THE MYSTERIOUS KEY

OR, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER XVI.

The hours that followed that joyous reunion are sacred to the lovers alone, and who can desire to trespass upon them? To Gerald, Allison seemed like one miraculously given back from the dead. He had believed her lost to him forever, and so all his hopes had seemed to die with her. Life for the future had held no special attraction for him, although since, perforce, he must live out his allotted time; being governed by a conscientiousness that was innate, he would have tried to spend it to some purpose for others, even though he might reap no consolation therefrom.

But now all this was changed! The dead was alive, the lost was found, and henceforth the star of hope would gleam with no uncertain light. His listlessness, his apathy, was all gone, and it seemed a blessed thing once more to be an inhabitant of earth.

The lovers took no note of time nor their surroundings. To them it was sufficient that they were in each other's presence—that they could look into each other's face and know that life and time were still theirs in which to live and love and hope.

They were only brought back to other realities about them when Lady Bromley came to summon them to a little feast which had been prepared in honor of this blessed reunion.

Gerald insisted upon carrying Allison down-stairs, although Mr. Lyman smilingly assured him that he was better able to perform that service, since he had long been accustomed to it.

"You are like a feather, my poor, wasted darling," he said as he lifted her in his arms, a thrill of pain shooting through his heart as he found how very light she was.

But her spirits had not failed, if her body had, for throughout the meal she was as bright and merry as of old. In fact, she was the only one of the party who did not seem to be at all affected by the memory of the terrible shadow which had enveloped her for so many months.

And why should she be affected by it? To her those months had simply been a blank; to them they had been full of suffering, every day having been marked by a sorrow and hopelessness that they would be long in forgetting.

Gerald tried bravely to respond to her lively sallies with equal wit and jollity, but he was often obliged to pause and take a swallow of water before he could trust his voice to reply.

When their feast was over, Allison was carried back to her chamber, and condemned to perfect rest and quiet for two hours, during which Lady Bromley, Gerald, and the Lymans had a confidential interview, when the whole history of the accident, its consequences and Allison's recent discovery by Ellen were discussed.

During the afternoon the lovers spent several hours together, when the past and their plans for the future naturally became the theme of conversation.

Allison, during the mutual exchange of confidences, told Gerald of John Hubbard's efforts to drive her into a marriage with him, and how, upon her refusal to submit, he had revealed the fact that she was not the child of Mr. and Mrs. Brewster, together with the proofs in his possession.

"And, Gerald," she observed, while speaking of this, "these proofs were in one of those boxes which papa—he will always be 'papa' to me, even though I did not really belong to him—sent you to get from the bank that Sunday he died."

Gerald started slightly at this.

"That accounts for what he said, and what seemed rather strange to me at the time he asked me to get them," he said. "He made me solemnly promise that I would never allow any one to suspect my visit or errand to the bank, and to be careful not to excite the suspicions of any one while taking the boxes to him. One, he said, contained valuable jewels which had belonged to his wife, and which he wanted you to have; 'the other,' he added—and I wondered what made him grow so pale—'holds nothing of any special importance to any one save myself."

"Poor papa! That proves that he wanted to destroy its contents, so that I should never learn the truth—that I was not his own child," said Allison, with a regretful sigh, and then she fell to musing upon the perplexing mystery of her origin.

"If you had only written me how John Hubbard was prosecuting you——" Gerald began, after a moment, when Allison exclaimed, flushing violently:

"I did write and write, Gerald, but you never answered one of my letters."

Gerald now grew crimson, then pale, and a savage light began to blaze in his eyes.

"Ah! I understand it all now, and it must be as I have long suspected," he returnd. "John Hubbard must have intercepted our letters. That rascal did his work pretty thoroughly, but, like all rogues, he has come to the end of his rope at last."

"Where is he now?" Allison inquired.

"In New York," Gerald replied, and wondering if it would be best to begin upon the story of the man's arrest—its whys and wherefores, that afternoon.

"I suppose that woman and her daughter—who, he said, were the real heirs—got all of papa's money," the girl pursued, with a regretful sigh.

"Yes, the suit was decided in their favor," said her lover, but with a queer little smile beginning to play about his lips.

"And did he marry that girl? Anna Brewster, he called her. He told me he should, for 'he had no notion of allowing such a fortune to slip through his fingers.'"

"Did he dare talk like that to you?" exclaimed Gerald sternly.

"Yes," he added, "they were married shortly after the girl was pronounced the legitimate heir, when they went immediately abroad. I met John Hubbard on the Strand, in London, one day, and had a spirited conversation with him regarding the rascally betrayal of his trust in connection with you."

