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The Secret of the Old Chateau

By DAVID WHITELAW.

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CHAPTER I.

The Soldiers of Fortune.

The front door of No. 9 Mortimer Terrace, Regent's Park, shut to with a bang that was muffled in the fog which had descended upon the metropolis in the early morning of November 14, 1907, and two dejected-looking men made their way down the little box-bordered path and beneath the dripping branches to the garden gate. Their coats were buttoned tightly up over their evening dress, for the early air of a November morning is apt to strike chill to those whose night hours have been spent in the heated atmosphere of the card room. At the end of the terrace, where it joins the outer circle of the Park, the men stopped.

"I believe he's playing the same game as we are," one of them said, glancing at the other. "I don't know, but I don't like to go in there, where I know he's got the drop on me."

"The other gave a little laugh. "Looks like it. A hundred and fifty last night, and a hundred and thirty today, and eighty-four to-night. I hadn't had that 'flush' at the end of it would have been a good deal more. I can't say, Eddie, that I congratulate you on your 'pigeon.' You used to be able to pick 'em out better than this."

"There's nothing like feeding your bird up before you pluck him, Vivian, and it's best to—"

"Make sure that he isn't a crow, eh?"

The elder man shivered slightly, and having relit his cigar, held out his hand.

"Well—it's the fortune of war, anyway. I leave you here, don't I? I'll pick up a stray cab at the bend. Good night."

The younger man stood where Eddie Haverton had left him. The acute depression which he had kept in check was now settling down upon him like a black mantle, and he cursed the luck which had tempted him to take a hand in Eddie's little game. The fair-haired young fellow, who was now counting his gains in the Mortimer Terrace house, had seemed such an easy prey when Eddie had introduced them in the West End bar, so willing to be fleeced. It wasn't often that Haverton made a mistake.

For all it seemed so easy, the sharpers had spread their net no less carefully than usual. In turn they had brought into play each trick or ruse of which they had knowledge, but all to no purpose—the small, mild-faced youth always held the cards, and after each night of play the dawn had found him with a goodly little pile of notes and gold on the green-topped table before him. The bitters had not only been bit, they had been masticated.

As Vivian Renton stood there in the damp fog, an idea entered into his active brain, a suggestion that he should return to the room he had just left and by some plausible tale work upon the feelings of the man whom they had been playing with. Hubert Baxter had seemed a decent sort of fellow, and he knew him to be in no need of money. Perhaps he might consent to lend a little of the gold he had won. To Eddie Haverton, perhaps, the loss of a few hundreds meant very little; with Vivian it was everything.

No one, save himself and his creditors, knew how hard pressed he was, and that the few coins which he fingered in his pocket as he stood in indecision were all that lay between him and a debt-encumbered destitution—and Vivian Renton was not the man to be in that condition long.

The fog, moving in slow wreaths, hung round him in a heavy stillness, broken only by the sound of some cab bearing a belated reveller homewards, or the peevish chatter of an animal in the Zoological Gardens near by.

Another and more sinister idea crept into the evil brain of Vivian Renton. Why should he not return to No. 9 and tap the little fair-haired man on the head? He knew him to be alone in the house that night, and he could bind and gag him without seriously injuring him. The fog was all in his favor, and would be out of the country before any hue and cry could be raised. He turned on his heel, and with his chin buried in his muffler, slowly retraced his steps.

The man who had shut the door upon Eddie and Vivian returned to the

card-room and, mixing himself a brandy and soda, the first he had tasted that night, sank into a leather arm-chair and chuckled softly as he puffed at a cigar.

The furnishing of the room showed refinement and taste. Mortimer Terrace was a row of detached stucco residences, the rooms of which strangely belied the small exterior appearance of the houses. The room in the front where the men had been playing was square and lofty, with long windows reaching nearly to the ceiling and giving on to little iron-railed balconies. Heavy red curtains hung in several lines from brass rods and, between them, a circular convex mirror showed the gleam of the fire in the fireplace and of the candles which guttered on the baize-covered card-table. The furniture was Sheraton, the pictures few but choice, and on the mantelpiece a steel-faced clock pointed to a quarter to two.

No. 9 had been in the possession of the Baxters for more than a century and had descended from father to son, and yet the old-fashioned solicitor's offices in the Strand. The present owner of the business and the house had come into his inheritance early, and his mother's death following upon the accident to the Scotch express which had robbed him of his father, for the first time in his history No. 9 had a bachelor owner.

