THE MYSTERIOUS KEY

OR, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER V.—(Cont'd)

Gerald returned the next afternoon bringing a brighter face than he had worn since learning of Allison's sad fate, and which was explained when he related to his friend the incidents and result of his trip.

He also brought home some pictures of Allison, which he had copied from an old one, and which proved to be very lovely and wonderfully lifelike.

He passed them to Lady Bromley. "Take your choice. I intended one for you," he said huskily; "that is, if you would like it."

"Indeed I would!" she cried eagerly. "Oh!" as her glance fell upon the exquisite face, "what a beautiful girl she was; and I am sure her soul was as sweet and pure as her face. You can almost seem to look directly into it through her great innocent eyes."

Tears rained from her own as she spoke; she could not be reconciled to the fair girl's fate, or to having Gerald's life blighted in such a cruel way. Even though she had never known the fair girl, she had grown to feel very tenderly toward her, through hearing him speak of her many lovable qualities.

"I do not see why I could not have had such a daughter, or a son like you, Gerald," she added, after a moment, as she turned a wistful look upon her companion.

The young man could not trust himself to reply; her emotion almost unnerved him, also, and he was obliged to turn to the window, and gaze stoically out upon the street, to keep himself from breaking down in a very unmanly fashion.

He had believed that it would comfort him to have a better and largtr picture of Allison than the old photograph which he had had for some time; but the beautifully tinted face, the uplifted look of the large, soulful eyes—which the artist had developed in a wonderfully lifelike manner—only seemed to make him realize his loss so much the more, and almost rent his heart in twain.

But Lady Bromley soon recovered her composure, when she at once proceeded to draw his thoughts into other channels.

She gave him a description of her adventure of the previous day, and how her sympathies had been enlisted in behalf of the poor waif who had been so sadly neglected and abused; that she had brought her home, to see if she could not brighten her life for a little while, at least.

Gerald was greatly interested in the story; but, after discussing it for a while, they drifted back to his own interests and plans, which absorbed their thoughts almost to the exclusion of all else.

The next morning Lady Bromley took Allison's picture down-town, and had it fitted to a costly and beautiful frame, which added greatly to its attractiveness, and, upon her return, she placed it upon an easel, where the light would fall upon it, and bring out its beauty to the best advantage.

"Ellen," she said, as the girl appeared in the doorway, "I would like you to bring me a glass of water."

Ellen made no reply, and hearing no movement, her ladyship turned to ascertain the reason of her silence. She found her standing upon the threshold, transfixed, a rapt expression on her face, her eyes fastened with an adoring look upon the picture of Allison. Presently she tiptoed across the room, and stood before it, her hands clasped upon her breast, which was heaving with mingled surprise and delight.

"It's her," she murmured reverently; "it's her, and prettier than ever!"

"Why, Ellen, did you ever see that lady?" questioned Lady Bromley, astonished.

Ellen started violently at the sound of her voice, and instantly came out of her trance of admiration.

"See her? Of course I've seen her, and talked with her, and loved her with all my heart," said the girly, under her breath; adding, with more animation; "'Twas she who gave me those ten dollars, and took me to Doctor Ashmore to have my arm set. Oh, where did you get such a beautiful picture of her?"

"A friend gave it to me last evening," her mistress replied, repressing a heavy sigh.

"Where is she now?" Ellen inquired, still feasting her eyes upon the lovely face, which she had never seen, except in her mind's eye and her dreams, since that day which to her, had been the most momentous of her life.

But Lady Bromley did not reply directly to her question. She evaded it by asking another:

"Did I understand you to say that this is a picture of the lady who helped you the day you met with your accident? Are you sure?"

"Sure!" repeated Ellen positively. "Why, I couldn't forget her if I should live to be a thousand years old! She was so pretty, I couldn't take my eyes off of her while we were in Doctor Ashmore's office together, and I've dreamed of her no end of times since."

"Come here and sit down, Ellen," commanded Lady Bromley, indicating a chair opposite her. "I want you to tell me all about that mishap; I did not suspect yesterday, when you spoke of the lady who was so kind to you, that I had any knowledge of, or interest in, her."

