

The Secret of the Old Chateau

By DAVID WHITELAW.

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.

CHAPTER IV.—(Cont'd.)

Remy leaned back in his chair and watched the firelight play shadow tricks upon the shapely features of his host. The heavy wooden shutters had been barred across the windows, and a candelabra of three branches shed an oasis of light over the fruit and decanters. The remote corners of the splendid room were in deep shadow, in which loomed the indistinct shapes of furniture and the dull gleam of mirrors. Portraits of dead and gone owners of the chateau looked down from the panelled walls as though wondering what had become of the gay revellers of their own time, and why it was that the hall of the Dartignys was so desolate. The firelight flickered upon the tarnished frames, and here and there was the cold sheen of armor.

The Marquis looked up suddenly. "You must forgive me, Monsieur Perancourt. I was thinking," he tapped the letter with a white and tapering forefinger, "and I was wondering, too, at this. Did Gaspard tell you what he wants me to do?"

Remy Perancourt nodded. "I understand that I am to see that you and your granddaughter reach Fecamp in safety. We of Gaspard's band obey his orders implicitly. I have arranged—"

The old aristocrat held up a protesting hand. "Over fast, my young sir, you go over fast. I am under no oath of obedience to my own son. Understand me, I will not leave the Chateau de Chauville."

"But, Monsieur le Marquis, you do not appreciate the—"

"I appreciate enough to know that I will not be driven from my home by a pack of wolves. Besides, my people round here love me; I have no fear of them. They will not forget the corn I have distributed among them in their lean years, the rents I have refused to accept from them. I in danger from my peasants? It is absurd!"

Perancourt sat looking into the fire for a few moments, then he rose and faced the Marquis de Dartigny, into whose pale cheeks a tinge of color had come.

"It is hateful to me," Remy said at last, "to dispel illusions, but my duty is clear. You, who have lived your life in these peaceful solitudes can have only a very slight idea of what is taking place back there in Paris. It is not your peasants you have to fear. When I tell you that at this moment one of the bloodiest of the Terrorists is sitting drinking at the 'Star of Navarre' in Blois, perhaps you will allow that Gaspard and myself are acting rightly."

Remy paused. Perhaps he expected an answer; but the Marquis sat silent, his eyes fixed on the speaker's face. "Perhaps, Monsieur le Marquis, the name of Herat conveys nothing to you; to us who know him it spells all that is hellish in human, or rather, inhuman nature. This man is the friend of Fouquier-Tinville; it is he who prepares the fatal lists for the daily sittings in the Maison de Justice. Your son knows the names which appear—"

"You mean that my name—"

"I mean that your enemies are active, and that they are at your very door. Do you imagine that your gifts of corn have been acceptable to all? What of the monopolists in the city of Blois, those devils who hope to make fortunes out of the famine and sufferings of the people? Believe me, the crops will be watered with blood before the people eat their fill. This is the time when the young must teach the old, when youth must—"

The door of the dining-hall flew open, there was a patter of tiny bare feet, and a small person of some four summers precipitated herself, between tears and laughter, into the arms of the old nobleman. From her grandparental sanctuary she glanced defiantly at her nurse, a sober-faced daughter of Albion, who stood, hesitating, at the door.

"She is naughty, Monsieur le Marquis; she will not sleep. It is Pierre at the lodge—he tells her stories of Paris and—"

Two roseleaf hands crept up and caressed the thin cheeks of the old man, and blue eyes full of a sleepy terror looked through the masses of golden curls into his. And the Marquis de Dartigny folded the little night-cad figure in his arms and signed to the nurse.

"Leave the little maid with me, Susan; she is frightened at what the wicked Pierre tells her." He patted the little round shoulder. "He is a wicked one, that Pierre, Sylvia, and to-morrow I will give him to the giant

Looking down into the hall below, the young man saw that the door of the dining-room stood partly open. Carefully he descended the stairs, his stockinged feet making no sound.

It was only a portion of the large room that came within his range of vision, but that portion took in the further end of a pair of candles, beneath the light of a pair of candles, the Marquis de Dartigny sat writing. Before him on the table were papers and cases and boxes; the latter of

which were dismissed with liberal presents; old Pierre and his wife were to remain. They would live in the lodge and would tell others that the family were travelling. They were to do their best to protect the chateau, but were to make their escape if danger threatened.

Sylvia and the English nurse had been sent off alone by the post-chaise, travelling by easy stages to Fecamp, there to take up their quarters at the "Taverne de la Lune" and await the

Signs That Tourists Have Laughed At.

The queer English in the shop signs of Japan always bring a smile to the face of the traveller. Recently the Japanese conducted a "sign campaign" in the interests of correct grammar and spelling and probably have improved things. The list that a tourist sends us from Tokyo shows how much the reform was needed: Ladies furs made of their own skins. General Tailor and Dressmaker, a

shirts washed inside and out (laundries re-tailed here).

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