THE MYSTERIOUS KEY

OR, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER XXI.—(Cont'd)

Accordingly, that very evening, Allison and Lady Bromley were consulted as to the plan, and both heartily seconded it, greatly to the young lover's gratification, whereupon there followed an earnest consultation regarding ways and means and time.

"How long will it take you ladies to make the necessary arrangements?" the young man inquired.

"That will depend somewhat upon your own and Allison's wishes regarding the matter," Lady Bromley smilingly observed. "Do you want a wedding—I mean a society affair?"

Gerald glanced at Allison, who smiled, flushed, and then shook her pretty head with a somewhat doubtful air.

He understood her. She was not quite sure whether she ought to wish for a brilliant wedding, such as young ladies in her circle usually aspired to. She was no longer Miss Brewster, the heiress, although practically her position was unchanged. Then, Mr. Brewster had been dead only a little over a year, and she was not out of mourning, although gradually lightening the sombre hues which she had hitherto worn. This was something of what he read in her expressive face and hesitation of manner. But knowing how all the fondest hopes of the banker had been centred in this beautiful girl, knowing that he had never denied her a wish from her infancy up, and that he would have spared no effort or expense to make her marriage the one important event in her life, Gerald felt that due respect ought to be paid to what he believed he would have desired, as well as to the expectations of society in general.

"It is customary for the bride to have her say upon a question of that nature, I believe," he smilingly observed, after considering for a few moments; "but if I may be allowed, I would like to express myself freely, and then you can do as you like."

"Certainly you may be allowed, and I am sure that Allison will be glad to know your preference in the matter," said Lady Bromley.

"Indeed, I would," asserted the fair bride-elect eagerly. "I should be glad to shift the responsibility of the whole affair upon his shoulders."

"Well then," returned her lover, his fond eyes fastened upon her face, that he might catch its every varying expression, "I think there ought to be a wedding — not too elaborate an affair, perhaps, because of him whom we lost last year, but as near an approach to a society function, such as he would have desired, as may be consistent."

"Gerald, how thoughtful you are! You always say and do just the nicest and most appropriate things," Allison exclaimed, her face glowing with pleasure, yet with a thrill of emotion in her tones, as her thoughts reverted to her father and how she would miss him in the coming festivities.

"And Allison," he continued, "I want you to be married from your old home, just the same as if everything had remained unchanged. Mr. Lyttleton thinks we must sail about the middle of April—that will give you fully two months, which ought to be time enough, with sufficient help, to de everything in a proper and becoming manner. My plan is this—to have the old house opened, and you, with Lady Bromley to matronize you, take up your abode there at once. I will advertise for your old housekeeper, Mrs. Pollard, and if she can be found I know that she will be delighted to resume her former position, and will soon have everything in apple-pie order for you. What do you say, dear?"

But Allison could not reply to this. The thought of going back to the dear old home, which she had believed lost to her forever — of planning for her marriage beneath its friendly shelter, and surrounded by familiar and well-beloved objects, around which clustered so many tender memories, aroused emotions which she found it difficult to master. Lady Bromley, seeing how near she was to breaking down, hastened to fill the gap.

"It will be just the nicest arrangement in the world!" she said brightly, "and it is so like you to think of it, Gerald. I am sure, too, that your suggestion with reference to a wedding is the right and proper thing to do—just what your father would have wished, Allison, and I know you will be happy to be at home once more."

"Indeed, yes," was all that the agitated girl could say; but she slipped her hand into Gerald's, at the same time lifting to him a look which told him more plainly than words how grateful she was to have everything so delightfully arranged for her.

Mrs. Pollard was advertised for the very next day, and on the second morning afterward presented herself in Lady Bromley's apartments, where she was almost overcome upon meeting Allison and learning what was wanted of her

In a week's time the house was in perfect order and everything running as smoothly and methodically as when Mr. Brewster was living, the only thing lacking to make the home life complete being his genial presence. Lady Bromley, however, brightened the home with her charming personality, and, throwing herself vigorously into the work before her, soon had the satisfaction of seeing Allison absorbed in matters pertaining to her trousseau, to the exclusion of all that was sad or depressing.

Gerald established himself in handsome lodgings nearby, where he could drop in upon them whenever he felt inclined, and every passing day only served to make life seem brighter to them all.

