The.....

Pomeroy Affair

I.

I stood at the window of my poor little meanly furnished surgery. There was scarcely a patient worthy of the name on my books, and my little stock of savings was nearly exhausted. In fact, it began to look as if the medals and distinctions I had won at college and the "'spital" were useless, for I had nearly made up my mind to abandon all hope of working up a practice in Newhurst.

As I looked down the whole length of the High Street I saw one of the Pomeroy dogcarts turn the corner by the market place. It contained a groom, dressed in their well-known dark blue livery, and he drove the thoroughbred chestnut up the street at a splitting pace. To my surprise, he stopped at the door of my humble surgery, ordered a boy who was standing near to hold the horse, and sprang out.

"Will you please come up to the castle at once?" he said breathlessly. "The earl has cut his hand very badly."

I believe I went scarlet with astonishment.

"Dr. Thornton generally attends his lordship," I said with hesitation.

"Yes, sir," said the groom; "but the dowager countess has had some words with Mr. Thornton, and she particularly begs you will drive back with me."

A moment later I was seated in the dogcart, speeding away to the castle, not knowing that that simple summons to attend a wounded hand was to lead to the most extraordinary incident of my career.

I was received in the morning-room by the dowager countess, a woman of about forty years of age, who was still in possession of the wonderful beauty which had made her famous throughout Europe. I should mention that the present earl was her stepson. His young wife, a girl of about twenty, was in the room when I arrived, but she had very little to say, and I understood at a glance that the person to be conciliated was the dowager, who appeared to rule everybody. The conversation was of the ordinary type; the earl had wounded his hand somewhat severely with a hunting-knife. He was at present in the library, and they would like me to go there at once. I was about to leave the room, when the dowager called me back.

"There is one other little matter, Dr. Lightfoot," she said. "We very much fear that the earl's heart is seriously affected."

She stopped, and I looked properly sympathetic.

"Could you manage to make an examination without alarming him? He is very nervous, because heart disease is in the family."

I promised to do my best.

The earl received me most cordially. He was a man of about five-and-thirty, healthy and strong looking, though somewhat pale, the result of leading a studious life. The wound in his hand was not of much consequence, and within a quarter of an hour it was sewn up and bandaged. Then I approached the heart question, of course, very delicately. He laughed.

"I don't think there is anything the matter with my heart; but you are welcome to sound it, if it's only to please the ladies."

Now, if there is an organ which I profess to understand with some thoroughness, it is the heart. But I could find nothing in the world the matter with his. The action was somewhat weak, but that must be expected in a man who spends almost all this time in the library. So far as I could ascertain, there was not a trace of disease.

"There's no heart disease in our family," said the earl cheerily.

This was a direct contradiction of the dowager's words, but I had paid little attention to it at the time. Every doctor knows how unreliable patients are in their statements. There are some who take a delight in exaggerating every trifling ailment, there are others who take an equal delight in minimizing them. Before I left I had come to the conclusion that the earl was one of the best fellows I had met. There was not a scrap of affectation or nonsense about him.

His great hobby was sketching. I have never met a man with such remarkable talent. Every thought that passed through his mind seemed to be transferred to paper. For instance, while we were chatting he sketched my likeness. It was quite a little work of art, with the characteristic signature, "Pomeroy, December 20th, 1895."

"We are both students, Dr. Lightfoot," he said warmly, "and if we don't become very intimate, it will be your own fault. I am quite glad I cut my hand. It has been the means of introducing us."

That concluded my interview with the Earl of Pomeroy.

The same night, at ten o'clock, the dogcart again dashed up to my surgery. This time the groom was white with excitement.

"Come at once, sir," he said huskily.

"Is anything wrong?" I asked.

"The earl is dead!"

For a moment I gazed at him in stupefied silence. Dead? A man whom, only a few hours earlier, I had seen in the prime of life and in sound health! It seemed impossible.

"How did it happen?" I asked.

"His lordship went to the library after dinner, as usual. He fell asleep in his armchair before the fire —and—and about an hour ago the housekeeper found him, sir. He was dead!"

Tears were trickling down the man's face as he spoke. I felt that my medical knowledge must be in some way altogether at fault, but it was no time for idle conjecture. I sprang into the dogcart, and three-quarters of an hour later stood in the castle hall.

Everything was, of course, in confusion. The servants were horror-stricken. The young countess, overcome with grief, had been carried unconscious to her room. The only person who showed any nerve and presence of mind was the dowager. She looked pale, but cool and collected. In fact, she was one of those determined, strong-minded women who can face any emergency.

She led me at once to his bedroom, where he had been carried. I shall never forget the scene that followed. He lay on the bed, his face just as I had seen it in the morning, except that it was now pale and rigid.

"How is it, Dr. Lightfoot," she said sternly, "that when you saw the earl this morning you were not able to foresee this calamity?"

