

THE VENGEANCE OF A TREE.

BY ELEANOR FARRAND LEWIS.

Through the windows of Jim Daly's saloon, in the little town of C—, the setting sun streamed in yellow patches, lighting up the glasses scattered on the tables, and the faces of several men who were gathered near the bar. Farmers mostly they were, with a sprinkling of shopkeepers, while prominent among them was the village editor, and all were discussing a startling piece of news that spread through the town and its surroundings. The tidings that Walter Stedman, a laborer on Albert Kelsey's ranch, had murdered his employer's daughter had reached them and had spread universal horror among the people.

A farmer declared that he had seen the deed committed as he walked through a neighboring lane, and having always been noted for his cowardice, instead of running to the girl's aid, had hailed a party of miners who were returning from their mid-day meal through a field near by. When they reached the spot near, however, where Stedman (as they supposed) had done his black deed, only the girl lay there, in the stillness of death. Her murderer had taken the opportunity to fly. The party had searched the woods of the Kelsey estate and just as they were nearing the house itself the appearance of Walter Stedman, walking in a strangely unsteady manner towards it made them quicken their pace.

He was soon in custody, although he had protested his innocence of the crime. He said that he had just seen the body himself on his way to the station, and that when they had found him he was going to the house for help. But they had laughed at his story and had flung him into the tiny, stifling calaboose of the town.

What were their proofs? Walter Stedman, a young fellow of about twenty-six, had come from the city to their quiet town, just when times were at their hardest, in search of work. The most of the men living in the town were honest fellows, doing their work faithfully, when they could get it, and when they had socially asked Stedman to have a drink with them, he had refused in rather a scornful manner. "That infernal city chap," he was called, and their hate and envy increased in strength when Albert Kelsey had employed him in preference to any of them. As time went on, the story of Stedman's admiration for Margaret Kelsey had gone afloat, with the added information that his employer's daughter had repulsed him, saying that she would not marry a common laborer. So Stedman, when this news reached his employer's ears, was discharged; and his then was his revenge! For them, these proofs were sufficient to pronounce him guilty.

Yet, that afternoon, as Stedman crouched on the floor of the calaboose, grew hopeless in the knowledge that no one would believe his story, and that his undesired punishment would be swift and sure, a tramp, boarding a freight car several miles from the town, sped away from the spot where his crime was committed, and knew that for ever its shadow would follow him.

From the tiny window of his prison, Walter Stedman could see the red glow of the heavens that betokened the setting of the sun. So the red sun of his life was soon to set, a life that had been innocent of all crime, and that now was to be ended for a deed that he never committed. Most prominent of all the visions that swept through his mind was that of Margaret Kelsey, lying as he had first found her, fresh from the hands of her murderer. But there was another of a more tender nature. How long he and Margaret had tried to keep their secret, until Walter could be promoted to a higher position, so that he could ask for her hand with no fear of the father's antagonism. Then came the remembrance of an afternoon meeting between the two in the woods of the Kelsey estate—how, just as they were parting, Walter had heard footsteps near them, and glancing sharply around, saw an evil, scowling, murderous face peering through the brush. He had started towards it, but the owner of the countenance had taken himself hurriedly off.

The gossiping townspeople had misconstrued this romance, and when Albert Kelsey had heard of this clandestine meeting from the man who was later on to appear as a leader of the mob, and that he had discharged Stedman, they had believed that the young man had formally proposed and had been rejected. But justice had gone wrong, as it had done innumerable times before, and will again. An innocent man was to be hanged, even without the comfort of a trial, while the man who was guilty was free to wander where he would.

That autumn night the darkness came quickly, and only the stars did their best to light the scene. A body of men, all masked, and having as a leader one who had ever since Stedman's arrival in town cherished a secret hatred of the young man, dragged Stedman from the calaboose and tramped through the town, defying all, defying even God Himself. Along the highway, and into Farmer Brown's "cross-cut," they went, vigilantly guarding their prisoner, who with the lanterns lighting up his haggard face, walked among them with the lagging step of utter hopelessness.

"That's a good tree," their leader said, presently, stopping and pointing out a spreading oak; when the slipknot was adjusted and Stedman had stepped on the box, he added: "If you've got anything to say, you'd better say it now."

