THE MYSTERIOUS KEY

OR, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd)

Hastening forward, he was soon standing before the monument, when he was more amazed than ever—almost paralyzed, in fact, as he read the following simple inscription:

"Miriam Harris Brewster. Born October 18, 18—. Died———"

A blank space was left after that last word, plainly showing that the person who had caused the monument to be erected had been in ignorance or doubt as to the dates of the occurrence of the event.

A mighty shock of joy went quivering through Gerald as he stood gazing upon this shaft, which marked the spot where his mother lay, for it proved, beyond question—at least, to him—that the patient, sorrowing little woman had been the lawful wife of Adam Brewster. It also proved him to be the son and heir of the late banker, while he was sure that only the man himself could have been instrumental in erecting this fitting memorial and otherwise beautifying the spot.

It must have been recently done, he judged, for the granite looked comparatively fresh, while it was also evident that orders for the perpetual care of the place had been given to some one, for the grass had been newly cropped.

No ornamentation in the way of shrubbery or flowers had been attempted, but the turf was solid and handsome, and the gravel walk around the place absolutely free from weeds and grass.

Tears of gratitude involuntarily rose to Gerald's eyes, for it was inexpressibly comforting to him to find this sacred spot so attractive—to know that Adam Brewster had, even after years of apparent indifference and neglect, at last done his duty in proclaiming to whoever it might concern that Miriam Harris had been his lawful wife.

He was also very thankful that he had obeyed the impulse which had prompted him to come to the place, instead of returning directly from New Haven to New York, as he had been tempted to do.

After looking about a little, and reading some of the names inscribed upon various headstones, he made a note of the name of the marble-worker, which he had found cut into the pedestal of the monument marking his mother's grave, then retraced his steps to the village, where he sought the sexton and inquired who had fitted up the Winchester lot.

"I don't know, sir," said the man, studying with curious eyes the fine face of the young stranger; "some workmen came here, nigh onto three years ago, and turned the whole lot topsy-turvy. I tried to find out who sent them, but they said they were working for a New York firm, and that's all I ever knew about it. The place never had no kind o' care afore that, but the thing was done up han'some then, and two hundred dollars put in the bank, with orders to have the interest used every year to keep it in shape."

"In whose name was the money deposited?" Gerald inquired.

"Nobody's, sir; it was just left there for the Winchester lot, and I goes and draws the money—eight dollars—at the end of the season. I try to earn it, too, sir," the man concluded, with an anxious gleam in his eyes.

"I am sure you do," said Gerald kindly; "the lot is looking well."

He thanked him for his information, slipped a silver dollar into his hand, then proceeded directly to the station, and was soon on his way back to New York, with a very much lighter heart than he had expected to carry thitherward that morning.

He was still very much mystified regarding those names in the New Haven register, and it seemed to him that it would be very difficult to prove that his mother was the lawful wife, and he the legitimate heir, of Adam Brewster.

True, he had the certificate and wedding-ring, and his own baptismal certificate. There was also that monument bearing the name, "Miriam Harris Brewster."

This latter would be a very strong point if it could be proved that the late banker had authorized the placing of it; but unless such proof was forthcoming, the fact would undoubtedly be regarded as a trick, which any one might have made use of to establish a point; it would never be accepted as positive evidence of a lawful marriage.

Arriving in New York, Gerald at once sought Mr. Lyttleton, and acquainted him with his singular discovery. That gentleman at once exclaimed that the books in New Haven had been tampered with, but when, or just how, they could have been made to prove such falsehoods, was more than he could understand.

The fact that a monument bearing the name of Miriam Harris Brewster had ben erected in the Winchester lot, he agreed wit- Gerald, would amount to nothing in the way of evidence unless Mr. Brewster's agency in the matter could be indisputably proved, and this did not appear likely, since it was patent that he had taken special pains to prevent such a discovery.

"The first thing to be done is to hunt up that firm of marble-workers, and try to ascertain who gave them the order," the lawyer observed, during their discussion of ways and means regarding future action.

Accordingly, on the following morning, Gerald started out upon his search.

By referring to a directory three years old, he learned where the firm's place of business had been located, but upon presenting himself there was greatly disappointed to find that the works had changed hands.

This, of course, only served to complicate matters, since the new firm had in their possession none of the books of the old, except those of the previous year, which contained a record of unsettled accounts and orders received, and which had accompanied the "good-will" of the business.

But Gerald was fortunate enough to obtain the address of one of the members of the old firm, and, hastening to seek him, ascertained, to his great relief, that the books showing the last five years' business were still in existence.

He told the man his errand—namely, that he wished to learn the name of the party or parties who had ordered a monument and the granite border for a certain lot in the cemetery in Ashton, R. I.

