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### \*\*\*\*\* ROLFF -:--:- HOUSE

G. H. BENEDICT.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Claude descended the steps to the old cellar door, and, in the total darkness, searched for the key-hole, and with difficulty inserted the key and turned the rusty wards. Then moving back the door on its creaking hinges, he entered the old cellar.

On entering, he could not distinguish anything for a moment in the dim, uncertain light that came from one small, very narrow window in the heavy foudation wall. Gradually his surroundings became visible, and he found that he was in a quite large, rather oblong and dungeon-like room, surrounded by heavy stone walls on all sides. Above his head the heavy beams of the foundation floor were dark with moid and age, and festooned with the cobwebs of generations. The one window was so narrow that it admitted but a faint light, and Claude had to strain his eyes to note these things. In moving about in this dark, underground place, he was surprised to notice a flight of very narrow stone steps in the foun-dation wall, leading apparently to the outside. He strained his eyes, but could

see nothing in the darkness. He cautiously proceeded up the steps, and dis-covered that the entrance at the top was apparently closed in by a heavy covered that the entrance at the top was apparently closed in by a heavy stone slab. Descending the steps, he proceeded to search for the vault. After a time, he discovered a small but massive stone door, that was set in the inner wall of the cellar. This door was the only indication of a vault or receptacle of any kind, but he noticed that the stones surrounding it were of a peculiarly massive kind. A single key hole was cut in the door, but there was no sign of hinge or knob by which it was held in place or might be opened and closed. The heavy stone slab was fitted so nicely into the masonry surrounding it that there was scarce a chance even for dust to enter.

This, then, must be the mysterious vault. Claude examined it closely and most curiously. Why was it built, and what did it contain? Why were its contents so jealously, guarded, and access to it so hedged in by strange conditions? Was here hidden the stored wealth which he felt sure his aunt had saved, as well s the remaining treasures of his grandfather's suspiciously-gotten fortune? Claude asked himself these questions. He could not help but think that the heavy stone door concelled the secret of much that was mys terious in his life and circumstances.

Would be ever learn the storet, and solve the mystery? He almost left

Would be ever learn the scoret, and solve the mystery? He almost felt and the solve the private of the solve the country. By waiting, in a month or two, the secret might be his. But, no-his old pride and determination arose. He half nurmured and half thought as he murmured and half thought, as he gazed on the impassive stone door.
"Be your secret or your treasures." your secret or your treasure what

"Be your secret or your treasure what it may, I alone possess the key, and I can waft. I have made my plans, and I will carry them out. The secret here shut up will wait for me."

Claude was as good as his word. Ere a fortnight more had passed, he had taken leave of Rolff House of his taken leave of Rolff House, of his friends, of wearisome business details, of the sober Dutch village, and, lastly, of sweet and tearful Rosa Bruyn, and was on his way across the broad Atlantic.

THAPTER IX.

It was not many days before Jacobus
Bruyn took occasion to call upon Lawyer Saybrook to consult with him Lawyer Saybrook to consult with him in re-

gard to the Rolf property.

As may be imagined, the sudden departure for Europe of the young heir of Rolff House had been the cause of unlimited gossip in the little place, In some mysterious manner, pretty much all of the legal transactions in which Claude had been engaged had leaked out and become the subject of public talk, and, naturally, the truth had been improved upon in various ways as the details passed from mouth to mouth. The good burghers shook their heads gravely as they commented on the reckessness of the young man, and many were the predictions that he would soon "come to a bad end." And when Lawyer Saybrook's name was mentioned, there were knowing nods and winks, and voices were lowered as comments were freely made on the sharp bargains were freely made on the sharp base had driven with the young man in supplying him with money for his European trip.

These stories had of course come to

the ears of Farmer Bruyn. The Rolf property adjoined his lands on its west-ern side. The old wood, mentioned in a previous chapter, extending across into the bounds of the property of the shrewd, acquisitive old farmer, and for years he had had his eyes on it and the adjoining meadow land as a most desir-able addition to his farm if it ever became purchesable. But so long as the aged mistress of Reiff House lived, no such result was posible. The old lady would not listen to a proposition to sell a foot of her lands. But now rumor was a foot of her lands. But now rumor was busily circulating the tale that young Rolff had privately deeded all of the land in question to Lawyer Saybrook as security for certain moneys advanced him, and already the public was beginning to look upon the shrewd lawyer as the coming owner of Rolff House.