"I am innocent, I swear before God," the doomed man answered, "I never took the life of Margaret Kelsey."

"Give us your proof," jeered the leader, and when Stedman kept a despairing silence, he laughed shortly.

"Ready, men!" he gave the order. The box was kicked aside, and then—only a writhing body swung to and fro in the gloom.

In front of the men stood their leader, watching the contortions of the body with silent glee. "I'll tell you a secret, boys," he said, suddenly. "I was after that poor murdered girl myself. A very little chance I had; but, by Jove I had just as little!" A pause—then, "He's shunted this earth. Cut him down you fellows!"

"It's no use, son. I'll give up the thing as a bad job. There's something queer about that tree there. Do you see how its branches balance it? We have cut the trunk nearly in two, but it won't come down. There's plenty of others around; we'll take one of them. If I'd a long rope with me I'd get that tree down, and yet the way the thing stands it would be risking a

fellow's life to climb it. It's got the devil in it sure."

So old farmer Brown shouldered his axe and made off for another tree, his son following. They had sawed and chopped and chopped and sawed, and yet the tall white oak, with its branches jutting out almost as regularly as if done by the work of a machine, stood straight and firm.

Farmer Brown, well-known for his weak, cowardly spirit, who in witnessing the murder of Albert Kelsey's daughter had in his flight mistaken the criminal, now in his superstition let the oak stand, because its well-balanced position saved it from falling, when other trees would have been do. n. And so this tree, the same one to which an innocent man had been hanged, was left for other work.

It was a bleak, rainy night—such a night as can be found only in central California. The wind howled like a thousand demons, and lashed the trees together in wild embraces. Now and then the weird "hoot, hoot!" of an owl came softly from the distance in the lulls of the storm, while the barking of the coyotes woke the echoes of the hills into sounds like fiendish laughter.

In the wind and rain a man fought his path through the bush and into Farmer Brown's "cross-cut," as the shortest way home. Suddenly he stopped, trembling, as if held by some unseen impulse. Before him rose the white oak, wavering and swaying in the storm.

"Good God! it's the tree I swung Stedman from!" he cried, and a strange fear thrilled him.

His eyes were fixed on it, held by some undefinable fascination. Yes, there on one of the longest branches a small piece of rope still dangled. And then, to the murderer's excited vision, this ropeseemed to lengthen, to form at the end into a slip-knot, a knot that encircled a purple neck, while below it writhed and swayed the body of a man! "Hang him," he muttered, starting to help the hanging form, as if about to help the rope in its work of strangulation; "will he for ever follow me? And yet he deserved it, the black-hearted villain! He took her life—"

He never finished the sentence. The white oak, towering above him in its strength, seemed to grow like a frenzied, living creature. There was a sudden splitting sound, then came a crash, and under the fallen tree lay Stedman's murderer, crushed and mangled.

From between the broken trunk and the stump that was left, a grey, dim shape sprang out, and sped past the man's still form, away into the wild blackness of the night.

PAUPERISM IN ENGLAND.

Government Statistics Reveal Only a Part of the Dire and Growing Fervor.

The remarkable fact that throughout the whole of England and Wales there were at the end of last year twenty-four paupers existing on Government charity in every thousand of population, is contained in a great mass of statistics on pauperism recently issued by the Poor Relief Department of the British Government. The exact percentage was 24.5 paupers per 1,000 of population. There was a great increase of pauperism during the year, many thousands of people, owing to the general business depression, being driven to ask relief for the first time in their lives, and the officially recorded proportion of pauperism reached the highest point in many years. The proportion was smallest in 1891, when it was 23.2 to the 1,000 of population. This is a remarkable fact in itself, as indicating the normal amount of extreme pauperism in England, for the record is only of paupers applying for Government relief.

It is a curious fact that the proportion of paupers to population is smaller in London than throughout the rest of England and Wales. But there has been a great increase and continued growth of pauperism in the metropolis in recent years which is causing a great deal of anxiety. In the second week of last December there were 106,376 paupers in London, which was equivalent to 24.3 per 1,000 of the whole population. This was 8,926 more paupers than were receiving relief in the city in the corresponding week of the previous year, and a greater number than in any year since 1872.