The girl sat down, as directed, and went through with the whole story, describing how kindly Allison had spoken to her on the street; how, when she had fainted, she had insisted upon having her carried into the office of the noted surgeon, instead of allowing her to be jolted over the pavements to a hospital in her suffering condition; how she had remained with her during the operation of setting the broken bone; then made up the loss of her aunt's money, and also presented her with ten dollars; then sent her and her bundle home in an "elegant carriage."

She was enthusiastic over Allison's beauty; her tones were replete with reverence in speaking of her, and of her wonderful generosity; in fact, she had seemed—to the poor, downtrodden girl, who had been little better than a serf—like some beautiful saint, who had extended to her an almost divinely beneficent hand to lift her out of a bitter bondage to which, almost all htr life, she had been subjected.

From the moment that Allison had put that ten-dollar bill into her hands, she had been a new creature. Money had, indeed, been "power" in this instance; with it lying hidden close against her heart, sht had seemed to feel her chains slipping from her, for she knew that it would give her a start on the road toward an independence such as she had never known.

She then spoke more in detail of Doctor Ashmore's subsequent kindness to her. When he had discovered that she was actually dying from slow starvation, he had been so indignant, upon learning the reason for it, that he was on the point of having her aunt arrested. But Ellen begged him not to do so, for she feared that, in the end, she would only suffer the more; her chief desire was to watch her opportunity and get away from her, and this the kind-hearted surgeon enabled her to do by offering her an asylum in his home.

"And did you never meet Miss Brewster after the day of your accident?" Lady Bromley inquired, when she concluded.

"What? Miss who?" Ellen questioned, a startled look sweeping over her face.

"Miss Brewster, the lady of whom you have been telling me. Did you not learn her name?"

"Why—why, no; she didn't tell me. I didn't ask her; but I heard Doctor Ashmore call her Miss Allison. I thought that was her name!" said Ellen, with almost breathless incoherence. "She told me if I wanted anything of her to ask him her address, and let her know; but he was so good to me, I didn't need to. Wasn't that her name?" she concluded, looking strangely mystified.

"Yes, Allison was her first name; probably Doctor Ashmore was so well acquainted with her he felt at liberty to address her in that friendly, familiar way," Lady Bromley explained.

"Brewster! Brewster!" muttered Ellen to herself, with a flushed, lowering face, a sullen gleam in her dark eyes.

"Yes, Miss Allison Brewster," said her companion, regarding her curiously. "What is there about the latter name that affects you so peculiarly?"

"Nothing," said Ellen, springing to her feet, and with a quick indrawn breath. "I—I will bring you that glass of water now," and she hastened from the room, as if anxious to escape further questioning.

But, once outside the room, she stopped, and, putting her hand to her head, stood gazing upon the floor in deep perplexity.

"I wonder—— No, I don't believe it can be true," she breathed, after thinking deeply for a moment or two.

When she returned to Lady Bromley's presence with the water, she waited until she had quenched her thirst; then, as she took the empty glass from her, she asked again:

"Where is she now?" with a backward glance at Allison's picture; "you did not tell me."

"Oh, Ellen, she is—dead!" sadly replied her ladyship.

Crash! went the glass upon the floor, and the girl sank upon her knees beside it.

"No—no, not dead!" she gasped wildly.

"My poor child, I did not mean to shock you so," said her mistsress regretfully; "but it is true."

"Oh, it can't be true! I cannot bear it! And she was so rich and beautiful? Now I shall never see her again!" and Ellen, utterly overcome, burst into violent weeping.

Lady Bromley allowed her grief to have its way for a while; inded, she herself was deeply moved, in view of the unassumed love and sorrow which the girl evinced for one in whom she herself had been so interested.

But when she began to recover herself sosmewhat, she quietly observed:

"Yes, Miss Brewster died more than three months ago, and she was not rich at that time—her fortune had been stolen from her, and she was actually driven from her beautiful home."

"Stolen! Who stole her money from her? You don't mean that she was poor like me!"

"Yes; every dollar was taken from her."

"Who stole it? Who dared to drive her from her home?" cried the girl, springing excitedly to her feet, her cheeks aflame, her eyes literally blazing with an angry, vengeful light.

"Her guardian—the man whom her father had appointed to manage her affairs," replied Lady Bromley; but mentally wondering why she allowed herself to be drawn into these explanations to this poor, ignorant girl, who was almost a stranger to her.

"His name? What was his name?" demanded Ellen, in a scarcely audible voice.

"John Hubbard."

