



CHAPTER XXXI.

The events detailed in the past chapters had occupied the full months, and winter had again arrived. For awhile, Claude found occupation enough to keep himself from total despondency. He had much to do to straighten his affairs, but under the advice and with the assistance of lawyer Halstead, he was enabled to meet obligations falling due by issuing new mortgages and disposing of outlying portions of the estate.

Claude went through with all this business wearily and mechanically. His health had been restored in a measure, and, feeling himself once more master of Roiff House, his pride and spirit returned, subdued only by the experiences he had passed through. The career of study and travel he had marked out for himself had come to a sudden end; he could not interest himself in the business and pleasures of the little place; and his ardent spirit fretted and soured under the ill-fortune that seemed to balk his chief desire. There was but one object that now absorbed his hopes and ambition—and that object was sweet, patient, faithful Rosa Bruyn. The young man's short experience as a student of art abroad, and the knowledge that he was shut out for the time from all hope of carrying out his ambitious projects, had dulled the edge of his enthusiasm for travel and study, and it was natural, at his years, that, folled in every other outlet to his abundant energy and spirit, he should surrender himself completely to the beguiling passion of love.

He could dream only of Rosa Bruyn. He caught a furtive glimpse of her occasionally, and saw she was growing fatter, though paler than of yore, and with a mien of settled sadness that cut him to the heart. How willingly could he now resign every other thought of ambition or happiness to throw himself at her feet!

Claude could not resist one more communicating with her. He wrote her a long, passionate letter, bewailing the fate that separated them, declaring his unchanging love, and vowing that he would be faithful forever, and would wait while life lasted for Fortune to smile on their happiness and crown their union. He wished her to give him a like pledge, for he had plans in view that might take him from the place for years; indeed, he might never return, but, whatever fate overtook him, he wished to carry with him the assurance that she could be his, and only his, while life lasted.

This letter he entrusted to old Carl to deliver and bring him an answer and in the course of two or three days the old fellow handed him the following brief reply from Rosa:

My Dearest Claude: It was not worth your while to write to me; nor can I think it wrong for me to reply to you without my mother's knowledge. For I think she would give her consent most readily. My heart bleeds for you, and my life is very, very sad; but my duty is plain. It is very good and noble of you to be so considerate, after all the ill-treatment you have suffered. Do not despond. Do not be unhappy. Do not do wrong to yourself by being melancholic. These clouds will yet depart. We shall yet be happy. I shall love you always, and be faithful till death; and should you wait for me, your reward will not be denied, if I live till the day that makes me free to be the mistress of my own heart. You speak of going away. I cannot control or advise you; but remember how unhappy I shall be to see you even at a distance occasionally; and do not say anything reckless. Believe me, ever fondly and faithfully, your own Rosa.

These sweet words came like a blessing and a prophecy of hope to the young man. But he was resolved on not staying longer than he could help in the little village. He felt that the only thing that could enable him to bear the sorrow and disappointment wringing his heart was excitement and action. His country was in the throes of a terrible war; disaster had fallen upon her arms; the call for help from all patriotic sons resounded through the land. Claude was naturally of a generous nature in which the spirit of patriotism would find easy root. He felt that his country needed his services, and his restless, eager nature, fretting under disappointed hope, was ready to face any danger or bear any privation that would supply stimulus to his glowing spirits. He put himself in communication with the military authorities of the State, and, having the opportunity of taking a position as or private, he was determined he could bear any privation that would give his services to his

With this he made hurried preparations for his business affairs. He decided to install old Carl and Margaret in the great house again, made careful arrangements for the disposal of his property, if he should never return, and on the approach of the New Year, was ready to join the army at its winter headquarters.

But he recollects his promise to be at the old vault on New Year's day, and so delayed his departure for a few days.

The first day of the New Year soon arrived, and Claude proceeded to the old house to observe whether the expected sign had appeared on the door of the old vault. He had not entered the old mansion before since his departure for Europe.

It was with a beating heart, and many recollections crowding on him that he again traversed the old hall and procuring a light, proceeded down to the old cellar.

Entering it, he was quickly at the door of the old vault. Here the traces of LeB Sackett's abortive attempt to break into it attracted his attention for a moment. Then, casting his eye scrutinizingly over the door, he noticed in each of the four corners a small white cross, plainly painted on the dark stone.