At the end of a month cards were issued announcing the approaching marriage, and inviting a long list of friends to be present at the nuptials and reception following.

CHAPTER XXII.

Mrs. Manning and her children, with whom Allison had exchanged frequent visits before leaving Boston, were to spend this last month with her—Mr. Manning coming later in season for the wedding—and Mrs. Bryant was to be the guest of Lady Bromley during the week preceding the event.

Thus time flew, and two days previous to the wedding the house was full of happy, congenial people, all deeply interested in the affairs of the lovely bride-elect, especially in the elegant gifts which had been pouring in thick and fast for more than a week, and in the trousseau, which Gerald had privately instructed Lady Bromley must be the daintiest and nicest which her, exquisite taste could suggest. On this particular afternoon, the Lyttletons, with Mr. and Mrs. Lyman, had ben invited to dine with the family, and after dinner they were all gathered in the drawing-room, a jolly, happy company of twelve, when a maid entered, and, going to Allison, informed her that Mademoiselle Fromonte, the modiste, had arrived with a special reception-dress which had been sent home once before, but had to be taken away again for some alterations. Mademoiselle now wished to try it on, to be sure that it was all right before letting it go out of her hands.

"Ah!" said Lady Bromley, who had overheard the message. "I am glad it has come—now everything is complete. Helen, it is that lovely pearl-gray brocade with the rose trimmings that I was telling you about," she added to Mrs. Bryant.

"Oh, Allison, let me go up with you and see it tried on," said that lady, turning eagerly to her. "I've seen all the rest, you know, but this will have to be packed immediately, and I shall miss it otherwise."

"Why cannot we other ladies have the same privilege?" smilingly inquired Mrs. Lyttleton. "We all love pretty things."

"So do the gentlemen, also," Mr. Lyman here piped up, whereupon there was a general laugh at his expense.

"Well, well! Mr. Lyman, I am surprised to find a man of your age so fond of girlish finery," merrily cried Lady Bromley, who was excessively amused. "Allison"—turning gaily to her—"there is but one thing for you to do; go up and let Mademoiselle Fromonte put on the robe, then come down and give us all a look at it."

"And make a show-figure of myself!" protested Allison, blushing.

"Oh, we are all friends, and you are an object of special interest just now. Run along, dear, and let us have our way," said Mrs. Lyman coaxingly.

The fair girl tripped away without more ado, but twenty minutes later the portieres parted again, to reveal a vision of loveliness which brought an exclamation of delight to every lip, a look of fond admiration to every eye.

Mrs. Bryant sprang forward to meet her, clasped her by the hand, and drew her forward to the centre of the room, directly beneath the chandelier, her delighted eyes feasting themselves upon the beauty before her.

But suddenly she stopped short, her figure grew rigid as marble, her face grew pale as death, a wild, frightened look sweeping over her features; then, with a shriek that froze the blood of every listener, she threw up her hands and fell senseless into the arms of Gerald, who sprang forward to catch her.

The whole company was thrown into the greatest excitement by this unexpected and alarming occurrence. Lady Bromley fell upon her knees beside her friend, her face betraying great anxiety and distress.

"What could have caused such an attack?" she murmured apprehensively. "Open the windows, somebody, so that she may have plenty of air."

Mr. Lyttleton sprang to obey her, and throwing open a sash, the cool evening air swept refreshingly into the apartment, and the unconscious woman began to revive almost immediately. She soon sat up, and looked around the room in search of Allison.

The girl was sitting at the foot of the sofa, and was regarding her guest with an expression of fear and anxiety. It seemed to her that she could not bear to have her wedding marred by a single untoward event

"Oh, was it all a dream?" cried Mrs. Bryant, trying to rise to her feet as her glance fell upon the young girl.

"Was what a dream, Helen?" inquired Lady Bromley. "What was it that shocked you so?" Why did you faint?"

Mrs. Bryant did not reply. Her attention seemed all concentrated upon Allison, toward whom she tottered weakly, and, bending over her, clutched eagerly at something upon her neck.

"No, no! I did not dream it!" she cried, shivering from head to foot. "Mabel! Mabel! Look! look!" and holding up the object which she had seized with one hand, she pointed at it with the other to attract Lady Bromley's attention. It was the golden key which was Allison's only heritage, save that of love.