"I don't believe it was possible for any medical man to foresee it," I replied firmly.

"But I warned you that the earl suffered from his heart."

"I found nothing amiss with the earl."

"We hoped that in sending for you," she said bitterly, "we should have better advice than could be obtained from an old practitioner like Dr. Thornton. Evidently, our confidence was misplaced."

She swept contemptuously from the room, and left me there, feeling more perplexed than I have ever been before or since.

II.

I knew quite well that I was not in any sense of the word to blame for what had happened. The question was, ought I to grant a certificate? If I certified that the earl died of heart disease, I stultified myself. If I refused a certificate, a coroner's inquest would be required, and the whole countyside would be indignant at what they would call my clumsiness in not avoiding it. I was turning the position over in my mind, when the butler entered, begging me to go to the servants' hall, as the housekeeper had been taken ill.

It was she who found the earl dead in his chair. Fully two hours passed before I was able to leave her, and by that time it was nearly one o'clock.

When, at last, the butler conducted me from the housekeeper's room across the great corridor, it was only dimly lighted, but to our great surprise we saw a figure emerge from the library, and walk slowly and noiselessly across the corridor. It approached the door, of the earl's bedroom, and then, turning round, looked at us. It was the white, stern, rigid face of Lord Pomeroy!

I heard the butler — a stern old Scotsman, who had been with the family since boyhood— whisper a prayer under his breath. I seized his arm.

"Come with me to the earl's bedroom," I said. "I shall want your help."

We entered the room, and found him lying just as I had seen him when the dowager countess took me into the room. But there was no change. The bunch of flowers which had been placed on his breast was lying on the ground.

I pointed this out in silence to the butler, who trembled violently, and for the first time showed signs of fear. Placing my fingers on the earl's heart, I felt after a moment a slight movement. He was alive!

I began to see there was something mysterious in the whole affair. Between us we applied restoratives until the faint gleam of life became more steady.

Seeing that there was no immediate danger, I decided to leave the butler with his master, while I visited the library. While still unconscious it was evident that Lord Pomeroy had visited that apartment. I was curious to know what had happened there.

I found the electric light burning brightly. He had switched it on on entering, just as he would have done in the ordinary way. Nothing was disarranged. I went across to his writing table, and there I found, perhaps, the most remarkable piece of evidence that ever fell into man's hand. It was half a sheet of note-paper, with three sketches drawn in the earl's masterly way. The first was a sketch of a little medical syringe, the second was a poppy — the opium plant; the third was a portrait — exact and unmistakable— a portrait of the Dowager Countess of Pomeroy.

I understood the meaning of it at once. To sketch whatever was in his mind was a kind of second nature to the earl; he would do it almost unconsciously. The meaning of his sketch was that somebody — the dowager countess — had used a syringe to inject a drug, and the drug was opium.

But the countess had made a miscalculation. She had injected sufficient opium to cause the appearance of death, but not sufficient to kill.

I could only marvel at the diabolical cunning of the woman who had attempted the crime. Her motive was clear — she wished to see one of her own children inherit the title and estates.

The method in which she had approached the crime was masterly in its long-sightedness. She first quarrelled with the family doctor; then, taking advantage of a trifling accident to the earl, she sent for a young and unknown practitioner, who would naturally be somewhat easily led away by anything that was said by such a great lady. Her design had been frustrated by the accident of my being detained in the house, for if in the morning she had seen signs of returning consciousness in the earl, she would, no doubt, have finished her work.

I had now two tasks before me — to restore the earl to health and to prevent a recurrence of an attempt on his life.

The first was comparatively easy. At the end of a couple of hours he was able to take nourishment, and his mind appeared quite clear, though, of course, he remembered nothing that had happened after the time he fell asleep in the library. I told him what had happened.

"But the matter must be hushed up, Lightfoot, for the sake of the family," he said eagerly.

"Quite so," I said; "but we must also take care that it does not happen again. I suggest that the dowager countess be sent for at once and confronted with you."

My plan was carried out, and succeeded better than I expected, instead of attempting to deny it, she entirely lost her self-possession, and, falling on her knees, begged forgiveness.

I pointed out that in remaining silent I was compounding a felony and jeopardizing my future career, so I insisted on the dowager countess retiring altogether from society, and living on her own property in the North of England.—London Answers.

HE WAS PERFECTLY CANDID.

The beautiful and accomplished daughter of a wealthy dealer had the misfortune, so to speak, to fall desperately in love with a young man who was employed in a railway office. Her affection was very much requited so far as the young man was concerned, but there was reason to infer that the wealthy maiden's pa would kick.

"What is the best way to conciliate the old fogey—how can I get on the blind side of him?" asked the youth of the maiden during one of their secret sessions.