The proportion of pauperism in London was highest in the years 1867 and 1869, when it reached 47.8 and 48.1 respectively to the 1,000 of population. But these were years of exceptional depression, and the astounding figures have never been reached in any other year since the inauguration of the present system of statistics. The lowest point was reached in 1891, when the proportion of paupers was 22.4 per 1,000 of population. Since that year there has been a steady growth of pauperism in the metropolis, and at such a rate and with such coincident circumstances as to be the cause of much anxiety to the authorities and a matter of great public concern.

But these figures are of the pauperism only that comes to the official notice, and the record takes no account of the vast amount of poverty that is relieved by private charity and through other than Government sources. To "go on the parish" is the last and much dreaded resort of the honest poor, only to be availed of in direct extremity, and the Coroners' records show that many unfortunates have died of actual starvation rather than thus apply for public charity. More than a dozen of such sad cases are noted on the official returns of inquests held in London alone during last year. So that the startling showing of twenty-four paupers in every thousand inhabitants is only part of the picture of poverty in England.

The Cause of the Attitude.

Watts—"Just look at that fellow on the bicycle, will you? What in the world is the use of him humping over so?"

Potts—"He must be trying to put his shoulder to the wheel."

A French juggler of vital statistics says that the number of deaths in the world during a single century closely approximates 5,000,000,000.

A watch chain that had been missing for several years was found in the stomach of a cow slaughtered by Jack Bird, of Merriwether, Georgia, recently.

In a new colony to be established in Calabria by an Italian deputy there will be equality between the sexes, and the dress question has been decided beforehand. Men and women are to wear similar attire, and apparently to work without any distinction of sex.

AGRICULTURAL.

Give Them Good Care.

With a dairy herd that has not been well sheltered and fed during the winter, the spring is a very trying season. The cows are thin in flesh and weak accordingly. Often they are forced to live on straw and other fodder which should be thrown to them between meals, to be picked over at leisure only through the cold days of mid-winter, and as soon as the snow begins to disappear and the ground becomes frozen they are permitted to roam over the lots at will, picking the dry, dead grass from the corners of the fences and enjoying themselves as best they can, with occasional days of sunshine in the raw blasts that sweep across the field, chilling them to the very marrow. This allowing cattle to roam at large in the fields during the early spring, is a mistaken and very bad practice too commonly indulged in by many. It is much better to keep them sheltered, turning them out to breathe the fresh air only in warm, sunny days. If they are thin in flesh they are in no condition to resist the chilly winds, and the stubble grass and dead turfs in the corners of the fences, which they pick up, does them more harm than good, only distending their craving stomachs without affording them any nourishment. It is a burden to get rid of, and makes them feverish and costive. They ought to be generously fed and prepared for their coming work, if they are cows. The burden of calf-bearing and the milk-producing that is to follow call for plenty of good hay and a liberal supply of grain, to give them strength and furnish a supply of nourishment for the calf as well as an abundance of material out of which to laborate milk.

Nor should this full feeding of hay and grain be discontinued as soon as the grass begins to start. Gorging with that relaxes the system, loosens the bowels, and makes the cows feel weak, lazy and faint. This sudden change from dry to green feed gives too great a shock to the system to maintain perfect health. Every one knows how green grass operates upon horses. It makes them weak and flabby, loose and lazy, and so they are supplied with hay and grain until the working season is over and they are turned for a run on grass. A cow is no less severely worked by giving birth to her calf and elaborating a generous flow of milk. Besides, her labor has no season of rest, when she can roam at leisure, doing nothing. She must continue her work through the summer and fall season, whatever may be the weather or condition of the feed, and then enter upon another six months' siege of dry feed and cold winter. Her life experience is not one of the greatest possible enjoyment.

At all times it should be the aim to give her strength and build up her system so that it can perform and endure the burdens that she is expected to bear. The better she is cared and provided for, the better she will do, and the better she does the more she is entitled to kind and generous treatment. The greatest profit lies in breeding your best cows to the best blood you can get—it costs but little more than poor blood—and then giving their offspring the best keeping and most kindly treatment you are capable of. This has been said so often that it seems needless to repeat it. But progress is so slow and so many are penurious and hard to learn that the evidence of progress is discouraging. There is no more mistaken policy than that of trying to economize by raising inferior stock and trying to save by pinching in its keep—especially in the line of the dairy.

