THE MYSTERIOUS KEY

OR, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER VIII.

The moment Ellen found herself free she darted across the hall and sprang inside Lady Bromley's apartment. Her face was pale, and she was so nervously excited that her teeth actually chattered audibly. Her mistress followed her more leisurely, quietly closing the door after her. Then, turning to the still quivering girl, she inquired:

"Who was that woman, Ellen?"

"Aunt Lu," gasped the girl hysterically.

Lady Bromley looked slightly startled at the information.

"Can that be possible? What a singular coincidence!" she exclaimed. "Where did you meet her?"

"I had just come up the stairs, and had got as far as the elevator, when she came out of it, and ran square into each other," Ellen explained.

"What reason did she give for detaining you? Why did you scream?"

"I'm sorry I made such a noise," said Ellen humbly, "but she frightened me so I cried out before I thought. The minute she saw me she pounced upon and grabbed me as a cat would a mouse, and shook me until I could hardly breathe."

Lady Bromley looked both indignant and disgusted at this account.

"What reason did she give for doing so?" she inquired.

"She didn't stop to give any reason—she just snapped out: 'Oh, you tricky minx; so I've got on your track at last!' Then she asked me what I was doing here. I told her I was living here with a lady. At that she grew madder than ever, and pinched me so I had to scream. She was going to drag me into her rooms when you opened the door."

"Her rooms!" repeated her ladyship, surprised.

"Yes; she says she lives here, too. Oh, Lady Bromley, I can't stay here!" Ellen interposed in great distress. "She has found me out, and now I must go away, or she will do something dreadful to me. I'm more afraid of her than ever, now that he has got all that money."

"What was it she whispered to you just as she let you go?" questioned her ladyship gravely.

"She said if I dared tell anybody about her, who she was, or where she'd lived before, she'd 'settle' me. You see, she means to find some scheme to get me out of the way," the girl continued timorously.

"Do not allow yourself to be at all disturbed, Ellen," said her mistress reassuringly. "As soon as Mr. Winchester returns, we will have a talk with him, and I am sure we shall be able to make some arrangements so that you will feel perfectly safe. That woman certainly cannot harm you while you are here under my protection, and I will not send you out again until we can decide how best to provide for you. Now, do not spend another moment worrying about it, but come and hold my worsteds while I wind them," she concluded in a cheerful tone.

And the girl, apparently greatly comforted and reassured by her words, removed her hat and wrap, and then contentedly sat down to comply with her request.

When Gerald returned that evening he was astonished beyond measure by the wonderful developments of the day, as related to him by his friend. He was, of course, also greatly delighted to have the evidence already in his possession so strongly re-enforced, and felt confident that the victory in the coming lawsuit would be his.

He was deeply touched by the account of Allison's kindness to the unhappy waif, whom she had found such a sufferer on Broadway on that last day that they had spent so happily together in Central Park, and also with the girl's almost unexampled reverence for her benefactress.

He called Ellen into the room after Lady Bromley had concluded her recital, and, after asking her some searching questions, had not a doubt that justice would soon overtake that arch-plotter, John Hubbard, and bring him his proper reward.

He smiled, though rather bitterly, as he opened the little locket which he always wore, and gazed fondly but sadly upon the faded leaves and petals of the rosebud that Allison had so playfully thrown at him in her father's office so long ago.

"What changes even a little time will bring forth!" he sighed. "I shall never forget how lovely she was in that pretty dress and that dainty hat, with those graceful plumes nodding at me with every movement she made; how frank and sweet and lovable she was; how her eyes gleamed with roguishness as she threw this bud at me. Ah, me!

"Neither shall I ever forget how that wretch appeared a little later—what an evil look he wore when he brushed it upon the floor and set his heel upon it," Gerald continued, with compressed lips, his whole face darkening. "He did it purposely, because she had given it to me. He was jealous of me because he saw that she was fond of me, and so he meant to crush me as effectually as he crushed my rose. I wonder how he will feel when he finds that the tables are turned—when he comes to be arrested for forgery and conspiracy, and learns that I am the rightful heir to the Brewster estate!"

Gerald would not have been human not to have experienced a certain degree of triumph in view of the dismay and mortification that his enemy would experience when he should learn how all his plotting and scheming had been overthrown, and by whom, and who was to reap the rich harvest which he had so coveted.

That same evening he made some inquiries about the new occupant of the suite at the end of the hall, and learned that "the lady was a widow, Mrs. Adam Brewster by name, and had engaged the apartment for a year."

The next morning Lady Bromley told her little maid that she was going out, but that she need have no fear over being left alone, for if the bell rang she need not answer it, and thus she would run no risk of a visit from her aunt if she should be impelled to seek another interview with her.

Her ladyship was absentall the forenoon, but found everything quiet and serene upon her return—Ellen being contentedly engaged with some sewing which she had left her to do.