"Ah, that's it! Now I know all about it; and I'm going to tell—I'm going to tell! I don't care if they kill me for it!" panted the excited girl, as she again sank, almost exhausted from mntal excitement, upon the spot from which she had but a moment before arisen.

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

RESULTS FROM FERTILIZERS.

The twenty-first annual report of the Dominion Experimental Farms contains valuable data from Dr. Saunders in regard to manures and commercial fertilizers. It is pointed out that the experimental plots at the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, for the testing of different kinds of fertilizers, as applied to wheat, barley, oats, corn and roots, are conducted on lines similar to those which have been in existence for over 65 years at Rothamsted, England. They are reported upon for the 20th consecutive season, and much instructive information may be derived by Canadian farmers from a careful study of the tables. These show, for each of the wheat, barley and oat crops, the yields of grain and straw for the season of 1907, and the average yields for 19 and 20 years of wheat, and for 18 aand 19 years of barley and oats, from applications of barnyard manure and of artificial fertilizers. The experiments were made on 19 plots of one-tenth of an acre each, as compared with two plots which have been unmanured from the beginning. The exceptionally unfavorable character of the season of 1907 is reflected in the yields, these being lower than the average on almost every plot. Thus, in the case of wheat, one unmanured plot gave only 5 bushels 40 pounds, as compared with a twenty-year average of 11 bushels 39½ pounds. It is interesting to note, too, that this average yield of wheat on the unmanured plot is nearly 1½ bushels less than that from the unmanured plot at Rothamsted, which is a little over 13 bushels for a period of 65 years. The best results are shown from the use of barnyard manure, the yield from which of wheat, upon the average of 20 years, is practically double that of the unmanured plot. Of the two barnyard-manure plots, the manure is on one plot applied fresh, and on the other in a well-rotted condition. The average yields from the two plots are about the same, the fresh-dung plot showing, however, a slight advantage of about 9 or 10 pounds per acre. But as the quantities applied are of the same weight and as dung in the process of rotting loses weight to the extent of about 60 per cent., there is, evidently, in the long run, a decided economy in the application of dung in the fresh condition.

A feature of the barley experiments is the evidence adduced in favor of common salt. This, applied annually at the rate of 300 pounds per acre, gave, in 1907, a yield of 32 bushels 44 pounds, the average yield for 19 years being 28 bushels 33 pounds. In the oat plots, it is noticeable that, in 1907, the yield from the rotted-dung plot was 64 bushels 4 pounds, as compared with 51 bushels 6 pounds from the fresh-dung plot; but on the average of 19 years, the fresh-dung plot gave a yield larger than the rotted-dung plot by nearly three bushels. Evidently, the special character of the season of 1907 was more favorable that year to the influence of the rotted dung, as in previous years, the yield from the fresh-dung plot has been the greater.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

Pulverized charcoal should be set where the fowls can partake of it whenever desired. Besides improving the lustre of the plumage it is a conditioner that has few equals. It also is an absorbent, taking up many of the detrimental gases in the intestines.

Wheat bran is a cheap warm weather food. Old hogs do well on it mixed with water. It is good for growth or to keep an animal along in a healthy condition, which is all that is necessary with breeding sows. They do not need fattening; the more fat the worse it is for them. It does not cost so much per ton as middlings, and besides, the bulk of manure is about twice as much.

There is nothing that so certainly indicates the enterprise and thrift of a farmer, or the lack of these essentials, as the condition of his team. If the work horses are strong, well kept and well groomed it is safe to set their owner down as a successful husbandman; but if the horses are thin, unkempt, and unfit for the strain put upon them, one may look for their corollary in broken-down fences, poorly tilled fields and decaying farm buildings. These conclusions do not always follow, but the exceptions are no greater than are needed to prove the rule. A team strong enough to do with ease the work required of it, costs no more for maintenance than one unfit for its tasks.

HUNTING SEA ELEPHANTS

SPORT OR BUSINESS WITH ELEMENTS OF DANGER.

Terrible Jaws Can Bite an Iron Rod in Two the Thickness of One's Finger.

An occupation which few followers is the hunting of sea elephants, which are found in great but rapidly decreasing droves in the Antarctic regions, especially on or near Kerguelen Land.

