaling five cupfuls of milk or cream. Plain milk can also be used and has a somewhat richer taste if the milk is converted into junket before being made into ice cream.

Vanilla ice cream, which is most generally liked, is made thus: Put a pint of cream, one-half pound of sugar and two inches of vanilla-bean, cut in small pieces, into a double boiler. Allow to boil ten minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from the fire and with a blunt knife scrape into the cream the seeds and the soft part of the bean, mix thoroughly with the cream and set to cool. If the vanilla-bean is unavailable, use two tablespoonfuls of vanilla extract, added when the cream is cool. When quite cold add another pint of cream; pour into the can, put on the cover, fasten the crank and give it a turn to see that all is right. Put in a layer of ice about three inches deep, then a layer of salt an inch deep, and continue to alternate ice and salt to the top of the can; turn the crank slowly and steadily until it goes pretty hard. If properly packed it will take from twenty to twenty-five minutes to freeze.

It is not well to freeze too quickly. When the mixture is frozen remove the crank, wipe the lid, take it off carefully, so that no salt falls into the can, remove the dasher and scrape it off and with a wooden paddle or mush stick beat steadily for ten minutes to make the cream smooth. Put on the lid, place a cork in the hole where the dasher was, brush the edges of the lid with melted fat, which will harden as it chills and seal any crevice through which brine might enter. Drain off the water in the tub, repack in salt and ice, cover with paper, and then with a piece of carpet. Stand away in a cool place an hour or two to harden and ripen. These directions answer for ice creams of all flavors.

To-morrow's Dinner.

Creamed Crab Meat Riced Potatoes
Asparagus on Toast
Strawberry Salad Crackers
Pineapple Cake Iced Coffee

If you can not secure canned crab meat any canned fish or the leftover bits of chicken may be creamed. For one pint of meat use one pint of rich milk and thicken with the yolks of two eggs.

Asparagus on Toast.—Soak the asparagus in strong salted water one hour to draw out insects. Cook tied together in a bunch in hot water to cover, cooking just until tender. There should be only a tablespoon or two of water left when it is done. Salt and pepper to taste, add a generous tablespoon of butter, and lay on slices of toast on individual plates.

Strawberry Salad.—Select large berries, hull, wash thoroughly and chill, first sprinkling with powdered sugar. When ready to serve arrange in crisp lettuce leaves and cover with whipped cream to which has been added a third as much salad dressing. A few chopped nuts sprinkled over the cream adds to the salad.

Pineapple Cake.—Frost your favorite cake with the following: One cup of grated pineapple and one-fourth cup of granulated sugar boiled ten minutes. Stir in powdered sugar to make it thick enough to spread.

A Refrigerator Will Save Both Steps and Food.

No labor-saving device is operated with less care than the refrigerator. If filled with ice and kept clean it will preserve food for several days, no matter how warm the weather may be. There is no occasion for concern and no extra work, and the food will be more appetizing if it has been kept at a low temperature.

Three things are essential in caring for the refrigerator. It must be kept cool, dry and clean, by no means a difficult task.

Coolness is obtained through the use of ice. When the ice is placed in the box, the air about it becomes cold. Since cold air is heavier than warm air, the cold air falls down about the shelves containing the food, absorbing the heat and crowding the warm air out. The warm air ascends, reaches the ice and becomes cold and heavy, when it descends, and this continual circulation of the air keeps the food cold.

When a blanket or paper is wrapped around the ice to retard the melting, the air is cooled slowly because of the time it takes to reach the surface of the ice. The slow process of cooling prevents the free circulation of hot and cold air and interferes with refrigeration.

The coldest part of the refrigerator is the bottom shelf, because the coldest air falls there. For this reason the drinking water, butter, cream, milk, and other foods requiring a low temperature should be placed there. Meat, vegetables and fruits can be placed directly above, while the top shelf is reserved for foods having strong odors such as onions, melons, bananas and cheese. If these foods are kept elsewhere, their odors will be absorbed by the milk, and other delicately flavored foods; but if placed at the top of the refrigerator, the warm air takes up these odors and when they reach the ice they are carried out of the refrigerator through the drain-pipe.

It is unwise to keep food on the ice, for not only is the food easily spilled, but it absorbs the odors from other foods. Should it be necessary to store food in the ice chamber, place it in tightly covered bottles or dishes, and in order to economize space use utensils having straight sides in preference to those having sloping sides, as they can be placed more closely together.

In attempting to cool the air of the refrigerator, we must not forget that dry air is also essential. Food spoils when micro-organisms grow in it and these little organisms grow best when the air about them is warm, moist and unclean. If in washing the refrigerator hot water is used, steam condenses on the walls and keeps the air moist for several days. Poor circulation of air will also produce moisture.