That afternoon all her trunks and belongings were quietly packed, and at an early hour the next day they were removed to another apartment-house farther uptown, where, before night, the small family of three were cozily settled, and better satisfied in every way with their new home.

Ellen was especially delighted and deeply grateful to the kind woman who was proving herself such a devoted friend to her.

When Mrs. Adam Brewster discovered, later in the day, that the occupants of No. 7 had removed, leaving no clue to their whereabouts, she was excessively disturbed, and for days afterward haunted the street cars and elevated trains, with the hope of running across either Ellen or her mistress, and so be able to trace them.

But she was doomed to be disappointed, for she never met them until some months later, when she was unexpectedly brought face to face with them.

"Mr. Lyttleton," said Gerald, one morning, shortly after this change, as that gentleman entered his office, "what do you say to sending Mr. Plum to New Haven, to take a look at those records?"

"I think it would be a very wise proceeding," heartily returned the lawyer. "I haven't a doubt that there has been some very clever forgery done there, and he will be just the one to ferret it out. Go ahead my boy; get him started as soon as possible. I want to get all our evidence together with as little delay as practicable, for it will take some time to arrange it properly. I am getting very impatient for the arrival of the hour when I can place a warrant in the hands of some trustworthy official, and send him across the water, to cut short the brilliant career of that happy couple who are sporting so gaily upon other people's money, and have them brought home to a final reckoning."

"How eager you are for this fight!" said Gerald, smiling.

"You are right. I am like an old war-horse, 'scenting the battle from afar, and eager for the fray.' I shall await Mr. Plum's report with a good deal of interest and impatience."

So Mr. Plum, the chrigraphic expert, who had figured so successfully in Gerald's trial the previous winter, was at once consulted regarding the wisdom of going to see what he could discover in connection with those mysterious records in the office of the city clerk at New Haven.

He was now at liberty when Gerald went to interview him, but after listening to the facts which the young man presented, said he would attend to the matter in a few days, and then report at once.

Accordingly, one morning, five days later, the queer little man appeared before his young patron, with a very scornful and disgusted expression on his small round face.

"Well, what news have you for us?" Gerald questioned, and regarding him curiously, but wanting to laugh at his comical appearance.

"Humph! If there were ever a daring piece of rascality undertaken, you'll find it on those books at New Haven, and it's a bungling piece of botch-work, too! Bah contemptuously asserted Mr. Plum, as he plunged his hands into his trousers pockets, and began to pace up and down the room, to walk off his disgust.

"How so?" eagerly inquired Mr. Lyttleton, shoving aside the work upon which he had been engaged, and swinging around in his chair to face the expert.

"See here!" said the man, coming to his desk, and seizing a sheet of paper and a pencil. "I'll give you the whole plot in a minute, so to speak. Adam Brewster is the name that is on the certificate in your possession, eh?" cocking his eye up at Gerald inquiringly.

"Yes," he assented.

"And Alan Brown is the name of the man the girl, Ellen Carson, told was her uncle?"

"That is right," said Mr. Lyttleton.

Mr. Plum wrote both names on the piece of paper; then, with a careful use of a sharp ink-eraser and a few strokes of his pen, he changed Adam Brewster into Alden Bronstern, and Alan Brown into Adam Brewster.

"By Jove! you've hit the right nail on the head this time, if you never did it before!" exclaimed the lawyer, seizing the sheet of paper and examining the names critically. "How do you solve the puzzle? I'm sure this doesn't look bungled, if that work in New Haven does."

He passed it up to Gerald as he concluded.

"No, I should say not," the young man observed, with an amazed look; "one would almost be willing to swear that the names had never been tampered with."

"Well, I flatter myself that I have made a fairly good job of it," Mr. Plum observed, as he gave a satisfied squint at his work. "All the same, a man is a bungler who undertakes to alter another person's letters and figures without first making a careful study of their curves, angles, and other characteristics. There is a wonderful amount of individuality in chirography—it's a very interesting study, very. Mr. Winchester, did you take a magnifying-glass with you when you went to examine those records?"

"No; I never thought of it," Gerald replied; "but Mr. Lyttleton asserted at once, upon my return, that forgery had been attempted in connection with those names."

"Humph! It's as plain as the nose on your face," returned Mr. Plum sententiously.

"To you, perhaps, Mr. Plum; but really, I do not believe that one person in a thousand would think of such a thing while reading those names. Truly, if John Hubbard tampered with them, it has been very cleverly done," the young man thoughtfully replied.

"I'd like to be as sure of my life and health for the next year as I am that those letters have been changed just as I've shown you," said the expert. "I'm not often fooled with such jobs."