"In November, the beginning of the mating season," writes Capt. Cleveland in Hampton's Magazine "the male and female elephants drag themselves onto the beaches, where they lie in great 'pods.' I have seen as many as seventy-five or a hundred massed in such a bunch. This is also the shedding season, and the animals rub the hair from their thick hides in preparation for the new coat.

"The females and the young have no distinguishing trunk; and the trunk, the mark of the elephant, grows upon the male only after he has reached the age of tnree years. It is really scarcely a trunk; it is more like a flabby snout and is only about fifteen inches in length. It elongates when the animal gets excited.

"This formidable looking, money yielding brute is often confused with the walrus, which as a matter of fact it resembles only in size.

ITS TWO ROWS OF TEETH

or tusks—those of the bull—are between six and seven inches long in front and grow shorter toward the back of the jaws. The tusks do not project like those of the walrus. The largest elephant I ever encountered was sixteen feet in length and six feet high at the shoulders.

"The sea elephant has large eyes, surmounted by huge brows. Its forward flippers, two in number, are armed with five nails each, but the aft flippers have not even rudimentary nails. The animal when on shore moves with a hobbling, rolling motion, its whole body quivering like jelly, but it navigates the water with almost the agility of an eel. It feeds on cuttlefish and mollusks.

"When you stop to think that the cuttlefish of tropical waters sometimes attains a weight of two tons you will realize the prowess of the sea elephant and the strength of its jaws.

"Having feasted for many months upon these grim delicacies of the deep, the bull elephants hobble out onto the beaches and in the mating season engage in fierce battles.

"Our purpose is to reach the island about the time that the sea elephant lands. His blubber—the layer of fat immediately under the hide—is then seven inches thick on an average. Upon this fat the animal subsists for six or eight weeks, at the end of which time it is reduced to a thickness of

BARELY TWO INCHES.

"The fat of the female is by no means so thick proportionately and she is little more than half as large as her lord and master. The female gives birth to young twice a year and suckles them like a whale. It is best to kill the female first, as the males will then lie around supinely; while if the male is killed first the females take helterskelter flight.

"The chief danger attending the killing of the sea elephant is in approaching too near its terrible jaws, which are capable of biting in two an iron rod the thickness of one's finger. The hunter, however, must get pretty close, as the thick hide and blubber have rendered the animal practically impervious to attack, the only vulnerable point being a spot the size of a walnut above each eye.

"Careless hunters have at times got within reach of the brute's teeth and have escaped only by dexterously wriggling from their clothes. I had occasion once to shed my coat with great agility, one of the smaller beasts having caught me by the sleeve."

SNAKES OF EAST AFRICA.

For one thing East Africa must have credit; snakes are not numerous, as they are in the South, at least I never have seen many, says a writer in Forest and Stream. There are pythons, but they do not appear to be dangerous. I shall never forget how, down in South Africa during the war, I once awoke and found a black mwamba in bed with me. This snake is absolutely deadly. It frightened me so that after the whole thing was over I went out and was sick. Fortunately I was quite ignorant of the fact that it was under the blankets with me and rolled out unconcernedly. Had I known it was there, in all probability it would have struck me.

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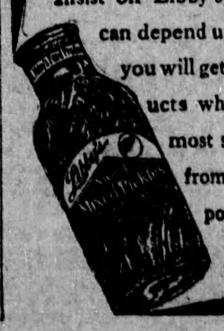

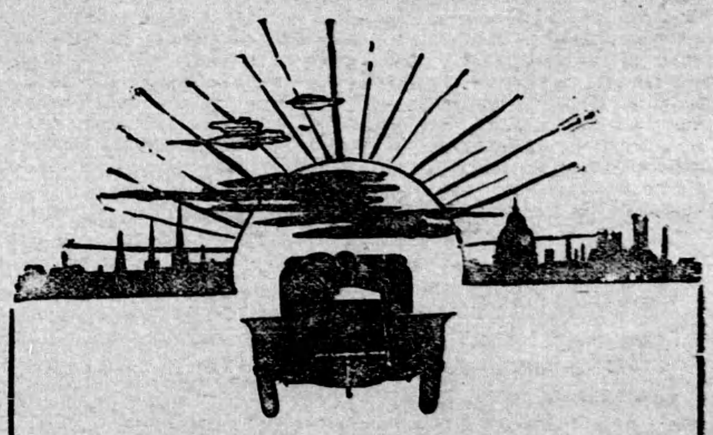

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