It was the sign his aunt had told him to await. At last, the time had arrived when the secret of the old vault was to be removed. The prohibition had ended. He recalled to mind the mysterious roll his aunt had given him, and resolved to proceed at once to learn its contents.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Returning to his room at the tenant house occupied by Carl Crum, Claude opened his trunk and took out the roll of manuscript left him by his aunt which, in his eagerness to carefully preserve, he had kept with him in all wanderings.

He then drew a chair up to a table standing near the window, and, sitting down, placed the roll on the table before him and examined it narrowly. It was a long, narrow strip of parchment, and he read it with a steady eye.

"To my dear nephew, Claude Roiff: To be opened only according to promise."

Claude had often studied these words before, and longed for the time that would make him master of the secrets of the roll communicated to him under such mysterious circumstances. At last he could conscientiously and properly gratify his curiosity. He broke the parchment into strips, and laid it out on the table before him, and a glance showed him that the writing was in the cramped, peculiar hand he knew well to be his aunt's.

He at once became absorbed in the contents of the manuscript. It read as follows:

My Dear Claude: At my death you will be left alone in the world—the only surviving representative of your blood and race. Both in the old world and the new, every one that could claim near kin to you will have passed away. To the end that you may know your birth and lineage (of which you have been purposely kept in partial ignorance); that strange matters, which common report has greatly exaggerated and misrepresented, may be correctly reported to you; and that my action toward you, my dear child, under which I have often before you were restive, may be justified in your eyes, I write these lines.

and tenderest nature, became truly persuaded of his duty to compel the obedience and respect to his wishes of his son, and toward his stern demeanor, though, in truth, his heart was wounded and bled sorely for him. But Roiff only grew more unmanageable, and finally became involved in a difficulty that rendered him amenable to the law. It was a reckless, boyish frock, committed against the property of a high official of the city, and his father's influence was no longer available to save him from arrest and trial. His father administered to him; but the law officers were on his track, and he fled from his home in the night, and many weary years passed, and he was not again heard from by his aged and sorrowing parents. The blow, indeed, was too heavy for their declining years, and it was not long before the tender mother had gone to her final rest, and her faithful husband, with the last part of his life taken away, did not linger long behind her.

It was, my dear Claude, that I was left alone in the world, not knowing that I had a single relative of near kin left, for on both my father's and mother's side all had passed away save a few distant and to me unknown kindred, and, though I hoped my brother was still alive, it seemed idle to seek for him.

For my father's affairs were settled, I still had left a comfortable fortune, and lived a quiet and lonely life in my native city, indulging in few pleasures and cherishing the one hope that I would yet hear from my brother. At length, to my great joy, there came a letter from him. In it he stated that he had settled in the New World, had grown rich and married, and was traveling in a fine mansion, but his wife had died, leaving him with two small children, and he had no proper person to take charge of them, or of his household. So he entreated me to come to him, saying that he had heard of our parents' deaths, and believed me still to be unmarried. He said he would make me the entire mistress of his household and guardian of his children, and that I should have complete disposal of all that he possessed. The tone of the letter indicated great grief and despondency, and my heart was broken. After careful consideration I decided to go, my brother's name being all my affairs, and getting all the information from further correspondence with him, I set sail for the New World.

In due time I arrived at my brother's house. I found him living in almost princely style, but affected with incurable grief and melancholy. His infant daughter had died ere I arrived. He seemed affected at losing his wife and child, and in paroxysms of sorrow and self-abasement, he would cry out himself and cry out that the vengeance of Heaven was visited on him for his crimes. Naught I could do would comfort him. He was completely changed—broken, penitent and despondent. He confessed to me strange stories of evil deeds he had done—how after coming to this country, he had joined a privateer and amassed wealth, but in his wild adventures had participated in crimes the memory of which was burned upon his conscience, and could not be forgotten. I was compelled to take complete charge of his affairs, and freely gave him the power and right to do as he pleased with my own little fortune, and, alarmed and horrified at the stories he told of the manner in which he had procured his wealth, I determined to use none of it, but to make my own money available for the maintenance of the household.