"I haven't a doubt that you are right," said Mr. Lyttleton, "although I should never have thought those names could have been made over like that. You have a natural aptitude in discerning such things; then, you have made a study of such tricks for so many years, you have a right to feel confidence in your judgment; but to us, who are inexperienced in such matters, those records would, doubtles, appear genuine. They must have appeared so to that justice who witnessed the copy which was produced in court last year, to prove the identity of the pseudo Mrs. Adam Brewster."

"Yes; of course it does take a certain amount of 'know how' to detect these flaws in chirography," Mr. Plum admitted. "I'd just like a glimpse of that woman's certificate, and compare it with what I've seen to-day."

"We'll give you a chance, sir, very soon," replied Mr. Lyttleton, with a confident nod.

He was more than pleased with the result of the expert's trip to New Haven, and felt that, with the discovery of that day, he now had all the evidence that was necessary to win the battle for his client.

"I think, Gerald, we are now prepared to rush matters as rapidly as we choose," he remarked, after Mr. Plum had taken his leave. "Did you succeed in securing the address I desired you to get?"

"Yes, sir; the lady at present figuring as Mrs. Adam Brewster mailed a letter this morning to 'Mrs. John Hubbard, No. 4 Avenue de la Opera, Paris,'" the young man responded, with a significant smile.

"Aha! That is well. It wasn't such a misfortune, after all, having the woman take that suite in the Normandie, eh?" said the lawyer, with a chuckle.

"No; I think it was a very good thing for us, on the whole, even if we were driven to take 'French leave,'" Gerald returned. "Everything seems to be coming our way just now," he added, but he sighed deeply as he spoke. He was thinking of how little real benefit would accrue to him from all this battling for a fortune.

He had not much doubt about winning, and justice would probably be done. He would be acknowledged as the rightful heir of Adam Brewster's property, and the schemer, who had overreached himself, would doubtless become the inmate of a felon's cell; but what happiness would it bring him?

He could feel no enjoyment in the downfall of another, even though the man might merit the most rigorous punishment, while the wealth which would come into his possession would almost seem to mock him, coming so late, when there was no one with whom to share it.

"I am not very sure about the woman remaining there; she, too, may be taking French leave," Mr. Lyttleton remarked, after considering the situation for a moment or two. "Your flight from the house will be likely to alarm her; she will probably reason that Ellen has betrayed her identity, and that her own safety will depend on concealment."

"I had not thought of that," said Gerald, looking a trifle annoyed. "It might be rather awkward if she should skip and we could not find her when she is wanted."

"Yes. I believe I will attend to having a warrant made out, and have her arrested at once. A bird in the hand, you know," his friend responded.

The next morning at ten o'clock Mrs. Adama Brewster was waited upon at her rooms in the Normandie by a gentlemanly official, by whom she was arrested, and, being unable to obtain bond, she was committed to await her trial, or until she could communicate with her son-in-law, Mr. John Hubbard, who, she excitedly declared, 'would attend to the matter of bail for her."

The next day the same officer, armed with a similar warrant, and all other necessary authority, sailed in the Aurania, to cut short the luxurious career of the said Mr. Hubbard, and the present possessor of the Brewster estate.

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

JUDGING LIVE STOCK.

Stock judging is a skill naturally possessed by some and it is a science that the breeder and feeder should understand. The agricultural colleges are giving practical instructions in judging live stock that is one of the most fascinating studies of the college, as it includes the knowledge of improved stock breeding. The students visit many prominent breeders of the different breeds and at the Chicago International they test their judgment and skill.

Professor Ferguson of the Michigan Agricultural College gives the following rules to his students:

1. Have confidence in your own powers.
2. Concentrate your thoughts on the breed and breed type of the animals you are working upon.
3. Do not hurry. Take time to decide. Having done so stick to it. "Be sure you are right, then go ahead."
4. If possible, watch the class as it comes into the ring. There is often something about the style and carriage of the winner which marks him out as he walks.
5. Take a minute to look over the line from as near the centre as possible in order to get a general idea on conformation.
6. Then pass slowly clear around the ring inspecting each animal from front and rear.
7. Never be satisfied without using your hand in addition to your eyes. Appearances are often deceitful.
8. In handling always work from front to rear. With cattle work on the right side, approaching the animal from behind.
9. First pick out the winner of the class; then use it as your standard in placing second and third.
10. When first is placed, briefly sum up its strong points.
11. Look for characteristics and most common breed defects.
12. Pay no attention to either the men with you or the crowd around you. Your business is with the animals.

FARM NOTES.

The quicker stable manure is thrown and spread upon the field the less the waste, whether the season is summer or winter.

The success of a beekeeper is not measured by the number of colonies kept, but by the surplus secured. Twenty-five hives, giving a surplus of 50 pounds each, are more profitable than 300 hives and no surplus.