"Well, Gerald," said Allison, somewhat plaintively, "I am very thankful to be well again; but I am sorry to be so—poor——"

"That does not trouble me in the least, my darling," Gerald interposed with a gleam of mischief in his fine eyes.

Allison flushed the daintiest pink imaginable at his words and look, but, with her mind still absorbed in the fact of her poverty, she continued:

"I cannot understand it. It seems very unjust to me, for I know papa meant me to have that money, and it does not seem at all right that it should have all fallen into the hands of that wicked man through those two strange women, while I, whom papa so loved, should be left with nothing."

"Allison, that was only a plot of John Hubbard's from beginning to end. He has coveted and schemed for that fortune ever since he first became associated with Mr. Brewster," Gerald returned.

"Then you do not believe that story was true—about his having been married to and separated from that woman previous to his union with mamma?" questioned the fair girl eagerly.

"I am sure that she was never his wife," Gerald positively affirmed.

"Oh, but can it be proved that she was not?" almost breathlessly demanded the pretty invalid.

"Yes, Allison. Mr. Lyttleton and I have been at work for many weeks making out a case of fraud against that rascal, and we can now prove beyond dispute that it was only through forgery that John Hubbard succeeded in getting possession of the Brewster fortune, and in proving this, we also establish the fact that his accomplice — that woman—was never your father's wife."

"Then no reproach can fall upon mamma's memory. She was papa's lawful wife?"

"Yes, my darling," said Gerald, bending to kiss the sweet, tremulous lips. "Never allow that thought to trouble you again. The reputation of neither Mr. nor Mrs. Brewster has ever been tarnished, and this will soon be proved to the world. There is to be a new trial about the first of February."

"And then I shall get my money back, I suppose," said Allison, with a bright little laugh.

"Oh, what an avaricious little party," gaily retorted her lover. "Are you so very anxious to recover your fortune?" he added more gravely. "Would it seem so very hard to have to share a limited income with a poor clerk?"

"No, it wouldn't be hard at all, Gerald," she responded, flushing. "I could be as happy as the day is long with you under any conditions," she concluded earnestly, and was rewarded for her delightful assurance by being caught passionately to Gerald's breast. "But," she continued, as soon as she was allowed to recover her breath, "I cannot help feeling sorry to lose this money, on your account as well as my own. I know that papa would have been greatly distressed if he had known that I was not to be benefitted by it, and then—I—thought that perhaps now—after all that has happened, you might not be quite so proud and—obstinate, and would be willing to take me with my fortune," she concluded appealingly.

At this Gerald's laugh rang out clear and hearty, and with a note of exultation in its tones.

"I am afraid I should have been sorely tempted to waive my old scruples, in view of the unexampled devotion of a certain true-hearted little woman," he gaily responded. "But, sweetheart, I am bound to confess that I am better satisfied to have matters stand just as the yare."

"But I don't understand it all," said Allison, deeply perplexed. "You seem to imply I am not to have the property, after all; but if John Hubbard's plot has been proved a fraud—if that woman was never his wife—I do not see why papa's will should not stand, and I be recognized as his heir."

"It is because another claimant has appeared," Gerald explained.

"Another claimant!" repeated the startled girl. "Papa had no relatives. Ah! yes, there is Cousin Annie Manning! Has she claimed his estate on the ground of being the nearest of kin upon learning that I was not his own child? I would not have thought that of Annie," she concluded, a note of keen pain in her voice.

Annie Manning had always been her ideal of a sweet, noble woman, and she had been very fond of her.

"No, dear," Gerald gravely returned, and dreading to reveal the truth to her, yet he knew that she would have to know it sooner or later. "One who is nearer of kin than Mrs. Manning has appeared——"

"How can that be possible? You deal in enigmas, Gerald!" exclaimed Allison, becoming somewhat excited. "If papa was never married before he wedded mamma, and had no children, how can there be a direct heir?"

"My darling, pray be calm," pleaded Gerald tenderly. "I would not for the world cause you a moment's pain or annoyance, but I have a story to tell you that will be a great surprise to you, and which, were it possible, I should prefer to withhold from you. When I am through, you will understand why I have hesitated, from a feeling of sensitiveness, to disclose it. It is a story, however, which it would be impossible to keep secret, and I suppose I am the proper one to relate it to you. To begin, I wil lsay that Mr. Brewster had been married previous to his union with the lady whom you called mother——"

"Oh, but you said——" began Allison breathlessly.