Meantime, my brother grew more and more melancholy. To divert his mind I talked to him of plans to explain his evil life. I urged him to use a portion of his wealth in charity and good works. The idea seemed to please him, and he soon became filled with plans to travel, seek out the miseries of the unfortunate and to relieve them. In pursuance of this plan, he charged me with the care and education of his son, and the disposal of his property and fortune in my hands, subject only to my promise to supply him with such funds as he should ask from time to time; and he quietly left his home and went I knew not where.

In the cellar of his great house, my brother had built a strong stone vault, and in this was deposited the money and valuables he had not used in buying or improving his property. Of this vault he gave me the key, telling me to use it when he died, and to give it to my son, not a penny save only to satisfy his demands, and moreover, to place therein all the profits that accrued from my management of the place—paying only the expenses, and using my own money entirely for every luxury or necessity of my household. After a length of time, my brother returned secretly supplied himself again with money and left. This he did at various times, never staying over a single night at his home, and saying nothing of his plans or purposes.

There came a period of years in which I did not hear from him. His son had grown to manhood, married, and you were born, my dear Claude, and named by me. My brother returned once again, and looked upon you infant face. He had grown old and feeble, and told me that he had at last found peace in religion, having joined a society of brothers, in a French monastery, where his life was devoted to works of charity and to penitence. He examined carefully into his affairs, and arranged that, in case of his death, a certain portion of his fortune should go into the hands of the brethren of his society. Though I had been reared in the strictest Protestant faith, I could not condemn the life in which my brother found hope and peace, and I agreed to all his wishes.

He went away again; and years passed on. Your father and mother died, my dear Claude, and I was left as your only guardian.

One dark night, at a late hour, as I was sitting in my room, there came a knocking at the door of the house. Old Carl answered the summons, and ushered in a tall, venerable stranger, who desired to see me. At the first glance of his face, I surmised that he came to tell me the fate of my brother. "My brother is dead," he said to him in an inquiring tone. "Yes," he replied, with a grave, sorrowful mien, "your brother, and our brother, is at rest."

I knew then that this stranger was a brother of the religious society which my brother had joined. I invited him to a seat, and asked him to give me all particulars. He told me of my brother's final hours, and declared that he had died at peace, having for years been one of the most faithful, sacrificing and de-

vout members of his order. He had left me, he said, a written testament, with directions that it be brought and delivered to me. He handed me the paper, opening and reading it, I found it to be in my brother's handwriting, and that it contained his last wishes in regard to his affairs. He gave a short narrative of his long travels and adventures in which he had particularly sought to trace up the proper heirs to some valuable jewels which he had acquired under circumstances that had always troubled his conscience, and which, consequently, he had never allowed himself to dispose of. In this he was successful, a coat of arms furnishing the clue; and the jewels were restored to him, and he had come through prize money, but as he said, sometimes acquired in deeds of actual piracy, and he determined, for the full relief of his conscience, to devote a sum to charity equal to the full amount of what he considered he had acquired by violent and unlawful means. The sum, which he had always viewed with an eccentric, apparently parsimonious ways.

A whirl of thoughts crowded on his mind. What did the old vault contain? Would it yield up him a princely fortune? If so, what use could it be to him now, that he was thwarted in the chief object of his happiness? Should he change his plans, and give up his idea of serving his country to level in wealth and pleasure? Amid these conflicting emotions, he sat and reflected some time, and then made up his mind to go down and consult old Carl Crum in regard to his aunt's statement and the best course to be pursued.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Claude did not find that old Carl appeared much astonished when he communicated to him the strange facts he had derived from his aunt's written statement, or even after he had explained to read the paper. In fact, in such a perfectly matter of fact way did he take the matter, that Claude was inclined to believe that he had had previous knowledge, and had been entrusted by his aunt with greater confidence than he had ever suspected.

But the old fellow seemed pleased at the turn of the matter.

"Well, well," he said, "I am glad this thing has ended up so speedily. I have quite liked having that old priest in the house with his hands in those money chests, and particularly since the old lady died, but of course it was no business of mine. No doubt all has turned out for the best. It's my opinion that you ought to examine the old vault at once, ascertain what treasures are left in it, and take proper measures for its security. If it wasn't for the reputation of this old house, I should furnish quarters for a select assortment of the most dangerous possible kind of ghosts, I would have been more concerned than I have been all these months for the safety of the valuables in the house. But now it's our own fault if everything is not made safe."

