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ROLFF HOUSE

BY G. H. BENEDICT.

In a large room, whose three windows looked to the east and south, lay the dying mistress of Rolff House. The apartment was large and quaintly furnished. The windows were shaded, so that the light was subdued, and the shadows lurking behind chairs and in the corners added to the mysterious character of the apartment. In a secret four-poster bed, with snowy pillows and counterpane, lay the invalid lady, unable to move hand or foot. The paralysis of age had smitten her frame, and it was only a question of a few days or hours when the vital spirit would escape its tenement. But her active mind was as clear as ever, and, at the threshold of death, she was as interested in all household and business matters, and exercised the same supervision, as when she was in a state of perfect health.

As she lay thus stretched out in helplessness, the most casual glance could note that the features were those of a woman of keen intelligence and strong force of character. The face was rather long and narrow, the forehead high, the eyes deep-set, grey and keen, the nose prominent and almost Roman in shape, and the mouth and chin of a kind that indicated firmness and self-poise. The hair was abundant and partly concealed under a neat black lace cap.

Rolff House had few servants. Old Carl Krum performed the duties of man-of-all-work about the old place, having an assistant at the ferry, which he was getting too old to attend to exclusively. A single old servant named Margaret, who had long been the companion of the mistress of Rolff House, which once boasted of a dozen servants and retainers, gradually descended. These faithful servants were the only occupants of the house save Claude and his aunt.

Old Margaret was sitting quietly in a chair near one of the windows. The invalid had been lying with closed eyes apparently asleep. She opened them, and Margaret, who had been sitting with her eyes bent on the Bible upon her lap, seemed to become instinctively aware that her attention was wanted, for she closed the book and turned her head toward the bed as if awaiting some message.

"Margaret, has Claude come in yet?"

"The tones were clear and calm, though feeble.

"I saw him coming up the path but a moment ago, ma'am. He heard him go to his room."

"Go tell him to come to my room, and do not return yourself till I have dismissed him."

Margaret simply bent her head. She was accustomed to executing orders without waste of words. She went directly to Claude's room, and delivered the message.

Claude proceeded at once to his aunt's chamber. As he entered, she lay with closed eyes. So still and white did she appear in the half shadow of the room, that it needed no very lively imagination to be startled into a surmise of death. The form and features were those of a corpse. It was with a half-fear that his aunt's spirit had already flown, that Claude advanced with hushed heart and knelt beside the bed.

The old lady opened her eyes, and bent them upon him.

"It is you, Claude. Kiss me, my darling boy."

He did as requested, and as his lips touched the pale and cold face of his aunt, a pang of grief and contrition shot through his heart as he noted the expression of deep tenderness upon the wasted face.

"Come draw up a chair, and sit beside me, Claude. I have my dying wishes to communicate to you."

The young man drew up a chair and seated himself, and then his feelings gave way, and he bent his head to the bedside, and sobbed bitterly. It is thus that grief often takes the most careless heart unaware, and forces it to confess a weakness it did not dream of.

"My darling boy—my Claude! The words came tenderly from the pale lips, and Claude wondered within himself that he had never before recognized the sweetness of his aunt's voice. "You will grieve a little while for me, Claude, but it will not be long. It is not the will of God that the old should be mourned for deeply. Rest awhile, then; it is well they should pass away. Yes, it is well. I must soon go. At any time the chill of death may strike me, my heart. I have waited too long ere saying what I have to say to you, Claude. Not till this day could I convince myself that my time had really come. But praise be to the Lord who giveth me strength to speak. Listen and mark well what I say, Claude. To you I have been but a foster mother. It was not my wish to manifest that deep tenderness for you. I knew the weak blood that is in your veins, and it has been my purpose to strengthen and prepare you for the responsibility soon to fall upon you. You are the only heir of Rolff House. When I pass away all will be yours. I charge you first that you see that Carl and Margaret have a home here so long as either live. It is my wish that you be my only heir, therefore I have not provided for them in my will. My lawyer has been here to-day. All that is needed to be done has been properly executed to make my wish known. Mr. Saybrook I have appointed executor. He is worthy, and I wish you to seek his counsel after my death and follow it in all things where your own good judgment will not direct you. I have charged him with all that I wish done in a business way. He is wise and prudent, and you will do well to consult freely with him."

The old lady paused a few moments from fatigue, then she began speaking again in a feeble but distinct tone.

"On yonder table, Claude, you will see a box with a key in it. Open it,

and bring the sealed roll you will find in it."

Claude proceeded to the table, opened the box, and found in it a roll of paper, heavily sealed. He returned with it to his seat at the bedside.