Feeding Cows During Milking.

There can be no doubt on this subject, as ample experience of our best dairymen and farmers have proven it to be the case. A cow giving twenty-five pounds of milk a day while being fed at milking, fell to a quarter of that weight in three weeks by having the time of feeding changed, and being milked by other hands. Both exerted their special influence. But what was unusual was the regaining the former quantity of milk by again receiving the former ration at milking time and being again milked by the same milker. Another cow that had yielded a large daily quantity of milk, having greatly fallen off in her milk, was fed at milking time, and though milked by the same man as formerly, regained her usual flow and quantity of milk. The ration at milking time must have brought the change. A large Shorthorn cow owned by a milker and distiller, was fed a good, rich slop at milking time every day, which caused her to fill a large pail, so that the froth overflowed the pail. This cow, at the death of the milker, passed into the hands of a neglectful party and soon dwindled to a poor milker. The experience of those owning extraordinary milkers will bear testimony to the good effect of liberal feeding at the time of milking. The family cow, generally is thus fed, and the average family cow is the largest milker. The contentment of a feeding cow causes her to give down her milk in free and full measure. Kind treatment, at the same time, is paid for in milk. Cows thus managed will, doubtless, pay a larger percentage of annual profit than any other cows not thus fed and treated. Many of our best dairy cows are injured by rough handling.

Summer Care.

A correspondent writes:—How many times we find the farmer going for his cows, the sun most down; he is tired and his help is tired; the cows are a little contrary, the flies are bad, the feed poor, and everything seems to be going wrong. No wonder he gets out of patience; the cows get out of patience, and we certainly cannot wonder at it. But is there a remedy for these trials? Yes, I claim there is. Last summer's experience taught me a valuable lesson. My cows have already been milked at regular intervals, as order is the first law here. We all realize how dry last season was, not only dry but excessively hot, and it seemed as though flies were never so bad in the world. I always plant a large amount of sweet or other corn to feed the cows during the dry hot months, and I wish to be understood to feed in abundance. Last season, when the flies began to put in an appearance, I ordered my man to put the cows in the barn at 9 o'clock in the morning, also every other day to sprinkle along the back of each cow a sufficient amount of insect powder to keep flies away entirely. I had screens placed over all windows, sticky fly paper nailed or put around in different places all through the stable; and it was certainly a satisfaction to see what comfort those cows

took lying in the barn all day, even though they were confined in rigid stanchions. (You know I said this was a poor man's barn.) The cows were allowed liberty at night in the pasture, thus giving them a chance to rest. If any one doubts whether or not it will pay to protect cows from heat and flies, giving them what green corn they need to eat, I only ask him to try the experiment, and he will be convinced, as I am.

A Lion-Tamer's Peril.

One night Black Prince sprang 10 feet through the air straight at Philadelphia who saved his life by dodging, but did not escape the sweep of the lion's forearm. No one knew that, however, for the tamer showed no sign of injury, but brought his heavy whip down with a stinging cut over the lion's head, and went through the "act," holding a handkerchief to his face now and then, but smiling as before. When he left the ring it was found that one of the lion's claws had laid his cheek open almost from eye to lip, yet the man was smiling.

"He meant to kill me," said Philadelphia, as his face was being bound up.

"We will never show that lion again," said the manager, much excited.

"Oh, yes we will," answered the wounded tamer. "I will make him work tomorrow, as usual." And he did, teasing and prodding him that day as never before, as if daring him to do his worst.

As the weeks passed, it grew clear that Philadelphia, either through some change in his way of handling Black Prince, or through some change of temper in the lion, was losing his control; but still he continued to take the risk, in spite of protests from the management. First he tried only one performance a day, instead of two, hoping thus to placate Prince's smouldering wrath; but Prince only snarled and growled the more fiercely, and steadily grew worse. "Philadelphia may be caught any day," one of the other trainers said to me; but still Philadelphia persisted.