Claude was as anxious as possible to examine the old vault, and proceeded in company with old Carl at once to the house. They made their way to the cellar, and Claude produced the key that his aunt had left in his charge, and the outer door was opened after some difficulty. Within was another door, of iron, with a key in the heavy lock, attached to which was a folded piece of paper. Claude detached it, opened it and read it. It ran thus:

The last sum due on account of the bequest of brother Maximus (otherwise known as Roiff Van Buysen) to the order of which he was a member, having been taken according to due arrangement, by me, I hereby make note of the fact. And herewith I make a statement of the amounts I have taken, and the times at which they were taken, in order that it may appear that the trust confided in me has not been abused, and that the wishes of our deceased brother have been strictly fulfilled. And I aver that I have taken no more than was justly due, and that all has been settled in works of charity as brother Maximus himself planned and desired. I leave my blessing on this house. I will pray always, and my brethren with me, that peace, prosperity and the blessing of Heaven may abide ever within these walls. I sign myself, JUSTINUS.

"Faith, a magnanimous epistle," said old Carl. "Tis not every one who would have been so discreet, considerate and so ready to do good. I must confess that the old man seems to have had a full share of honesty and piety—and it is well he did."

Claude put the papers in his pocket, and proceeded to open the inner vault door. Within this door, the vault was divided into a number of compartments each of which had its separate door, which was locked. To Claude's surprise, old Carl now produced a bunch of keys, which he said he had given into his possession but a few days before by the strange visitor, and which they found to fit the various locks of the inner vault. On opening the doors of these receptacles, they were found filled with bags of coin, and valuable papers of various kinds, and although Claude was not able to make any estimate of the value of the contents of the old vault, he felt satisfied that he was considerable, and that his aunt's dying intimation that he would be left in the possession of wealth was realized.

But the young man did not halt his good fortune with the joy it once would have afforded him. He sought suggestions of old Carl as to what course to pursue for the security of his treasures, and followed his advice implicitly. The next few days were spent in installing old Carl and Margaret in Roiff House, and making all things as comfortable and safe as possible.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The treaty of Ghent in 1814, brought peace again to the country. On the disbanding of the army, Claude Roiff returned to his native village. He had passed unscathed through two campaigns, and rendered his country brave and faithful service.

Some important changes had taken place during his absence at the seat of war. Old Carl still remained at his post at Roiff House, and was as faithful and vigorous as ever; but the aged Margaret had passed away. Her health had been feeble, and she had never recovered from the shock that LeB Sackett's devilry had caused her, and she sank to rest at a good old age. By advice of Claude's lawyer, Mr. Halstead, and

deeds. You will continue, perhaps, the line of our family, not under the cloud of guilt, but in the light of innocence and happiness. God's blessing be on you and with you through life.

RACHEL VAN BUYSSEN.

After finishing the reading of the manuscript, Claude leaned back in his chair and gave himself up to reflection. A light had been thrown on the mystery that had rested over Roiff House. He could not doubt that his aunt's statement was a true explanation of all that had seemed strange to him in the surroundings of his youthful days. It was such an explanation as accounted to his mind for his aunt's peculiarities of character and what had often seemed to him her inexplicable ways. Between the lines of the constrained, plainly-written narrative, he could read the tragic history of her life, with its one sombre, unbroken cloud of sorrow and sacrifice; and his heart melted at the thought of the ungenerous judgment which he had always viewed with an eccentric, apparently parsimonious ways.

A whirl of thoughts crowded on his mind. What did the old vault contain? Would it yield up him a princely fortune? If so, what use could it be to him now, that he was thwarted in the chief object of his happiness? Should he change his plans, and give up his idea of serving his country to level in wealth and pleasure? Amid these conflicting emotions, he sat and reflected some time, and then made up his mind to go down and consult old Carl Crum in regard to his aunt's statement and the best course to be pursued.

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a new housekeeper had been engaged in her place, being no less a personage than the widow Gray. Whether the widow was entirely satisfied with this arrangement is not known; but she had somehow fallen in her assault on the obdurate heart of the bachelor lawyer, and had accepted through his influence the comfortable place in question as perhaps the only available compromise.