"My father," said the wealthy maiden, "is a great admirer of candor. If you deceive him in the slightest particular about your financial status or your past life all is lost. When you call on him be straightforward, even to bluntness."

The young man took the hint, a few kisses, and his leave, and next day he sailed into the cosy little studio of his prospective father-in-law.

"Good morning, sir," said the latter.

"Good morning yourself."

"What can I do for you?"

"I came to ask the hand of your daughter in marriage; but before you welcome me into your family I want to give you a few facts about my past career."

"Well, you are a cool one. Have you any assets?"

"Not the slightest."

"You are probably in debt?"

"Well, I should say so. I can't remember the time when I wasn't dunned several times a day."

"I daresay that coat you have on is not your property?"

"You've hit it. It's borrowed for this special occasion; the hat isn't paid for, and the shoemaker is waiting outside to converse with me about the boots I've on."

"You are one of those candid gentlemen."

"Right. I keep candor on hand to give away. My salary is only $10 a week, and I think the railway company is going to lower my wages."

The astonished dealer acknowledged the fact—he had unearthed a perfectly candid man. He ascertained from his daughter that she would leap off the end of a wharf if she didn't get him, and, having paid the young man's debts, he gave his consent to the marriage.

So much for candor.

THE WRONG HAT.

At Scotch weddings some years ago it used to be the custom to batter the hat of the bridegroom as he was leaving the house in which the ceremony took place. On one of those occasions a newly married couple—relatives of the bridegroom—determined to carry out the observances of this custom to the letter.

The bridegroom heard them discussing their plans, and dispatched a messenger to the carriage—which stood waiting—with his hat some time previous to his departure. Then donning the hat of the male relative who had plotted against him, he prepared to go out to the carriage.

No sooner had he got to the door than his hat was furiously assaulted and almost destroyed. He walked out of the house amid the laughter of the bystanders and entered the vehicle; then, taking the battered hat from his head, he threw it into the hands of its proper owner, exclaiming: "Hey, McDougall, there's your hat!" and donned his own, amid the cheers of all present.

FARM, FIELD AND GARDEN

MILK PRODUCTION.

Can the brain or nervous system of a cow affect her yield of fat, and if so, in what ways and to what extent, is the interesting question that has claimed the attention of many investigators. That cows have more or less power to "hold up" their milk is well known, but to what extent she may at will affect the actual secretion is not so clear. A comparison between the amount of milk drawn from a cow by a man and a calf was quite largely in favor of the calf. When cows are milked one teat at a time, both the yield and quality, at least for short periods, are decidedly affected. The yield of fat in such trials fell off from one-fourth to one-third of the yield when milked in the usual way (both teats from the same gland at the same time). Tests made upon these subjects indicate that change of milker, manner of milking, and change of environment and exert a more or less decided influence, temporarily at least, on the quantity and quality of the milk produced, the fat being as a general rule more sensitive to such changes than the other ingredients or the total yield of milk. In tests in which cows were milked in from three to four minutes and double that time, the yield of milk seemed to be very little affected, but in every case richer milk was produced when the cows were milked fast than when they were milked slowly. Many studies by different investigators on the effect of the frequency of milking and the studies of fractional milkings seem to justify the following statements:

The secretion of any single ingredient, as fat, is not affected by the act of milking.

No considerable formation of milk takes place during milking.

Too frequent milking and allowing the milk to remain in the glands too long, both tend to diminish the secretive activity of the glands.

The process of milking in itself is without effect on milk production. Frequent milking, within certain limits, may result in an increased production of milk, not through the act of milking itself, but through the emptying of the glands.

SOME INSECT DESTROYERS.

It is learned by observation and experience that farmers make a great mistake in killing harmless animals, birds and insects.

The owl seldom attacks poultry, but prefers rats, mice, and squirrels.

The black bird is a great enemy to the insect pests of the garden and orchard.

The bumble bee, with his fuzzy legs and body, is the best carrying medium for the distribution of pollen from blossom to blossom. Without this insect the clover fields would be seedless.

The crow is a great destroyer of insects and does but little damage to crops.

The hedgehog is of great value to farmers, and should be protected. He is always searching for worms and insects that are injurious to plants.

The bat is a harmless animal, and should be protected because it kills flies and bugs.

The king-bird often destroys the farmer's bees, but the good which it does by protecting poultry from hawks and other birds of prey greatly overbalances the mischief which it may do.

POULTRY YARD.

Keep the water vessel in the shade.

Cleanliness is an enemy of disease.

Filthy drinking vessels introduce disease.

Better have the poultry hungry than overfed.

It wouldn't be a bad idea to clean that feed trough.

Fowls soon become accustomed to regular hours of feeding.

If you are feeding green cut bone in summer, be sure that the meat is not tainted.