Farmer Bruya credited these tales; and he had no doubt that, if the lawyer became the owner of the property, he

became the owner of the property, he swould soon be disposed to put it in the market for sale. So he hastened at once

to inquire into the matter.

The man of law was delighted to see the old farmer. He shook his hand with cordial warmth, and the keen, self-sat-isfied twinkle in his eyes indicated that

infied twinkle in his eyes instituted that perhaps the visit was not unexpected by him. Nevertheless, he professed surprise that the farmer could have any business with him in regard to the Rolff estate, and handed him a chair and sat down beside him with a well-assumed air of interest and innocence.

It was a subject for the pencil of a Hogarth—the pale, smooth, keen-visaged lawyer, leaning back in his chair, with a countenance full of mystification that was belied by the intelligent twinkle of his eye, as the blesst, straightforward farmer stated the object of his visit.

"Why, this is strange, very strange," remarked the lawyer, as the old man concluded; "in fact, I think I may say, it is a complete surprise. Why, really, my dear sir—"

"No need for surprise," interrupted

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meadow land between it and the land for years; and I'm ready to pay a good round price for it, money down." "Of course, of course," replied the lawyer. "You come directly to the point like a practical man; but, really, my dear sir, I fear you misapprehend the whole matter. I am not responsible for any stories that may be circulating about my transactions with the young heir who is my client. It is strange, wery strange, how such stories get started; but I cannot assure you that all you hear is true, or that the property, u desire is for sale or likely to be." "Come, no beating about the bush," said the farmer, bluntly. "I got my story straight enough. The land is as good as yours. I want it. Now, if it is to be sold at any time, I'd like the first

"Well, 'now, really, really," said the lawyer, straightening up in his chair, "I fear I will be compelled to lose a fine chance for a bargain. We can't believe all we hear, Mr. Bruyn. People will talk, you know. To be sure, I can't tell what may happen, nor can't deny or affirm that the property you mention may or may not be in the market one of these days. But, my dear sir, so far as any legal transactions I may have arranged with my young friend are concerned, I can assure you that public rumor is very much at fault. I may or may not have entered into certain arrangements that give me a prospective lien on various portions of the Rolf estate. There are mortgages, to be ale—and there may be some private contracts; but, sir, these may be intended as a mere matter of secu ty, me a with the unders standing-

"No matter for your understanding," interrupted the farmer. 'I know you've got some hold on this property, and I know and you know that that young prodigal will never be able to claim it back. I want the land, and you don't. You're a lawyer, and what can you want of land except to drive a sharp bargain? I am willing to pay more than it is worth. Now, if 101

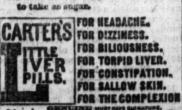
want to make a bargain-"Ah, if I do, my dear sir; but what If I don't? Eh, sir-what if I don't? Let us suppose for a moment-merely suppose for the sake of argum nt, my dear sir-that I have or may be able to have this property at my disposal. Does it naturally follow that I would wish to sell it? Would it not be more natural to assume that if, after many years of hard professional drudgery, I have managed to acquire a little money, and, in the legitimate course of my profession, have had an opportunity to invest it in a manner looking to the acquisition of certain lands, it may be my object to retire from my profession and settle down as a private country gentleman? Perhaps I am tired of professional life; perhaps I desire to pass the evening of my days as a rural gentleman and amateur agriculturist instead of a har:aesed, overworked lawyer. Would anything be more natural, my dear sir? Furthermore, I have an only son, Mr. Bruyn, and although I have afforded him a good education, it does not necessarily follow that I wish him to be a lawyer like myself. I may have a different ambition for him. I may desire to see him become an hones;