Around her throat was clasped the delicate chain with the key suspended from it.

Lady Bromley went quickly to Allison to ascertain what had so excited her friend. The effect produced upon her as she caught sight of the golden key was scarcely less remarkable than that exhibited by her friend.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed wildly and with ashen lips, while she grasped Allison by the arm. "Where did you get it?"

The startled heart of the girl leaped into her throat at the question, and she could make no reply. She turned a troubled, appealing look upon Gerald, who instantly came to her side, an eager expression on his face, for he believed they were on the verge of a wonderful revelation.

"Lady Bromley," he observed gravely, "I have told you, and we all know, that Allison was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Brewster when she was an infant. Since we are practically a family-party, I may safely mention the fact that she was a deserted babe, found by Mrs. Brewster's sister. That golden key was pinned upon her dress, and—"

Gerald was suddenly cut short at this point by the strange behavior of Lady Bromley, who fell upon her knees beside Allison, and, winding her arms around her slender, graceful form, bowed her head upon her neck and sobbed brokenly

"Found! Oh, my darling, I have found you at last! What a blessed release from the cruel bondage in which I have lived all my life! For years I have carried a crushed and bleeding heart in my breast, for almost a quarter of a century I have struggled and fought with a guilty conscience."

She paused, utterly overcome, her tears flowing like rain, while Mrs. Bryant betrayed almost equal emotion. Allison, however, was strangely calm, and her face, though pale, was illumined by some intense inward joy.

"Gerald," she said as she lifted her shining eyes to him, at the same time throwing her right arm around the form of the kneeling, weeping woman, "she is my mother!"

Before the young man could respond, Mr. Lyttleton came to his sister's side, his countenance wearing a somewhat stern, but wholly puzzled expression.

"Mabel!" he exclaimed somewhat sharply. "What in the name of all that's mysterious is the meaning of this strange scene and your wild utterances? You are conducting yourself in the most unaccountable manner, while there appears to be some important secret which you and Mrs. Bryant share, but which is not apparent to the rest of us. I think you would do well to calm yourself and give us an explanation."

His tone did more toward producing this result than any other treatment could have done.

Lady Bromley immediately arose and turned to confront her brother, but with an air of dignity which at once assured him that whatever the nature of her secret, she had it in her power to explain everything to his entire satisfaction.

She did not move from Allison's side, however. She had clasped one of her hands in hers, and now stood there clinging to it while she replied to Mr. Lyttleton.

"Richard," she said, meeting his glance calmly, while there was a ring of gladness in her tones which he had not heard in them since her girlhood, "the secret of more than twenty years is a secret no longer, for this dear girl is my daughter!"

"Mabel, are you crazy?" cried the startled man, and regarding her as if he really feared that her reason had suddenly been dethroned

"No. It is apparent that you are thunderstruck at the revelation," she returned, with a nervous laugh, "but what I have told you is true, and Helen can prove the statement."

"But, Mabel, you have always said that you had no children," her brother sternly replied.

"And I spoke no falsehood, for fate and my own unpardonable rashness conspired to rob me of the only treasure that I ever had," said the agitated woman, in a tone of anguish.

"Explain yourself, if you please," commanded Mr. Lyttleton. "Here take this chair," he added more gently, as he rolled one to her side. "Sit down, everybody, while we have this remarkable denouement elucidated; for"—straightening himself with an energetic movement, a swift look of triumph sweeping over his features—"upon the proof of my sister's assertion there hangs a fortune."

Gerald started violently at his words, and comprehended at once that if it could be proved that Allison was the daughter of Sir Charles and Lady Bromley, there would be no further difficulty about settling the long-contested and complicated "Bromley Case." The appearance of a direct heir was all that was needed to bring it to a speedy issue.

(To be continued.)

On the Farm

EFFECT OF DIET ON SHEEP.