His listener smiled at his request.

"I can't tell you that, Mr. Winchester," he said; "the transaction was a very queer one, from beginning to end, and I know all about it, for I did all the business in connection with it. Let me see," he continued reflectively; "it must have been more than three years ago that we received a letter requesting us to send some designs of monuments, with descriptions and prices, for inspection, to room number forty-two, Hoffman House, on a certain date, and stipulating that no questions were to be asked, at the hotel, regarding the occupant of the room mentioned. The writer wished to make a selection, and would afterward remail the designs to us, and, if suited, give us an order. We complied with the request, strictly observing the conditions. Three days later we received the sketches back, and upon one was written: 'This one chosen.' Accompanying it were two bank-checks—one for five hundred dollars, from which the price of the monument was to be deducted, and the remainder used to erect a granite border to enclose what was known as the Winchester lot in the cemetery of Ashton, R. I. We were authorized to use our judgment in the matter. The inscription to be cut on the tablet was given, all but the date of the death of the individual, which was unknown to the writer; but we were ordered to make inquiries in the town, and affix it later. We made inquiries, but were unable to learn when the lady died, and so were obliged to leave the line blank. The other check, for two hundred dollars, was to be deposited in the bank of the place, upon the completion of our work, the interest accruing therefrom to be devoted yearly to the care of the lot—the same to be paid the sexton, or whoever would assume the care for the sum named."

CHAPTER IV.

"And you never say the party who authorized you to do all this?" Gerald inquired, as his companion paused.

"Never; the man—I suppose it was a man—evidently desired to have his agency in the matter entirely unknown; he gave us directions, and a certain amount to carry them out. The checks he sent to us were not signed by him, but bore only the signature of the cashier of the bank upon which they were drawn. So, you see, our patron adopted every precaution to conceal his identity. It was our duty to follow his instructions asking no questions, and I think we made a pretty good job of it," the gentleman concluded, in a tone of quiet satisfaction.

"Indeed you did," said Gerald heartily; "everything was handsomely and thoroughly done. Have you the letters which your patron wrote you in connection with all this?"

"No; and that is another strange feature of the affair," his companion returned. "We were in the habit of filing all orders, but this customer especially stated that his communications were to be destroyed, and he should depend upon our honor to obey his instructions implicitly. Besides, they were typewritten, and, therefore, if you are looking for any particular handwriting or autograph, they cannot be found here."

Gerald was terribly disappointed upon receiving this information. It seemed as if he was destined to be baffled at every point, and it was very disheartening.

At the same time, what he had just learned might, if produced in court, point, though indirectly, to Adam Brewster as the man who had ordered the improvement of the Winchester lot and the erection of a monument to the memory of his mother, but the facts gleaned from the marble-worker would be so vague and unsatisfactory, it was exceedingly doubtful if they would be admitted as evidence.

"Can you give me the date on which you sent those designs to the Hoffman House?" Gerald inquired, after a moment of troubled thought.

"I—might possibly be able to do so, sir," the gentleman returned, with some hesitation, "but, really, I still feel myself in honor bound to regard the wishes of our mysterious patron. I should be very glad to oblige you, but I cannot break faith with any one, once having given my word."

"I appreciate your position, and respect you for your fidelity," Gerald frankly responded, "but there is a great deal at stake in this matter; a fortune is involved, it having passed into the hands of a sharper, thus wronging the only direct heir, and as the gentleman in question is not now living——"

"Ah!" here interposed the marble-worker, "that makes a very material difference; can you explain the position a little more fully to me?"

Gerald did so as briefly as possible, mentioning, in conclusion, that as a lawsuit would probably ensue, he might have to call upon him to testify in his behalf.

The gentleman then arose, and, going to a shelf, took down a large account-book, laid it upon a table, and began to turn over the leaves.

Pausing at last, he laid his fingers upon a line, remarking:

"Here, Mr. Winchester, is the order for the stone; we always copied every commission into our books. This says November 10. I sent the designs to the Hoffman House three days earlier."

Gerald made a note of the date, then, thanking the man for his courtesy, he bade him good day and hurried away.

"It is but a straw, and may lead me only on a wild-goose chase," he muttered, as he boarder a car for muttered, as he boarded a car for fort."

He proceeded directly to the Hoffmanman House, and, going to the office, inquired of the clerk if he could tell by inspecting his books who had occupied room number forty-two on November 10, three years previous.

"Certainly," replied that obliging official, as he beckoned to an attendant, who sprang at once to do his bidding.

He ordered him to bring him the second volume of the year which Gerald had mentioned, and, when it was brought, himself searched for the entry desired.

"Ah! here you have it, my friend," he said, in a brisk, cheerful tone. "Room forty-two—Adam Brewster, of New York City," and the clerk indicated the name as he read it.