There were rooms on the floors above, sacred and unused, their furnishings shrouded in dust-sheets and covered with old-fashioned furniture, perhaps, for a woman to come and reopen them, a woman under whose hands the house in Mortimer Terrace would again take on the mantle of home, and would give life and brightness to the forsaken apartments. For the moment, however, the ground floor flat, and the kitchen below, sufficed for the needs of the owner and his modest household. Hubert Baxter, a man of yet thirty, and of a world was just a playground and the wanderlust still claimed him for its own.

He rose from his chair, and, opening the folding doors, passed through into his bedroom. His eyes rested lovingly upon the scratched and labelled leather of his kit-bag, which, together with his golf clubs and camera, stood ready for removal in a corner and spoke eloquently of holiday.

He discarded his dinner jacket for a much-worn Norfolk and, returning to the fire, he threw away his cigar and selected a briar from the rack, then took his place again in the chair. He drew the stack of notes and gold to him, and from a drawer in the bureau at his right hand took out two similar heaps. Putting them together, he ran roughly over the total amount—three hundred and fifty pounds and fifteen shillings. He sat for some moments arranging the sovereigns symmetrically on their mats of bank notes.

Hubert Baxter was still smiling cynically as he took a seat at the bureau and drew toward him note-paper and envelopes. With a pair of scissors he carefully snipped off the die-sunk heading and commenced to write:

"To the Secretary,
"Suburban Hospital,
"London, S. W."

"Dear Sir—I am enclosing herewith the sum of three hundred and fifty pounds in bank notes for the furtherance of your extension scheme. They have been won by me at cards—by means of cheating. The conditions, however, are peculiar.

"The sender (who wishes to remain anonymous) is the possessor of an adequate fortune, a somewhat small physique, a bland and trusting expression, and a sense of humor. These, individually, might not deal for notice, but collectively they commend him to the observation of certain men who live upon their wits—save the mark! Two of these gentry have lately been giving him their attention, and the enclosed amount is the result."

"The experience has been a delightful one to me, and, really, their pitiful tricks would have deceived a child. Why don't these people learn something fresh?"

The writer leaned back and read his facetious letter with a smile of satisfaction. His favorite hobby in life had always been watching and exploiting the doings of the underworld of the great metropolis. With his insipid expression and innocent blue eyes he seemed a ready prey to the sharks ever on the look-out for victims. He loved to enter into the lists with these gentlemen, to watch with amusement their well-worn tricks, and at the right moment to checkmate them. The Suburban Hospital Extension was not the first charity which had benefited by his methods.

Hubert took up the notes, changing the gold into other notes to make up the amount, enclosing them in the envelope, and sealed it. The odd fifteen shillings he put aside to give to the crossing-sweeper at the corner in the morning. Personally he did not intend to benefit by so much as a penny piece. "Out of evil," he quoted, "cometh—why, what's that?"

The young solicitor wheeled round in his chair as he heard the front gate open and the crunching of steps on the gravel. Then rose as a knock sounded at the door.

CHAPTER II.

The Crime in the Card-Room.

For a moment after Hubert had opened the door he peered into the fog, not recognizing the features of the man who stood on the doorstep; then the voice located him.

"Sorry to disturb you, old man, but it's urgent. I think I've dropped a small envelope somewhere. I had it in my cigarette case. Do you mind having a look? I think it must have slipped out when I took my last cigarette."

The young solicitor drew back invitingly. "I haven't noticed it," he said, "but then, I haven't looked. You know where you were sitting; come in. You'll want another drink, too, after this fog. Sorry I can't put you up—my man's away and I'm all packed up, you know."

Together the two men entered the cheerful room, and Vivian crossed at once to the place where he had been sitting, and falling on his hands and knees made as though to search beneath the table. Unobserved by his host, he deftly placed a small, folded piece of paper under the chair which he had pushed back. Then he rose to his feet.

"Don't see it anywhere, Mr. Baxter; perhaps I—"

The ruse succeeded beyond the man's wildest hopes. As Hubert turned from mixing his visitor a whisky—and soda his eye lit upon the paper which Vivian had placed beneath the chair. Putting the tumbler on the table he bent down.

Quick as thought, Vivian was upon him, a chloroform-pad, part of the man's stock-in-trade, which he had whipped from a little tin case in his pocket, held tightly over the solicitor's mouth and nose.

Hubert Baxter was no weakling in spite of his slight stature, and had the fight been a fair one, he would have given a good account of himself. Taken unawares as he was, his case was hopeless, and in a few moments the "drug" had done its work and the solicitor was lying, an inert figure, upon the white baize rug before the fire.