"Hush, dear. I said that the woman whom John Hubbard produced as your father's wife is an impostor, and that no dishonor could possibly attach itself to either Mr. or Mrs. Brewster, as he attempted to prove. Nevertheless, he was married to a Miss Miriam Harris, of New Haven, Connecticut, some three or four years previous to his union with Miss Porter. This first wife died a little over a year afterward, and under preculiar circumstances——"

"What a strange, strange story!" murmured Allison, with a wondering sigh. "But go on! go on!"

Gerald then related all that he knew of the history of Miriam Harris and her wedded life as revealed in his aunt's—Miss Winchester's—letter to him, although he did not then expose the fact that he was the child who, upon his mother's death, had been left nameless in the care of a distant relative.

He told her about the package of papers that had been so strangely found in an old-fashioned cricket which was being made ready to be newly upholstered, how among them there had come to light a certificate attesting the union of Adam Brewster and Miriam Harris, together with the baptismal certificate of their only child, who was now the claimant for the Brewster fortune.

"Why!" exclaimed Allison, when he concluded, "it is equal to the most exciting novel I ever read!"

"It certainly is. It seemed so to me when I was following out the tangled threads," said Gerald, remembering with a thrill the sensations which he had experienced upon finding those names upon the New Haven books so mixed, and also his shock of astonishment upon visiting the "Winchester" lot the following day.

"And you and Mr. Lyttleton are to have charge of the suit for the plaintiff—this newly discovered heir?" musingly observed Allison.

"Yes." And the young man smiled slightly, yet with something of a feeling of uneasiness, for he really did not know how to disclose to her the identity of his newly discovered heir.

"How queer that seems, Gerald. Why, I think it is the strongest complication I ever heard of."

"How so?"

"Why, that you, the betrothed husband of the hitherto supposed heir of Adam Brewster, should be employed to work up a case against your own fiancee, which will result in diverting the fortune which her father willed her, and throw it into the possession of a new claimant whose existence has heretofore been unknown!"

"It is a strange complication, as you say," observed the young man, looking rather disturbed over having it stated thus.

"And it is so wonderful, too," she went on thoughtfully, "to think of papa having had a son living all these years, and never knowing it! I wonder if mamma knew that he had been married before she became his wife?"

"I am sure she never knew it, Allison," Gerald gravely returned. "The fact of all that secrecy having been preserved in connection with the first union, and that the wife was never claimed, or the birth of the son never discovered, would seem to prove that that episode was buried in his heart."

"And yet he must have learned of the death of the first wife, or he would not have married again," the young girl argued.

"Yes, but that part of it is a mystery which I fear will never be solved," said her lover, with a sigh. "And now——"

"Have you—have you see him, Gerald—this son?" Allison interposed rather incoherently, before he could go on.

"Oh, yes, many times."

"What is he like? Is he nice?"

"That depends upon your interpretation of the word 'nice,' dear," he replied, smiling, but flushing suddenly.

"Is he a worthy son of my father?" she questioned, her clear, serious eyes lifted to his face. "If he is, I can shake hands cordially with him, and tell him he is welcome to the fortune."

"Allison! what a grand, true-hearted little woman you are!" exclaimed Gerald admiringly, his face luminous in view of her unexampled nobility and unselfishness.

"But you have not answered my question. Is he worthy?"

"I hope he will prove himself to be so," he responded, with unmistakable embarrassment.

"Why!" Allison cried, starting up and searching his face with curious eyes, "how strangely you act! You seem very mysterious! Is this young man some one whom I already know? Oh, tell me, Gerald. I am just wild with curiosity."

And yet she had not a suspicion of the truth.

Gerald drew a wallet from his pocket, took two folded papers from it, and placed them in her hands.

"Read those, love; they will explain everything to you," he said in a tone that sounded rather strained and unnatural to her.

Allison unfolded the one uppermost and found it to be the document certifying the marriage of Adam Brewster to Miriam Harris.

Then, eagerly smoothing out the other, she read the name of Gerald Winchester Brewster upon the baptismal record, and—the mystery was solved.

"Oh, Gerald!" she cried, blankest astonishment written on her lovely face, "you are Adam Brewster's son!"

(To be continued.)

FIGHTING IN THE CLOUDS

DIRE PREDICTION BY AN EMINENT EXPERT.

Great Times When the Aerial Battleships Gets Busy in the Game of War.