For a moment Gerald's sight was so blurred that he could not see the writing, and his heart gave such a leap that he almost gasped for breath.

But at length his vision cleared, and he resolutely steadied his nerves as he bent forward and read the banker's name, which had been inscribed in his own familiar handwriting.

There was no doubt now that he had traced his man, but it might be difficult to make a jury see it in the same light.

There was a possibility that another party might have occupied the same room on the same day, either prior to or succeeding Mr. Brewster's occupancy of it.

In that case, he would be all at sea again, and thus it was with something of a nervous inward tremor that he put another question to the clerk.

"Can you tell me whether Mr. Brewster occupied the room exclusively on that day, or whether it may not have been vacated by him and assigned to some one else after?" he asked.

"I can tell you, of course," was the affable rejoinder, and then the man ran his eye rapidly over two or three pages of names.

"No," he said at last, "room forty-two was occupied on that date by no one save the gentleman already named. The day following, however, it was given to a party from Boston—you can readily see for yourself."

Gerald carefully examined the pages indicated, and then, with a great weight rolling off his heart, felt that he had made a long march on the road to victory.

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

DODDER IN ALFALFA SEED.

Occasionally, great damage results in alfalfa and clover fields by the introduction of dodder in the seed. This plant, when started, fastens itself to the plants of the main crop, and saps the life out of them. Dealing with this pest, the New York Experiment Station, at Geneva, describes the injury to alfalfa in a bulletin, as follows:

"Dodder is a yellow, thread-like, twining weed which is exceedingly troublesome in alfalfa fields. It appears in circular spots 3 to 30 feet or more in diameter. At the center of the spot the alfalfa is killed out, while around the margin the ground is covered with a mat of yellow threads which twine closely about the stems of the alfalfa plants and slowly strangle them. The spots increase in size from year to year. Many fields have been completely ruined by dodder. It is not often injurious to other crops (except red clover), but once established in an alfalfa field, it is very difficult to eradicate without killing the alfalfa."

Special precautions should be taken to sow clean seed. Sometimes it is found necessary to remove dodder and other foreign seeds after a supply has been procured for sowing. The following advice is given by the Geneva authorities regarding alfalfa seed:

"Alfalfa seed is larger than dodder seed, and advantage was taken of this fact by the Station to perfect a method by which commercial alfalfa seed may be made practically free from dodder, and safe to sow. It was found that dodder seeds are readily removed by sifting through a wire sieve having 20 meshes to the inch. Since ready-made sieves of this mesh are not readily obtainable, it is advised to construct a light wooden frame, 12 inches square by 3 inches deep, and tack over the bottom of it 20 by 20 mesh steel-wire cloth of No. 34. This quantity of wire cloth ought not to cost more than 15 or 20 cents. In case brass or copper wire cloth is used, the wire should be No. 32, on the English gauge. It is important that the wire cloth used be exactly 20 by 20 mesh, which may be determined by placing a ruler on the sieve or cloth and counting the number of spaces to the inch. With a sieve of this kind, it is estimated that a man can clean from three to seven bushels of alfalfa seed per day. From one-fourth to one-half pound of seed, and no more, should be put in the sieve at a time, and vigorously shaken for one-half minute. To make the work uniformly thorough, the use of a cup holding not over one-half pound of seed, and careful timing of the sifting, is recommended. If the seed contains little dodder, one sifting may do; but when much dodder is present, and particularly if it is of the large-seeded kind, two siftings, both made strictly as directed, are advised. In experimenting with this method, it was observed that, besides the dodder seeds, various other small seeds, broken seeds, and dirt, as well as some of the smaller alfalfa seeds, were also removed by sifting. The siftings varied from about 1 to 5 pounds per bushel, according to the original cleanness of the seed, and the thoroughness of the sifting. The rejection of the siftings is considered as causing but little, if any, loss.

FARM NOTES.

Have you noticed the wonderful increase of grass growth in the meadows after the application of a light dressing of manure? Barnyard manure may be applied to the meadows in winter as well as in early spring.

It is perhaps all right in some instances for a farmer who has earned a competence to retire and take his family to town, if he wishes. But it is exceedingly risky for him, or any other man, to put his money into a business for which he has no special training.

It is difficult to find work during winter for farm hands. If farm laborers could be kept at work all winter as well as summer, we would have no difficulty in finding plenty of farm help at moderate wages. It is the duty of everyone to give his men as much work as possible during winter and to lay plans to that end. There is much that can be done.