Everyone who has kept a large flock of sheep must have experienced what are called strokes of bad luck. These misfortunes may occur at any time, but mostly happen at transitional periods of the year or in connection with some crisis in the annual history, of which lambing is the best example. The mysterious nature of these attacks has always been a puzzle to flockmasters, for sheep are hardy creatures when well, and the appearance of the flock may well warrant confidence in their well being. Suddenly a death is reported, which causes no particular surprise or alarm. If, however, such a casualty is succeeded by others of a similar nature, a different feeling is aroused, and the owner and the shepherd are found in close consultation in order to find a cause. Meanwhile the mischief continues, and each morning, or seldomer, fresh deaths or cases are reported, and it soon appears that for some reason or other, the flock has been upset. Inquiries are instituted, perhaps in these columns, intestines are sent up to experts, veterinary assistance is called in, all too often to little purpose. The mischief continues, until it appears to exhaust itself, confidence is gradually restored, and the matter is attributed to those misfortunes which appear to be inseparably connected with the maintenance of a large herd of live stock.

I write entirely from personal experience, with some knowledge of sheep and science; but in such cases neither the one nor the other appears sufficient to stop the mortality, which, be it remarked, is not due to any specific outbreak such as rot, lung trouble, or gid, but seems to be due to a general upset of the digestive system. It is accompanied by diarrhoea, constipation, impaction; and death is followed by frothing of the mouth and enormous distension of the abdomen. It may attack lambs, tegs, or ewes, and appears to be attributable to errors of diet. In some cases death is sudden, a ewe falling down dead at the hay-crib. More often a shepherd leaves animals apparently in good health at night, and finds one or two stiff and blown up in the morning. The master becomes almost afraid to visit his flock or to ask after them and is daily worried by bad news. Now the best thing he can do, under such difficult circumstances, is to shift his sheep on to entirely new ground and new food, and this measure is often eminently successful, so that the plague is stayed almost immediately. The problem is, however, by no means solved, for in the first instance it was not suspected that anything was wrong in the general management. Hay, roots, cake, and daily outrun are all in accordance with good feeding; but for some reason, more or less occult, the particular food and situation appears to have upset the flock. The difficulty lies in foretelling the mischief, for neither shepherd nor master anticipated it, and it is scarcely likely that anything will be done till something has happened. When, however, the toscin sounds it is time to act promptly, and the treatment must be in the direction of change of food and situation.

I will next give a few cases in which I have been caught napping and had to bear the brunt of the loss. The first instance occurred in my days of pupilage, when I was a spectator rather than a sufferer. There was sad loss of ewes and lambs under able management, the cause being eventually traced to food. It happened in early spring in mild weather, which caused the turnip greens to shoot and flower, and the cause was, no doubt, too succulent food, containing crude nitrogenous matter (omides), which acted injuriously upon the sheep, upsetting their digestion and poisoning the blood. The second case occurred to myself, and it is noteworthy that it happened during my first year of farming. The previous tenant had allowed his hay to stand till it was too old, probably with the wish to secure as big a block of hay for valuation as possible. In the succeeding spring the turnips ran, and the consequences were innutritious hay, and imperfectly developed green food. The result was a rapid falling off in condition of the flock, which unfortunately was hidden from me by an accident, which kept me on my back. The result was the death of about sixty ewes and all their lambs, and it was long before the survivors recovered their normal strength. The serious misfortune was entirely due to errors in feeding, and I will pass on to another. Some years ago my ewes were affected with sore teeth, which communicated itself to the lips of the lambs, and the consequence was that the lambs could only suck with pain, and the ewes crouched and stamped when the lambs attempted to approach them. This proved fatal to many ewes and lambs, and was difficult to account for. It, however gradually become apparent that it was caused by a heated state of blood, brought about by diet of clover hay, with an allowance of cotton cake—too albuminous in its character. There was no roots that year, and clover hay, cotton cake and water were too heating. All went on for some weeks, but the heated condition of the blood seemed to fly to the teats and spread to the udders, affecting the lambs as well. Both ewes and lambs, being above ordinary value, made this a serious matter, and was a great trial to the shepherd, who was in excellent spirits during the lambing time, and had a capital "breed" of lambs. On another occasion, when roots were scarce and hay and water was alternative, the ewes became constipated, and when lambing time came many ewes were affected with hemorrahage and several died. This also was attributed to a heated condition of blood, owing to eating much clover hay (i.e., mixed clover and beets), without roots. It they had received meadow hay and a few white turnips the mischief would not have happened. In this connection it may be remarked that the same course of feeding might easily have proved harmless, for these strokes of bad luck appear to be due to a combination of circumstances. If however, a sheep farmer has once experienced a loss, and traced it to such causes as have been mentioned, nothing will persuade him to repeat it. He will hear of others doing the same thing without evil consequence, but his mind is made up. I have known a flockmaster say that he would not allow his flock to walk over a field of swedes before lambing, and, doubtless, he had got reason for his vow. Still, others do so, and think nothing of it, because they have not been bitten—but once bitten, twice shy. Food, no doubt, is a very principal item in sheep amanagement, and is so important that it cannot be dismissed in one short article. I therefore, shall hope to give a few more cases at a future time, bearing upon the vast importance of judicious feeding.—J. W., in Live Stock Journal.