"Aerial navies will be an accomplished fact at an early date, not only because they are highly efficient, but because they are cheap. The present cost of Germany's army is over $200,000,000 a year. It has 600,000 men in active service, and 1,200,000 reserves. A fleet of 500 airships could be maintained for $15,000,000 a year, and 100 new ships added annually for $25,000,000. The incentive to replace large bodies of troops by the new instrument of war will be extremely powerful on the ground of mere economy, in the present period of enormous war taxes." Such is the assertion of an enthusiastic believer in the aerial battleship. He goes on to say:

"A new machine of war has arrived. It will be a ship as large and eventually much larger, than our present ocean battleships. It will fight from the height of a mile above the earth, and will maneuver during battle at a rate of 60 to 65 miles an hour. The general discussion of experts for a number of years has established a so-called zone of safety, in which the last German airship, the Zeppelin II, has been built to travel in time of action. This is about 1,650 yards (nearly a mile) above the surface of the earth. The reason for adopting this level was that here the airship is out of range of the military rifle, which constitutes

ITS CHIEF DANGER.

"Nothing alive on the ground can escape the fire of an airship. It will be armed with rapid-fire guns, carrying shells, but its chief reliance in fighting infantry or cavalry will be upon the machine rifle. With this weapon it can turn a stream of 400 bullets a minute on any troops within two miles, exactly as a man turns the stream of a gardenhose against a tree. Its gunners can see any object on the ground with a perfect clearness, impossible of realization by anyone who has not flown in a balloon. They can thus mark the striking of bullets perfectly. And the range of their guns is nearly doubled on account of their position. The fire of an airship will annihilate infantry and cavalry beneath it, as surely as the hand of God. It will not be directed long at any coherent body which could be called troops. Human nature forbids the possibility of men remaining to be shot down like rats in a pit.

"A Zeppelin airship is not a balloon, but a true ship—exactly corresponding to an iron ocean ship. The Zeppelin I and Zeppelin II, two huge power-driven arrows, 446 feet long, are capable of being driven at a speed of 35 miles an hour through the air; and handled as quickly and easily not merely as an ocean-going ship, but as an automobile. Nothing could be more wonderful than the control of these great craft. Turning figures of eight is

A COMMON TRICK.

"An aerial ship 150 feet long and 51 feet wide could carry a dozen men a mile high in the air over a radius of 500 miles, and back; that is, it could reach every principal capital of Europe from the borders of German territory and return. It could, in addition, devote at least five tons of cargo weight to arms and ammunition. This could include ten machine rifles, each equipped with ammunition enough for a full hour's work, and two machine guns of the type built for the Zeppelin I, with 200 shells for each weapon. Two and a half tons of dynamite torpedoes could be substituted for half of the machine guns and their ammunition, if it were desired to attack fortifications or cities. Forty craft of this kind could be built and armed at the cost of one Dreadnought battleship. And such a fleet, without opposition from other airships, could conquer Western Europe. The moment it is launched, the standing armies of Europe become an anachronism.

"The weapons of a ship of this kind against battleships would be large aerial torpedoes, filled with high explosives. It has been popularly assumed that missiles of this kind would be simply dropped from the airship. This would be ridiculous. No possible aim can be secured by dropping any object down through a mile of air, filled with conflicting cross-currents.

THE AERIAL TORPEDO

will be fired from a long, light tube, by compressed air or some similar means, with sufficient force to give it some initial speed, and a rotation which will keep it from turning over. It will consist of 150 or 200 pounds of high explosive, like maximite, which cannot be set off by concussion, but is exploded by a fuse which concussion will ignite; and will carry a steel cap at its end. The initial velocity, and the force of gravity acquired in the fall of a mile through the air will give this a great speed by the time it reaches the deck of a ship. It will pass through the upper decks to the armored deck below, where the slowly burning fuse will at last explode it, and its force, directed against the sharp-pointed steel cap, will drive this through the armored deck and tear away the inside of the ship. There is no reason why this weapon should not become as dangerous as the submarine torpedo, whose explosion against the side of a warship is conceded to mean its destruction or disablement.

"In destroying troops on the ground the airship will take no serious risk. Its position makes it practically omniscient, so far as the movements of its enemies on the ground are concerned. Only prepared artillery can possibly hit it; therefore, it will attack only when artillery is not ready. It will work to windward at a low level; then rise into the high winds of the zone of safety, and swoop over unprotected bodies of infantry and cavalry with the speed of

AN EXPRESS TRAIN.