Do not place too much reliance upon the seeds you may get from the Agricultural Department, either as to breed or fertility. Very often they are any old variety under a new name. A wise man has said that that which costs nothing is worth nothing.

Coal ashes, while not so valuable as wood ashes, are, nevertheless, worth saving. Coal ashes contain some fertility, but the principal benefit derived from their use is in loosening the soil. Many people do not appreciate the necessity of keeping the soil porus so that it will readily admit water and air.

In the construction of roads, the attempt should be made to get a smooth surface as free as possible from mud and dust; and these results should be maintained as cheaply as possible. Such results, however, can be had only by selecting the materials and methods of construction best suited to the conditions, and by continuous repair.

One of the best lines of equipment which any form can have is a good workshop well supplied with tools and machinery for needed repairs. Breakage and loss of bolts and nuts are of constant occurrence, and there is frequently much loss of time (for such accidents usually happen in the busy season), in not having the needed things at hand with which to make repairs.

Potatoes require a rich, thoroughly prepared soil. Stable manure tends to produce scab, and for this reason, it should not be used on potatoes. A complete fertilizer rich in potash, applied broadcast at the rate of 1,000 pounds per acre will usually give good results. In many localities scab is a source of serious loss to potato-growers. One of the best and safest remedies for it is to soak the seed for two hours in a solution made by mixing one-half pint of formalin with fifteen gallons of cold water.

Hard work never has been and never will be entirely eliminated from tilling the soil. Thorns and thistles and weeds it produces as it always has done, and it is still in the sweat of his brow that the soil tiller eats his bread. But we have relieved the farmer from more toil than would have once been thought possible, only it opeartes pretty impartially upon farmers of all classes. The better farming now needed must be the individual work and thought of the farmer himself. If he cannot plan, calculate and judge about the details of his business, he is in no better shape for success than his unskilled competitors, who, perhaps, work harder and for less wages than he.

HIS FIXED INCOME.

A Southern Congressman who formerly practised law in Mississippi tells of an amusing case he once tried at State. He was then a student in the office of his uncle, a Colonel Martin, who figured in local politics.

The main figure in the trial was a lazy darky named Dick Sutton, arrested at the instance of his wife, who alleged that he contributed nothing to her support and refused to work.

During the examination of Sutton the young lawyer asked:—

"Dick, have you any fixed income?"

Sutton was puzzled by the term. Counsel explained that the expression meant a certainty, money paid not for odd jobs, but for steady employment; in other words, a compensation at stated intervals on which one could absolutely rely.

Upon the conclusion of counsel's remarks, the darky's face brightened.

"I think I has a fixed income, sah," said he.

"And what is this fixed income?" was the next question.

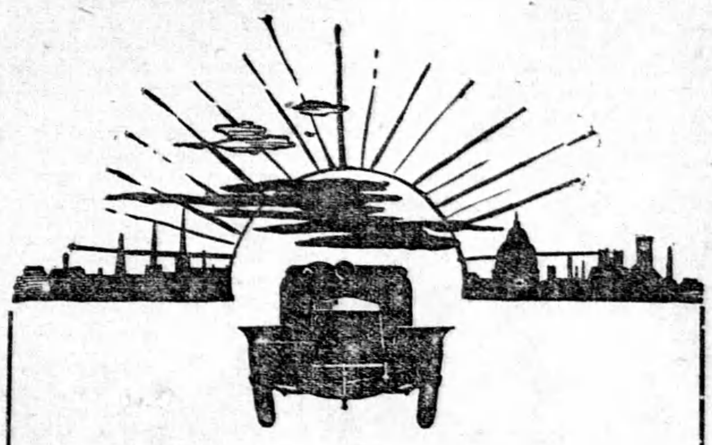
"Well, sah," answered Dick, with a broad grin in the direction of Colonel Martin, "de Colonel dere allers give me fo' dollars an' a sack o'flour on 'lection day!"

WISDOM WHILE YOU SLEEP

Some folks work as hard when asleep as when awake. Hence the business man's phrase, "Well, I'll sleep over it." Robert Louis Stevenson was a wonderful dreamer, and could dream in sequence. He would continue his dream one night from the place he left off the night previous. In this way he dreamed a great deal of "Jekyll and Hyde." The Marquis de Condorcet, the French mathematician, solved while asleep a problem in integral calculus which had puzzled him for days. Dante is said to have dreamed "The Divine Comedy." Voltaire composed the first canto of the "Henriade" while he was asleep. "Ideas occurred to me," he said, "in spite of myself, and in which I had no part whatever."

TRAINING YOUNG BUTCHERS.

An apparatus used in Berlin, Germany, for training butchers' apprentices in the killing of animals by the hammer method is described with illustrations in the June Popular Mechanics. The apparatus has an indicator and scale which tells the force of the blow, so that the apprentices soon learn just the force they require to make the killing as humane as possible.



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