The easiest and most satisfactory way of keeping the refrigerator clean, is to wipe up every spot with a damp cloth as soon as anything is spilled. Once a week a thorough washing can be given, using water of average temperature, to which a little baking-soda has been added. A cloth dampened in this solution and wrung quite dry is used to wipe off the walls and shelves, which should then be dried with a soft towel. After being washed in this manner, it is left dry as well as clean.

The drain-pipe can be taken out and washed in hot soapy water with a long-handled brush. When the pipe has cooled off it can be placed back in the refrigerator.

Should the ice melt before more can be added, the food should be taken out at once or it will spoil. When more ice is added, better results are obtained if the air in the refrigerator is well cooled before the food is again placed on the shelves.

Avoid opening the refrigerator except when absolutely necessary. By making a note of the things needed for the preparation of a meal, most of the food required can be taken out of the refrigerator at the same time.

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Heat That Causes Cold.

As the hot weather draws on we notice a curious phenomenon. We have colds ourselves, and some of our friends have them, too. Why hot days and nights should produce colds is at first sight a mystery.

Yet the reasons are quite simple. All colds are caused by microbes. The cold microbe is always waiting to waylay us, but he cannot do so unless we are run down in health.

If you sit in a draught, probably you begin to sneeze. It was not the draught which caused the cold; it was one of the most sensitive of the nerves of the body—the nerve which serves the ear, nose, and throat.

If you remain for long in a current of cold air, this nerve will be affected; it will say to the nose, ear and throat: "You do not like this draught," and they become so weakened that the microbes are able to find a home.

To keep free from summer colds you need only observe a few simple rules.

Don't wear too many clothes. If you do you will become overheated, and as you cool down the nerves will send out their despairing message which lets the microbes in.

Don't, after violent exercise, sit about in clothes that have become damp with perspiration.

Don't imagine that clothes which are sufficient for the heat of the day will be enough for the cool of the evening. Immediately you begin to shiver the nerves send out their welcome to the microbes.

Don't let your clothes dry on you if you get wet through the shower.

Don't stay in the company of a friend who has a cold. He will probably pass it on to you. A little common sense will keep you free from that horrible infliction, a summer cold.

Judging Eggs by Color.

Eggs in the winter time are likely to have pale yolks. A popular impression prevails that they indicate poor feeding of the hens. This is denied by the Government Bureau of Animal Husbandry, which declares that lack of green feed is the cause.

Most people think that eggs with pale yolks have less flavor than eggs with richly colored yolks. This is probably true; but the housewife's notion that they impart less richness to cakes and custards is contradicted by the experts—though, of course, they do contribute less color.

as pure white as possible. Furthermore, it is particularly important that two or more eggs served with an order shall match in color. Inasmuch as such eggs command an extra-high price, it is good business for the poultry raiser who caters to the fancy market to meet these requirements.

Boiled eggs should match in color of shell. No first-class restaurant or fashionable club would think of serving a brown egg and a white one together. Seven in shade they should match.

Many people are firmly convinced that brown eggs have a richer flavor than white ones, and nobody can persuade them that they are mistaken; but the experts say that the notion has no basis whatever in fact.

Supplies Heated Fresh Air.

With the ordinary steam radiator the only way to get fresh air into a room is to open the window, and that either makes the room too cold or consumes an extravagant amount of heat to keep it warm. There is now a steam radiator that gives results equivalent to an open window, as far as the fresh air is concerned, but without the disadvantages of cold and draft. This is done by boxing in the the steam coils of the radiator, and connecting this boxed-in space with the outside air by means of a pipe connected to the bottom of the radiator at the opposite end from the steam-pipe conection. The air pipe penetrates the wall of the room at right angles from the radiator. At the top of the inclosing box, between each pair of steam coils, there are a series of perforations. Thus, when the coils are hot, a draft is created which sucks the air through the inlet pipe, and discharges it, after being heated by the coils, through these perforations into the room. There is the same supply of fresh air as from an open window, but before reaching the room, it is warmed.

Please Take One!

A fruiterer opened a shop in a busy street and in order to make the people better acquainted with his name he had a number of handbills printed.

These he put into a little basket hung just outside the door, and above the basket he placed a ticket on which were the words, "Please take one."

One day, however, when the wind was in a mischievous mood, it blew this ticket down from the basket and it fell on the top of a box of oranges standing at the door. The passers-by could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw the oranges ticketed with the words, "Please take one." Thinking it was a plan for gaining public favor, first one and then another stepped up to the box and helped themselves to the oranges.

The fruiterer only found out what was wrong when a little boy came in and asked if he might take two—one for himself and one for his brother at home.

High prices have led to an increase in the diamond production of British Guiana.

Just as there is a potential statue in every block of marble, so is there an ideal self in every man. Be, then, the sculptor of your own character.