Or at night it will swing searchlights (steadied by wind-vanes and electrically focussed) hundreds of feet below its car, and fire from the dark above on a well-illuminated mark. Maneuvering will play the greatest part in its development as a fighting machine, and in general its tactics will be that of jiu-jitsu—a quick and sudden blow ot a vital part, with no possibility of return.

"It is at this point that the aeroplane will play its vitally important part. The speed of these craft will be some twenty miles an hour greater than that of the larger ships; they will be, by their small size and rapid and eccentric motion, absolutely immune from gun fire, and, when fully developed, they can be counted on to carry at least two men and a machine rifle. Scouting aeroplanes will get in touch with the enemy while the airships is hidden below the windward horizon. Wireless equipment, for a short distance ,can be carried by aeroplanes, and the airships, similarly equipped, will be exactly informed of all openings for attacks, before the enemy has an inkling of their whereabouts."

About the Farm

THE POTATO CROP.

I have grown potatoes successfully on various soils, writes S. C. Cubbage. But conditions must be right or a failure will result. I have grown good crops on low bottom land, where the drainage was perfect. The potato delights in a moist soil, but water should not stand for any length of time. Newly cleared land has nearly always given me good crops, but my preference of soil is a medium loam with a good clover sod, as I can grow a crop much cheaper. Phosphoric acid and potash are the prevailing ingredients in a potato fertilizer with a small per cent of nitrogen. This is not a very expensive fertilizer, and has always given me good crops when used on clover sod. I buy the materials and mix the fertilizer by the following formula: Acid phosphate and fish scrap 880 pounds each, muriate of potash 400 pounds. This costs about $22.80 a ton. I used 1060 pounds to the acre of this mixture, 500 broadcast, after the land is plowed. This is worked well into the soil with a riding cultivator and heavy spike-tooth harrow. When ready to plant, I open the furrows six inches deep, three and one-half feet apart, and distribute evenely the other 500 pounds in the furrows.

The seed is selected at digging time from the most productive hills. Tubers of good, medium size and uniform shape are used. We cut the pieces with two good, strong eyes, and plant 16 inches apart in the furrow, and cover by throwing a light ridge with a one-horse plow from each side of the row. I have discarded the use of fresh barnyard manure for potatoes as it invariably produces more or less scab with me. Well-rotted manure applied to the sod the fall previous to planting is all right. The largest yield I have ever raised was on a field that had not had any stable or barnyard manure for six years. The field had been rotated, corn one year, wheat one year, clover two years. The sod was turned May 1st and kept well worked until June 19th, when the potatoes were planted and the above formula of fertilizer used. All the commercial nitrogen that was used was what the fish scrap contained.

When I plant potatoes on land that has no sod, I use in addition the above formula 100 pounds of nitrate of soda to the acre at planting time, and a second 100 pounds when the tops are about 8 inches high. The last application is sown along the sides of the rows and cultivated in immediately, as it is very soluble and dterinrates fast if left exposed to sun and moisture. I have never had such good success with potatoes planted after any other crop, as I have on a clover sod.

PASTURE FOR PIGS.

The value of pasture for hogs is more generally recognized now than it ever was. Of course its value per acre depends upon what kind of pasture it is. Clover pasture has been recognized longer as profitable for this purpose than any other kind. But the coming into use more generally of alfalfa in some sections has made it a favorite for hog pasture at certain seasons. Rape is also greatly esteemed for hogs because it grows so rapidly, but it requires more grain feeding with it. Any of these pastures are valuable for hogs, for it makes them very healthful and gives them rapid growth.

Swine feeding upon a pasture probably require more food than do those in yards because more energy is required in grazing than in laying around a yard. But they get more out of the food given them while in pasture than otherwise, because of the nature and likely combinations of the food and the greater activity of the digestive organs brought about by exercise.

The green food increases the digestive capacity of young pigs and puts them in a better condition for latter fattening.

Just what a pasture is worth is hard to say, though its value per acre is known to equal from 1,500 to 3,00 pounds of feed.

FARM NOTES.

Feed hens bone meal or crushed oyster shell at least once a week (daily would be better). Plaster from the wall will also answer the purpose.

The man who bores auger holes in his stable floors to allow the liquid manure to escape from the barn, is making holes in his pocketbook. A simple, inexpensive device should be employed to save it.

The Maine experiment station recommends that eight pounds of acid phosphate, eight of kainit and half a peck of sawdust thoroughly mixed can gainfully be used with the weekly droppings from 25 chickens; that when no preservatives were used, at least 50 per cent. of the nitrogen in hen manure was lost in the form of ammonia, which loss is entirely avoided by the preservatives mentioned.