"In that roll," continued his aunt, "is a written memorial I have had drawn up long in anticipation of this solemn moment. It contains that which it is important you should know, but which it is not yet time to communicate to you. For reasons of deep importance, I do not wish you to open the roll except under certain express circumstances. On the first day of January, of each year, I wish you to go to the great vault door, in the south cellar. All the key of that vault is in the box from which you took this roll. If, on the door of the vault, you see marked the sign of a cross in each of the four corners, you can open the door and learn the contents. Unless you find this sign, you must not open the roll till five years have elapsed, when all prohibition will cease. You are not to open the vault under any circumstances until the sign is found. The key of the roll, when you open the vault, if the inner door is locked, and the key not in it, you will have it broken open. Do you understand all this clearly?"

"I do, aunt; but it seems very strange and mysterious."

"For your full guidance, I have written all I have told you in the unsealed paper that is in the box. If you forget anything, I desire that every instruction I have given you be implicitly followed. I can trust you to do so. All that seems strange will be one day made clear. Soon I hope the mystery and shadow that have rested over Rolff House will be lifted. Wealth and happiness, I trust, will then be yours. One thing more you must promise me, Claude—never to sell or resign your interest in Rolff House. Do you promise?"

The words were uttered in still fainter, but very solemn tones.

The young man readily gave his promise.

"Sit by me yet a little while, my darling boy," she said in scarcely distinguishable tones. Claude remained seated in the solemn stillness of the room, while minute after minute slipped by. His aunt did not speak to him again. He waited patiently for her to bid him go. Still the moments slipped by, and no word or sign did he receive. At last he grew alarmed. He spoke to his aunt, but she did not answer. He rose up, and took her hand, but it was cold. He looked at her face, and saw it had the hue of death. He was shocked and alarmed. He hastened from the room. He was free at last, and he left Rolff House.

BRIGHT'S DISEASE

is the deadliest and most painful malady to which mankind is subject. Dodd's Kidney Pills will cure any case of Bright's Disease. They have never failed in one single case. They are the only remedy that ever has cured it, and they are the only remedy that can. There are imitations of Dodd's Kidney Pills—pill, box and name—but imitations are dangerous. The original and only genuine cure for Bright's Disease is

DODD'S KIDNEY PILLS

Dodd's Kidney Pills are fifty cents a box at all druggists.

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CHAPTER VII.

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his Dutch church. The first outbreak of grief, not unmingled with remorse, was soon over; the sad offices to the dead were performed; and he was free to face with his new position as master of Rolff House. His naturally buoyant spirits soon rose to intoxication as he dwelt upon his plans and hopes for the future.

But soon Claude found that there were obstacles to be met, and unexpected difficulties to be overcome. His first disappointment came when he arrived at a knowledge of his aunt's will, and of the actual condition of her property, and it flashed upon him that he might be compelled to limit his grand expectations.

But Anthony Saybrook proved a ready comforter to him in this emergency. It was at his office that Claude first heard a copy of his aunt's will read and learned that he was not as rich as he had anticipated he would be.

"Ah, my dear young sir," the obsequious lawyer remarked after Claude's expression of his disappointment, "this is not a matter for much regret. Why, you are heir of the finest property in this section, and without a single cent in money, your fortune is a large one, and with judicious management can be made to yield you all the ready cash you can need."

"But I anticipated there was a large amount of money," replied Claude, with deep chagrin expressed in his countenance. "I am certain my aunt's revenues were large. She spent very little—in fact, as you know, was almost parsimonious. What can she have done with her money? It is a very strange thing."

"Strange, no doubt, my dear sir, and yet, perhaps, on consideration, we shall be able to see that it is not so surprising as it appears at first. We lawyers know well that heirs are commonly disappointed in the expected amounts of their fortunes. It is so easy to exaggerate any person's supposed wealth. Your aunt no doubt had large revenues. The business she yielded considerable results. Still, business generally requires large outlays to conduct it, and your aunt was disposed to have her own way in managing her affairs, and it may be allowed to say so, it is probable that her business was not as well managed as it would have been if she had employed a trustworthy counsellor. I have later had your aunt's confidential adviser in lawyer and confidential adviser in drawing up her will, and she assured me that her revenues were barely enough to meet absolutely necessary expenses in taking care of all her large estate. This seems very natural to an experienced man of the world. Many of the wealthiest families of our land have nearly everything invested in their property, and it needs nearly all their revenues to keep up their estates."