The garden affords green stuff that is needed and will be relished by the shut-in fowls.

The poultry keeper who does not provide suitable shade for his fowls, ought to be obliged to spend a day in their yards when the thermometer registers from 95 degrees to 100 degrees in the shade.

SCIENCE OF SEED SOWING.

It should not be forgotten in sowing vegetable seeds, and, for the matter of that, all seeds, that they must have air, moisture and darkness in order to sprout properly. If sown deeper than they desire they rot; if too shallow, the light is too intense or they do not get moisture enough. As a rule they should be as near the surface as possible, with the rather dry earth packed around them as firmly as possible. The surface earth should be rather dry or it will not powder well—and this is important in connection with air. There is no air in a soil pressed when wet—but the more dry earth is pressed and pounded the finer and more porous it becomes. There is a great art in getting seed to grow properly — and yet the art is very simple when the principles are understood.

OVER-RIPENED CREAM.

When cream is ripe and stands too long before churning a large amount of acid is developed which results in coagulation of the casein. This becomes incorporated in the butter in the form of white specks, greatly injuring its appearance and detracting from its keeping qualities. The only remedy is to churn before the cream reaches this point. An accurate method of determining just when to churn is to use some acid test, such as Mann's test or Ferrington's test. The ordinary farmer, however, will not use these and consequently must learn from experience at what stage the cream will make the best butter.

REGULAR FEEDING.

The regularity of feeding has a great deal to do in obtaining the best results. The cow that is fed regularly will always give the best satisfaction in the milk pail. If you are not regular in feeding your cows, they will not be regular in giving milk. A cow regularly fed does not worry over her feeding, as she expects her feed at a certain time, while the other cow gets her food sometimes at one time and sometimes another, consequently she will not rest easy and does not give good results from her feed.

CURING CLOVER.

We must cure our clover in such a manner that the leaves will not be lost. The greater part of the nutriment of the clover plant is found in the leaves. When this hay is cured in the swath in the ordinary way, the leaves become dry and brittle and are lost in the field. Clover should be cut when dry and be soon bunched up and cured in the cocks. Turn the hay over the second day and put it in larger cocks. Here the clover sweats and gets rid of much of its moisture and dries out in a soft, tender state. The second day it is ready to be put in the barn.

FEEDING CHICKS.

Chicks should at first be fed little and often upon wholesome, plain food. For the first week they should be fed every three hours, the first meal given about half-past six o'clock in the morning and the last one about eight o'clock at night. From the time the chicks are a week old until they reach one month they will have to be fed about four times a day, and after this until they are four months old, three meals a day will be sufficient. Thousands of chicks die every year from the result of overfeeding.

A GREAT SPELLER.

Child of Three Years Reads the Newspapers.

Although only three years old, Master Norman Dexter Weeden, of Alameda, California, reads the daily papers regularly, spells instantly and generally correctly any phonetic word that is put to him and remembers vividly all that he sees and hears. He assists his brother Frank aged eight, in preparing his lessons in arithmetic, geography and spelling, but he does not go to school himself because he is too small.

Baby Norman's powers of comprehension are marvelous in one so young. Nothing, it seems, escapes his notice. He is always asking the why and wherefore of everything that comes within the range of his senses. He talked and spelled before he reached his second birthday. Little Norman has received no special instructions in an educational way. On the contrary, his parents have sought to discourage the precocity of their child, for fear that he might overtax his mental faculties.

WORD COMBINATIONS.

Since the infant prodigy was able to sit alone his constant playthings have been alphabetical blocks. With these he is incessantly making combinations of words he has seen. Given but a glance at the headings in a paper, Baby Norman will invariably, with his blocks, set them up without an error. He has a hobby for observing the names on delivery waggons, store windows and billboard signs, and rarely makes a mistake in spelling them entire, even though he has noticed them but once.

When asked to spell words like "longitudinal," "assassination" and others of similar length, the tiny mental wonder never hesitates, but spells them quickly, apparently by sound and unconsciously. When he secures a paper Baby Norman pores over it from the editorial to the lost and found columns, pronouncing the most difficult words with an ease that is phenomenal. He is an adept in arithmetic and the feats he performs with figures evinces no great effort on his part.

An Irishman applied for and obtained a situation on some railway works. "What's your name, my man?" asked the timekeeper. "Patrick Cahill," was the reply. "How do you spell it?" Pat scratched his head. "Indade, an' Oi don't know, sorr. Oi never shpelt it; an' me father, he never shpelt it either. Faith, an' I don't think it was ever intended to be shpelt at all. Put it down without shpelling, sorr!"

Ella—"Belle told me that you told her that secret I told you not to tell her." Stella—"She's a mean thing. I told her not to tell you I told her." Ella—"Well, I told her I wouldn't tell you she told me—so don't tell her I did."