Vivian rose unaskingly to his feet and reached out for the decanter.

Secondly as he was, he hesitated to touch the glass which his victim had prepared for him. He had no animosity against the man lying in the rug—in fact, he regretted that force had been necessary.

But time was short; the money he had risked so much for must be found and escape made from the house before daylight. With feverish haste Vivian turned out the bureau and the drawers of a pedestal desk which stood in a recess by the fireplace. His eye passed many times over the envelope addressed to the hospital; a secret hiding place it would have been difficult to find.

An hour passed and the searcher, who had extended his attentions to the bedroom, came back through the folding doors. His face plainly de-



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noted his non-success. Then his eyes fell upon the figure upon the rug, and the Norfolk jacket with its big pockets prompting him, he fell upon his knees and slid a hand out cautiously toward—

With a cry of horror he leapt to his feet and tottered blindly to a chintz-covered Chesterfield. The fear stood out in little beads of moisture on his forehead and the gray eyes were fixed in staring terror.

"Dead!" He breathed the word hoarsely to himself, and called weakly upon his Maker.

How long he sat there he could not have told; he must have fallen into a trance of sorts, for when he came to himself it was to see the first gray of the dawn edging its way between the slats of the Venetian blinds, and in its light a candle which had outlasted its fellows burnt with a cream-colored flame. The face on the white rug stared up at him, and still.

From the clock on the mantelpiece a single chime cut into the silence of the room and the man on the couch jumped up with a stifled oath. He leant across the body of his victim and saw that the hands on the steel face pointed to half-past five. The fog outside had lifted somewhat and he told himself that he had put off his escape too long.

(Continued in next issue.)



What Temperature Means to Your Cooking.

How many cooks realize what temperature means in cooking? Not many, and yet the intelligent use of graded heat largely determines the palatability of a dish. The higher the temperature used the more pronounced is the flavor of the food, especially when dry heat is employed, as in baking. Note, for example, the characteristic taste of roast beef and the savor of broiled oysters; if the beef were boiled and the oysters stewed each would lose much of its flavor.

The rule applies to vegetables as well, for, although tomatoes, turnips, and a few others have their flavor increased to an unpleasant degree by high temperature, by far the greater number are better baked than boiled. Carrots, parsnips, beets and squash can be baked on the racks of the oven as potatoes are. Remember that true baking involves dry heat—you only steam or boil in the oven if much moisture is present.

But baking does not only enhance the natural flavor foods; it creates new flavors by making new substances through high temperature. The fresh crust of bread, rolls, muffins and toast, the well browned top of a rice pudding and the crisp surfaces of broiled or baked meats, poultry and fish all have a new and delicious flavor due to actual change in the food material.

Moreover, baking insures the retention of minerals and other valuable substances that are dissolved in boiling and lost when the water is poured into the sink. The constant use of foods impoverished in that way causes malnutrition as surely as does a diet that lacks some of the important food-stuffs.

Some foods, however, should not be subjected to intense heat during the whole of the cooking process. For example, if an egg is boiled steadily for three or four minutes the white will be hard (and indigestible) and the yolk soft, whereas if it be put into a

pan of boiling water and the pan is withdrawn to a warm place where the water does not boil, both the white and the yolk will be cooked evenly.

A cake, a loaf or a joint of meat that is put into a very hot oven and kept there until it is cooked will be overdone on the outside and underdone inside. That is because the substance formed by continued high temperature on the surfaces of such foods is a non-conductor of heat.

Foods that are injured by continued high temperature should be baked for twenty minutes in a very hot oven; the heat should then be reduced and the foods left in the oven until they are cooked through. Many a perfect recipe is spoiled in the cooking. What goes into a dish is only the foundation of the matter—the mixing, the flavoring and the baking are equally important to success, as many a novice finds to her sorrow.

Herbs in the Garden.

If there is any place on the farm where the farmer's wife and daughters have their own way, it is in the garden. It is one of the most important spots on the farm; and it can also be made the most beautiful.

This year, plan to leave the little strip along the fence at the lower end of the garden for a "patch of herbs." Any seed catalogue will give you the necessary directions for their culture, and after you once know their value, you will never be without them, for they will add a "zest" to your cooking that will be greatly appreciated.

The following list includes a few that should have a place in every garden: Parsley, one of the best-known herbs, is unequalled for garnishing, and for seasoning soups and meats.