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chances of failure are very kergs, while the tiller of the soil has at almost certain reward. Why sh uid I not desire to see Ralph e tab i hel ere I die in possession of a snug la ded property? It is possible—I do not say probable—that the propert we have been talking about ma so re day come into my hands; in f.c., t.e. possibilities in the case may not be limited to the possession of even this choice hit of the Rolff property. It wouldn't be a bad idea for a sh end and enterprising man to get possession of the whole estate—eh, Mr. Bruyn? Mind, I do not say that there is any such chance at present; but who can tell what opportunities the future may offer. If any such happy fortune should be mine, I am inc laed

professional life is full of care an 't e

to think, Mr. Bruyn, that nothing would tempt me to dispose of a foot of the land It would rather be my ambition to become your good ne gh bor; and there would be no probab.lity of your estate and mi e eve: being joined during my lifetime; none at all, I assure you—unlest, indeed—but no matter; the idea is so remote that—" "No, no-what is it " interrupted the farmer. "I am here to talk about joining these lands, and if there is a chance I want t know it. Come, what were you going to say. Out with

"Well, well-if your cario ity must be gratified. The thought flashed across my mind that I have an only son and you an only daughter; and if it should be that we become owners of adjoining estates, why, there might be such a thing as arranging terms for the ultimate union of the estates without any need of barter or sale. A mere suggestion, you will perceive, my dear Mr. Bruyn-quite improbable, in fact. In truth, I have never thought of the matter before, and have never, said a word to Ralph on the subject: though, now I come to think of it, I have heard him speak admiringly of your daugnter. And, really, my dear sir you must allow me to congratulate you on the possession of such a lovely child. If I were Ralph, nowbut, really, this subject is one that perhaps should not be trenched upon in a discussion based so entirely upon probabilities and the mere chances of fortune, so to speak."

The old farmer remained pung d for some time in a brown study. "I never thought of this before, he caid, at last. "I supposed if you got hold of any of this Rolff property you would want to sell it. But if you don't there's an end of that. To be sure, I have my daughter-and a rare girl she is, if I say it myself; and I don't intend she shall marry any rake or scatterbrains. There's your Rolf has been showing her attention, and the girl was foolish enough to cassvires him-for his looks and managed the suppose. But I saw only one thing in his favor—he was going to have this his favor—he was going to have this property; but I soon made up my mind he'd never know enough to k ep it; and I was right. Of course, he'll waste the proper y, and some ody will get it; and I hall be glad if it falls into no worse hands than your if it does, and you ever to sell it, you can consider me a cus-

To be Continued

COOKING HINTS.

Dou't add lard, molasses or sugar to bread if you wish to keep well and be wholesome. Potatoes baked thoroughly, but not

allowed to turn dark, are the best to be used for creamed potatoes. If salad dressing curdles when being mixed, add a little cold water, stir quickly, and it will become quite smooth.

If tea be ground like coffee or crushed immediately before boiling water is poured upon it, it will yield nearly double the amount of its exhilarating qual-If a sliced onion and carrot are cook-

ed with yeal, it will be found that the flavor of the rather tasteless meat is much improved. Veal cutlets rely for their flavor on the tomato sauce that is usually served with them. A delightful flavor is sometimes giv-

en to steak by placing it overnight in a bath of oil and vinegar. In the morning it is wiped before the broiling, but enough of the mixture has been absorbed to give it a decided flavor.

If in making split pea soup a teacupful of whipped cream is put in the tureen just as the soup is poured over, the improvement in flavor of the soup will be noticeable. This puree has sometimes a flat, even watery taste that is not at all agreeable, which the whipped cream entirely removes.

A Scotch Antigelf Law. Scotland, as everybody knows, is the land where golf originated and the land where it most flourishes. But if the law were strictly enforced north of the Tweed it would go hard with the players of the royal game in "Bonnie Scotland." Golf players there may not know it, but they are liable to a sentence of death for their indulgence in their favorite sport. Technically, this is literally a fact. In ancient times, when Scotland always had work for her soldiers to do, all young men were required to perfect themselves in archery. They preferred to play golf, and so serious a rival did the game become that it was for a time suppressed and made a capital offense. That curious law never has been repealed and may still be found on the statute book. There seems to be no record, however, of the law ever having been enforced.

A SUMMER RETREAT.

Mrs. Nathaniel Jones—"Have you found a desirable summer-place, Margaret ?"

Mrs. Jerome Smith—"Oh, yes, Elea-Mrs. Jerome Smith—"Oh, yes, Eleanor. It must be a lovely resort; it is advertised as 'Ping-Pong Paradise." What is

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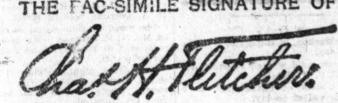
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