While the subject of railroad rates is engaging the attention of practically everybody at the present time, the possibility of an immense reduction in the cost of transportation on wagon roads is entirely overlooked. The average cost of hauling over the wagon roads is 25 cents per ton-mile, and in some 25 cents per ton-mile, and in some cases the cost runs higher than $1 per ton-mile. It has been demonstrated both in this and foreign countries that the cost of hauling can be reduced to as low as eight cents per ton per mile. The cost of a product must be kept within the purchasing power of the consumer or it has no market.

EELS ON A LONG TREK.

Stories From New Zealand of Their Night Land Journeys.

Prof. Drummond, the New Zealand naturalist, writing on the subject of the journeys of animals, observes that reindeer, foxes, hares, seals, whales, rats, many species of fish, a few species of reptiles, and even insects, undertake some very extraordinary migrations, says the London Standard.

In New Zealand the most notable migrants are birds, but in other classes seals are known to set out upon long journeys and to return to their old homes again, and the migrations of the Maori rat, especially in the Nelson and Marlborough districts, where countless thousands, led by an invisible Pied Piper, swarmed for many days across fields, through villages, over rivers and up hill and down dale, have become important events in the local history. The migrations of eels have not attracted as much attention as the movements of other animals, but are quite as remarkable.

R. C. Bruce of Ngaruru states that recent dredging operations by vessels fitted out for philosophical investigations have proved beyond all doubt not only that eels breed in the sea but far out at sea, where their breeding places have been found.

Old Maoris on the west coast of the North island state that when the eels go toward the sea in a large body they are led by two individuals of an enormous size. John R. Macdonald, of Levin, told Mr. Bruce that he once saw one of these migrations, with two large eels in the van.

Overland journeys at night, which are characteristic of some eels, have been noted in New Zealand. Mr. Bruce has been told by some very old Maori friends that they have known eels to undertake fairly long journeys by night. On one occasion the Maoris had camped for the night on a spur that is the watershed between the Wangaehu and Manguwhero rivers. About midnight their attention was arrested by their dog, which was much excited and was barking furiously. When they went out to ascertain the cause of the disturbance they found that the dog was following up an enormous eel which was on one of its land journeys.

SENTENCE SERMONS.

No truth is understood until it is obeyed.

Crooks are made by trying to dodge around duties.

It is always safe to go where you can help another.

No life lightens the world without consuming itself.

Obedience is the first step in training for authority.

Folks who have most advice to spare often need it most.

Love is always a poor thing so long as it tries to save itself.

No man can make life joyous who does not himself enjoy life.

Heaven always gets your picture just when you are not posing.

There is nothing more divine in this world than simple humanity.

The man who advertises his doubts often dreads truth most of all.

Luck may knock at the door, but it takes hard work to force it open.

The best way to flee from the tempter is to fly to your brother's aid.

A man's faith is to be known by his alley as well as by his front yard.

Shielding a fool from the fruits of his folly is fostering his foolishness.

The loss of sympathy would be too high a price for the los of all sorrow.

There are too many people busy printing the golden rule on elastic yardsticks.

He who is too busy to enter into the little joys of others gives the world no great joys.

Many a man thinks he is generous because he has a longing to give what he has not got.

When you see a prophet striking attitudes you may be sure he has some habits to hide.

There's a world of difference between trying to seem pleasant and seeking to give pleasure

Some people are so active religiously on Sunday because their piety has been resting all the week.

It is better to climb up though but lamely than to run down hot foot and free.

NO CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT.

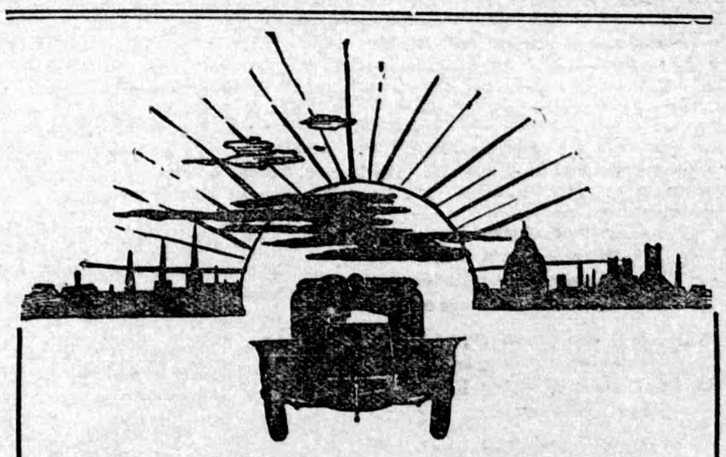
"I thought you said this house had an extra large back yard?" said the prospective tenant.

"So I did," answered the agent.

"But it is only four feet deep, by actual measurement," protested the p.t.

"Well," rejoined the wily agent, "the ordinary yard is only three feet, you know."

The Norwegian Army includes a corps of skaters, armed with rifles.



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