Ralph Saybrook had remained some time in the old village after his father's flight. He seemed to enjoy the dignity of being left in the possession of the business and property of his parent, and, being undisturbed by any legal proceedings, was apparently in no hurry to dispose of the property, as he was being constantly urged to do by his father's letters. In truth, Anthony Saybrook, in his voluntary banishment, began to realize what it is to educate a child to cold-blooded villainy and selfishness. Ralph was a poor wretch, but he could yet win the hand of Rosa Bruyn, and, with this object in view, he temporized with his father's orders to dispose of the property, urging various ingenious excuses, while he was in reality planning to appropriate his inheritance in a rather premature manner. But all of Ralph's hopes of gaining the hand of Rosa Bruyn came to an end through an lingering sickness that struck down the old farmer. A severe rheumatic attack held him confined to his bed for months, racked with pain, and broken in strength and spirit, the obdurate old man found his only comfort in the love and tenderness of his wife and daughter, and a gradual change came over him that convinced Ralph ere long that he was no more susceptible to his manipulations, thus disappointed old Ralph in time disposed of his father's property, and went to join him in a Western State, and the quiet little village heard of them no more.

Claude had returned home in many respects a changed man. He had grown in knowledge of the world as well as in years, and his military experience had been well calculated to discipline his impulsive and ardent nature. In one thing he remained unchanged, and that was in his devotion to the fair object of his first love. All his plans had for some time been abandoned from his path. Rosa had been quiet, and his correspondence with him ere he left the seat of war; and when he returned home the first doorway he had entered was that of old farmer Bruyn. Very tender and blissful was the meeting between the long-parted lovers. And when they went hand in hand to the chamber of the invalid old man, it was to kneel and receive his blessing.

Claude could hardly realize his happy change; but Death is a potent peacemaker, and the hand of death was on the old farmer. He lived to see his daughter the happy bride of Claude Roiff, and the mistress of Roiff House, and then passed peacefully away.

Claude had the venerable mansion of his fathers restored, and settled down in it as a quiet country gentleman. Under the soothing influence of perfect domestic happiness, all his ambitious ideas of fame as an artist faded away, and he could dream of no happier existence than to be at the head of a well ordered household, dispensing hospitality and charity with a liberal hand. The blessing the stranger priest had invoked on Roiff House seemed to have descended to abide there. Gradually neatness and order and beauty were restored to the surroundings; light and cheerfulness replaced mystery and gloom; and the noble old mansion ere long lost its reputation as an abode of hobgoblins and evil spirits. The mirth and prattle of childhood's voice again were heard within its walls; and no happier family could have been found in all the land than that contained beneath the venerable roof of Roiff House. No fairer, wiser or more gracious matron than the wife of Claude Roiff ever ruled over a household who the red of love. Age never came more gently to her than it did to Mrs. Bruyn, and no kinder or more indulgent grandmother ever shared the joys and sorrows of childhood. As for old Carl Crum, he always remained attached to the household, and was always a favorite with old and young—especially the latter. And he never was happier himself, or a greater hero in the eyes of wondering childhood, than when he gathered a group of children about him, and told them legends stored in his memory relating to the mystery of Roiff House.

THE END.

Why There are No Blue Roses
A knowledge of one simple law in nature may save the flower-grower days and weeks of hard and unavailing labor in attempting to produce that famous chimera of the botanists—the blue rose. The law is simply this: The three colors, red, blue, and yellow, never all appear in the same species of flowers; thus we have red and yellow roses, but no blue; red and blue verbenas, but no yellow; yellow and blue in the various members of the violet family, but no red. Other examples of this rigid law could be cited, but the above are sufficient. The botanist or floriculturist who really understands his business never attempts to produce a blue rose of a red violet.—St. Louis Republic.

A Holiday in Bed.
Two hospital nurses adopted a novel method of spending their two weeks' vacation. They hired a cottage in the country, and an old woman to attend them. From the moment they entered the door until the time for departure came they were never seen, and the village people naturally concluded that there was some mystery connected with them. Some even thought of consulting the police on the subject. On their return to the city they called on their friends, and explained the secret. They were nurses, and had spent their whole time in bed. Accustomed to sleep in such snatches as they could get, their notion of a holiday was a period of long and undisturbed repose.

Potatoes for Stock.
Exhaustive experiments are reported by the French Society of Agriculture in which a ration composed chiefly of potatoes afforded rapid gains in live weights of both sheep and cattle, a large percentage in dressed weight of the slaughtered animals, and flesh of excellent quality. Cooked potatoes proved more effective and profitable than uncooked.

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