The climax came one night in January, when Black Prince came within an ace of killing the daring tamer outright, and certainly would have done so had his attention not been diverted just at the critical moment by the horse he was riding. He paused in the very act of springing, as if to decide whether he would destroy the man or the horse, and in that pause allowed the tamer to get on his guard while the watchful grooms rushed in through the iron gates and drove Prince from the ring.—[McClure's Magazine.]

The British Navy.

The comparative decline of Great Britain's naval strength among the powers of Europe, and the vital necessity of her recovering her erstwhile superiority at sea, are subjects of vital importance to the whole British public. It appears to be generally recognized that, if in the course of a great war, England's navy fail to protect her commerce at sea, she will be exposed to national starvation. Under these circumstances the writer urges that probably the most short-sighted and expensive policy which Great Britain can pursue is to keep her navy just abreast of, or even a little head of, the navies of the two powers which, it seems not improbable, may at no distant day be arrayed against her. By far the wisest and, in the long run, the cheapest policy for her to pursue is, he contends, to put forth her full power of shipbuilding at once, to largely increase the personnel of the navy, both men and officers, and to show all competitors, once for all, that rivalry is useless. The writer urges very forcibly and decidedly that if Great Britain were defeated at sea the Empire would be dissolved, the Colonies and India lost, and England herself sink into a third-rate agricultural country. Unfortunately for England the masses who rule the country, whose well-being is wrapped up in her continued supremacy, neither understand nor care to learn the conditions under which they are supplied with work and food. They do not realize that loss of empire means national extinction.

Subterranean London.

It is now generally recognized throughout Europe that the underground electric road offers the simplest and best solution of the problem of rapid transit for cities, and the rapidity with which underground lines have grown in favor has drawn attention to future possibilities in the utilization of the earth, below the surface, for commercial and other purposes. It has been proposed in crowded cities, where land is of high value and municipal restrictions have been passed, limiting the height of office or other buildings, that buildings should go downward and that as many stories might with advantage be built underground as above ground. Operations now going on in London, England, seem to point to an extraordinary development of underground resources in cities in the early future. On emerging from the River Thames the new City and Waterloo line will, in its passage up Queen Victoria street, run for a part of the way underneath the low-level main sewer, which in its turn runs along beneath the District Underground Railway. So that at this point in the city there is, first, a busy main thoroughfare, below that a steam railway, then a huge metropolitan sewer, then an electric railway, reaching its terminus at a depth of about sixty-three feet below the streets, and here it will communicate with another line, the Central London, which will lie at a depth of eighty feet.

Mr Gladstone to America.

Mr. Thomas A. Edison has received from London a phonographic cylinder on which Mr. Gladstone's voice has been caught for the edification of his many admirers on the other side of the Atlantic. This is the message of wise counsel he sends:—It is self-help that makes the man, and making is the aim which the Almighty has everywhere impressed upon creation. It is thrift by which self help for the masses dependent upon labor is principally made effective. For them thrift is the symbol and the instrument of independence and of liberty, indispensable conditions of all permanent human goodness. But thrift is also the mother of wealth, and here comes the danger into view, for wealth is the mother of temptations and leads many of its possessors into a new form of slavery more subtle and not less debasing than the old. From this slavery may all lands, and especially all lands of the English tongue, hold themselves for ever free!

ONTARIO CROPS AND LIVE STOCK.

Following is a bulletin sent out by the Ontario Department of Agriculture, from information sent in by correspondents:—

Fall Wheat.—This crop had entered a most crucial period as correspondents wrote, and much uncertainty existed regarding its future prospects. Early in March fine bright weather prevailed, and the protecting covering of snow disappeared, revealing the fields of wheat in a promising condition in most quarters. The latter part of March and the early portion of April, however, was a season of alternate freezing and thawing, and the cold nights and warm days not only resulted in much "heaving," but also browned the tender blades and left all but well-drained fields with an appearance anything but satisfactory. The situation at the time correspondents wrote was as follows: Fall wheat has been seriously set back by spring frosts and absence of warm rains. Should another week or two of unpropitious weather prevail much of the crop will have to be plowed up or resown; but as the roots are vigorous timely showers and genial weather may carry the fields forward towards an average yield. Where the fields entered the winter with a good top they are still vigorous and verdant, and those who practice under-draining rejoice in an encouraging outlook. The great fall wheat counties along Lake Erie send rather discouraging reports, and in the eastern portion of the province, where the acreage is small, the prospects are equally poor for a good crop. In the Lake Huron group the county of Huron gives a cheerful report, while Lambton and Bruce are rather the reverse. The Georgian Bay counties' reports are equal in tone, and on the whole the chances are hardly as good as usual. In the West Midland group favorable reports prevail over those of a less encouraging character, and the same may be said of the Lake Ontario counties. So far there has been an almost complete exemption from injury by worms or insects.