Sage has many uses. Powdered and used with pork chops, and pork roast, sage is delicious; it is indispensable in either fresh sausage or scrapple, and who ever heard of cooking a goose without the proverbial "sage-and-onion" dressing?

Caraway seed is used in cakes and

confectionery and in rye bread. Horehound, as a tea, or boiled with sugar to form a syrup, is an excellent remedy for coughs and colds.

Dill, an old world annual, with aromatic, pungent seeds, is used with pickles. Peppermint, makes a delicious sauce to be served with lamb, while coriander, summer savory, sweet marjoram and thyme, are all excellent for flavoring.

Chives are little known, but lend a delicate onion flavor to soups and salads, and to meat dishes.

Lavender also should be planted. Then you can revive one of the pleasant old-fashioned customs of laying sprigs of lavender with the bed linen.

Many of these plants are hardy, and having been started, will come up every year. If the leaves or branches are cut on a dry, bright day, just before they come into bloom and are tied in bunches, or spread out to dry, and then packed in clean, dry boxes, they will keep all winter.

Less Don't's.

Little Boy seems determined to break every bone in his body, and I found that I was getting into the habit of saying, "Don't" to everything he suggested, obsessed by the fear that he might hurt himself. Finally his father took me to task, saying that I was either teaching the boy to do things without consulting me, or on the theory that I would say "No" anyhow—or else I was letting him grow up unable to do anything and all the more likely to sustain a serious injury when he finally began to do big feats, without properly trained muscles.

Fortunately I heeded the warning, and now at five years of age, Little Boy climbs a short ladder, has a special perch in the cherry tree, does trick riding on his tricycle, steers his Irish Mail and coasts down fairly steep hills, walks the top of the porch rail, and still comes to Mother when any new adventure is to be undertaken, firm in the belief that she won't say "Don't" unless she can give him some really good reason for the admonition.

The execution of a Jew is a Jew is a rare occurrence in Britain, only five or six having suffered the extreme penalty during the past forty years.

Minard's Liniment for Burns, etc.

Italy, under normal conditions, converts 1,800 tons of orange blossoms and 1,000 tons of roses into perfume annually.

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Quick Disguise.

"There's a man out in front who says he wants to lick you," said the office urchin of the Chiggersville Clarion.

"How large is he?" asked the editor, who was in the composing room taking a proof of an editorial on the rights of a free people.

"He's a great big fellow, sir," "All right," replied the editor, as he whipped off his collar and tie, rumpled his hair, disarranged his dress and smeared ink on his face, neck, ears and arms. "Go back and tell the obstetrical visitor that there is nobody on the premises now but the galley boy."

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I find letters from God dropped in the street—and every one is signed by God's name, and I leave them where they are; for I know that whosoever I go, others will punctually come, forever and ever. —Walt Whitman.

Worry is Cowardly.

Worry is really a form of cowardice. It is born of fear and comes from the consciousness that we are not equal to cope with the obstacles which confront us. In other words, it is a confession of weakness, an admission that we are not masters of the situation; that our troubles are bigger than we are. It is evidence that we have lost faith in ourselves and in the Power that sustains us. Consequently we do not get the confidence of other business men; they are not willing to trust us with loans or other assistance, because they see we do not have confidence in ourselves; that we are not large enough to meet a large emergency.

If you are a worrier, my friend, instead of regarding you as an able fellow, as you may fondly think they do, people are more likely to look upon you as a weakling. They criticize you and regard your habit of fretting and stewing as an indication of inefficiency and a lack of constructive ability fatal to leadership. And unless you take the same attitude toward yourself, unless you recognize that your worrying is nothing but cowardice and weakness, and resolve to rid yourself of the habit, there is nothing for you but unhappiness and failure.

There is only one way to get rid of the worrying habit, and that is to quit at once. You know that worry has never done anything but render you less able to cope with your difficulty. Courage is the natural foe of worry. When you lie down at night, instead of reviewing all the perplexities and problems with which you have struggled during the day, thrust all this out of your mind and fill it with the consciousness that you are made in the image of God, and partake of all His divine qualities. Instead of cringing before the horrible shapes created by worry and fear, assert your power to triumph over all the obstacles that stand in the way of your success. For fear and worry, substitute courage and faith. Make a supreme call upon the Great Within of yourself, where you will find an infinite reservoir of peace, of harmony, of divine power and strength that will make you a master of circumstances.

Try this mental treatment, not only before you go to sleep, but many times during the day, and you will be surprised to find how quickly you can drive fear and worry out of your life.

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