"This seemed reasonable if not very agreeable to Claude; but he thought of his aunt's dying charge to him, of the mysterious roll, and of the great stone vault in the south cellar, and he could not help connecting these things with the strange disappearance of his aunt's money. But of this he determined to say nothing to the lawyer. The latter, however, saw that something was on his mind, and endeavored to draw it out. Assuming his blindest manner, he said:

"The only way in which your aunt could have disposed of any surplus revenue would have been to have concealed it somewhere. In that case, she would naturally have left you some information on the subject. I am fully conversant with her business, and know that there is no more money invested than is stated in the will. Did she have any communication with you in regard to her money?"

"She told me she had made a will, and that I was her heir," replied Claude, not without design of evading the question.

"If that is all, then it would seem to settle the question," continued the legal gentleman, with an air that seemed to indicate that he was not entirely satisfied that it was all. "There is nothing left us then but to make the best of things as they are. Now, what are your wishes as to the first steps to be taken, my dear sir?"

"You spoke of my ability to raise money on the property?" queried Claude.

"Yes, certainly," was the reply. "It is a matter that might be managed. Money is always to be had on good real estate. If it is your desire, my dear young friend, to use a portion of your fortune in travel and enjoyment, as it is very natural you should wish to do, why, I may venture to say—in fact, I think I can assure you—that I can put you in a way to procure it. Now, what are your ideas—your plans—your expectations?" as it were, as to the amount of money you would like to use?"

To be Continued.

APPLEDORE.

Miss Josie Lanigan spent Friday the guest of Miss Jennie McKerrall. Elder Kinsley, of Wallaceburg, has been holding special services in the Saints church during the past week.

A large number from here attended the Sunday school excursion to Rond Eau on Monday.

Isaac Andrews purchased a new horse last week.

C. Purdie, of Tupperville, spent Sunday in this vicinity.

CHATHAM CENTRE.

The continued wet weather has interfered with work in the fields. Chalmers' congregation has erected a fine new church shed.

Rev. Mr. Neilly preached a fine sermon here from the text "God is Love." Geo. Woods gave a dancing party in his new barn last Wednesday evening.

Miss Mary Henry, of Detroit, is visiting at Rolff House.

Miss Daisy Houston, of Chatham, is visiting Miss Lena French.

Wedding bells will ring on the 9th concession this week.

A few from here attended a garden party at the manse in Dover last Tuesday evening.

Miss Russell, of Blenheim, has been engaged to teach in the new school the last term of this year, while our present teacher attends Normal school at Toronto.

900 DROPS

CASTORIA

Vegetable Preparation for Assimilating the Food and Regulating the Stomach and Bowels of INFANTS & CHILDREN

Promotes Digestion, Cheerfulness and Rest. Contains neither Opium, Morphine nor Mineral. NOT NARCOTIC.

Perfect Remedy for Constipation, Sour Stomach, Diarrhoea, Worms, Convulsions, Feverishness and Loss of Sleep.

Fac-Simile Signature of **Chas. H. Fletcher** NEW YORK.

400 months old. 35 Doses—35 CENTS.

EXACT COPY OF WRAPPER.

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Castoria is put up in one-ounce bottles only. It is not sold in bulk. Don't allow anyone to give you anything else on the plea or promise that it is "just as good" and "will answer every purpose." See that you get **C-A-S-T-O-R-I-A**. The Fac-Simile Signature of **Chas. H. Fletcher** is on every wrapper.

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Is growing in favor every day. It contains nothing but that which is **GOOD, PURE and WHOLESOME**. It just suits a very large class of people, giving them what they have long desired. Purity, wholesomeness and high leavening properties. It makes success in baking, certain. Sold only in 10c, 15c and 25c cans.

Yolk Baking Powder Co.,
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SOLD ONLY IN 10c, 15c and 25c CANS.

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Sprinklers, Nozzles, Hose Menders, Hose Bands, Lawn Rollers, Lawn Rakes, Grass Edgers, Etc.

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Makes ice cream in four minutes.

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Morton's Hardware Store

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Fence Builders Who Think

The London Fence Weaving Machine is a comparatively new thing to the fence builders but it is fast becoming indispensable as a money and labor saver, especially since Fence Slats are so hard to procure.

With this machine you can build a fence of No. 9 Galvanized Orimped Wire, 10 wires thick with No 13 Galvanized Cross Wires, for than 35c a rod, after the posts are set.

Compared with any ready made fence w the same number of wires, in the market, it will be found to be heavier and stiffer and a very little over half the cost.

You can buy them at the great Hardware Emporium at the East end, from Geo. Stephens & Douglas, General Hardware & Implement Merchants.

P. S. With every sale of Superior Binding Twine we are giving away a splendid Map of Western Ontario.

Geo. Stephens & Douglas