Rye.—What little of this crop is grown came through the winter in fair condition, although injured in places by ice. The area of winter rye is inconsiderable, taking the province over, but here and there in the central and eastern counties some stout advocates of this crop are to be found.

Clover.—The reports concerning this crop are not favorable. A few correspondents speak of good fields and encouraging prospects on high and well-drained lands, but east and west there has been a good deal of "heaving," more particularly during the spring, and a liberal application of the land roller will not fully remedy matters. Old meadows have suffered most in this respect, and the newer fields are rather patchy and thin owing to the drought which prevailed last autumn. A few correspondents allude to the injurious effects still traceable from the visitation of grasshoppers last summer. At present the chances appear to be rather against a good yield of hay and clover this year, although timely rains may make up for past drawbacks.

Vegetation.—Up to the time reports were sent in there had been but little actual growth in field and forest. In fact, at the close of the second week of April vegetation appeared to be but little ahead of what it was two or three weeks earlier. A good spring rain was hoped for by correspondents as something that would start growth and bring the season well forward.

Live Stock.—Taken altogether the reports concerning the condition of live stock may be considered satisfactory. Horses do not appear to have been as well cared for as in former years, owing to low prices, yet though rather on the thin side as a class they have come through the winter with but little sickness, barring an occasional attack of distemper. Horned cattle as a rule are healthy, though lean; reports of disease were very scattering. Tuberculosis was referred to by some correspondents, but the cases alluded to were not regarded as serious. Sheep are in particularly good trim, and lambing is proceeding most satisfactorily, save that a few correspondents complain of an unusually large proportion of singles being dropped. Swine are also in generally good condition. Some form of distemper is here and there reported, and a disease "resembling rheumatism" has shown itself in a few places, while in the neighborhood of Dereham township hog cholera broke out recently and carried off 200 hogs; but notwithstanding these local and occasional occurrences the swine industry has seldom presented a more favorable bill of health. There was plenty of fodder with which to carry stock through the winter, taking the province all over.

Farm Supplies.—There is not much unanimity of opinion regarding the quantity of hay, grain or fat and store cattle on hand. In the three western districts of the province the bulk of correspondents report a surplus of hay and wheat, and in some countries there are more oats than are needed for feeding and seeding. In the Lake Ontario counties there is but little hay to spare, and in the eastern and northern hay, wheat and oats are in store in only moderate quantities. A great deal of hay was pressed and exported during the fall and winter, and large quantities of wheat were fed to live stock, more especially to swine. Fat cattle are hardly as plentiful as usual, and buyers appear to be shy in most quarters, as several correspondents state that fewer ewes than usual have been sold for May shipment. Store cattle are plentiful with some farmers and scarce with their neighbors; in fact the cattle industry appears to be in a most unsettled condition, except in the case of fresh cows, which are in better demand than ever for the dairy.

Dynamite and Nitro-Glycerine.

Nitro-glycerine is a mixture of glycerine, nitric and sulphuric acids. The two acids may be mixed and cooled artificially; the glycerine is then dropped into the mixture, and the result is washed in plenty of water, the nitro-glycerine separating as a heavy, yellowish liquid. Dynamite is porous earth soaked in nitro-glycerine; the German infusorial earth, called kieselguhr, takes up three times its own weight of nitro-glycerine and makes the best dynamite. Nitro-glycerine uncombined is stronger than the dynamite; it is also more dangerous to the handler. Sugar, white magnesia powder tri-poli and alumina are used in making dynamite, as they take up and hold larger quantities of the nitro-glycerine. Nitro-glycerine is from four and a half to six and a half times as powerful as gunpowder, and dynamite is rather less powerful.