FORTUNES IN "CORNERS"

MILLIONS WON AND LOST IN A SINGLE DAY.

A Great Many Americans are Never Happy Unless They are Gambling.

"Corner" is merely another name for a trust or monopoly. One man, a firm, or a syndicate of firms arrange their speculations with a view to controlling the whole of a certain commodity, such as meat, wheat, or cotton, for instance. If they succeed in obtaining this monopoly, then they can create a scarcity which causes the prices to rise, and enables them to ultimately sell out at huge profits.

It is by this means that Mr. J. A. Patten, the celebrated Chicago financier, made profit at the rate of $500,000 a day recently, through "cornering" many million bushels of wheat. The consequence was that the "man in the street" had to pay more for his bread, although Mr. Patten maintains that it was the shortage of the crop and unfavorable weather conditions which made the prices of flour and wheat go up, and that he was simply shrewd enough to take advantage of that circumstance.

PITTSBURG BREAD KINGS.

And while Mr. Patten has been busy in the Chicago wheat "pit," Messrs. Ward and Evans, the bread kings of Pittsburg, have been inaugurating a new company, capitalized at $8,000,000, which will probably "corner" the bakery trade. This new company is said to have acquired large wheat areas in the West, and will be able to obtain its supplies without the intervention of the middleman. In fact, the new combination from the wheat-fields to the bake-house, will make a strong fight to control the whole Eastern market.

Whether they will succeed or not is another matter, for these attempts at "cornering" are often attended with disastrous results. Readers may remember how Mr. Joseph Leiter endeavored to establish a wheat "corner" ten years ago, miscalculated, and on account of the slump in prices found himself with 35,000,000 bushels of wheat on hand, and lost $1,500,000 in a few hours.

LOSSES AND GAINS.

It is true that Mr. E. P. Hutchinson, familiarly known as "Old Hutch," got complete control of the wheat market in 1888; and, by buying at 75 cents a bushel and selling at $2.50, made an enormous fortune; but when, two years later, those very shrewd men, Mr. Mackay and Mr. Flood, cornered 9,000,000 bushels, they were glad to escape with a loss of $2,500,000. In the 'seventies Messrs. Lyon and Co. dropped $10,00,000 over their "corner" in wheat; while in 1887 Edward Harper, in a wheat deal on the Chicago Exchange, lost $3,500,000.

An American syndicate some time ago created a "corner" in biscuits—capital $55,000,000! Between Salt Lake City on the west, Portland on the east, St. Paul on the north, and New Orleans on the south—an area or several thousand square miles—no person was able to eat a biscuit without paying tribute to this commercial octupus.

COTTON "CORNERS."

In 1881 an attempt was made in Liverpool to "corner" cotton, the looms in Lancashire being stopped by way of counter-action. The "corner" came to an end in a few days, Mr. Morris Ranger, a great cottoin speculator, failing two years later and causing much disaster. This was the first of several cotton "corners" attempted in Liverpool during the 'eighties, all of which proved unsuccessful.

About the time that Mr. Leiter tried to "corner" the world's wheat supply, a gigantic milk trust, with a capital of $12,000,000, furnished chiefly by British speculators, was projected in New York City, while about the same time a British-American Corporation obtained practical control of the fisheries of the great Canadian lakes, thanks to a trust with a capital of $5,000,000. The countless millions of fish disporting in the waters of these mighty lakes can only do so by permission of these monopolists.

CURIOUS "CORNERS."

The modern history of steel and oil, of course, provides some of the most striking examples of the power of trusts and combines, and such men as Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Andrew Carnegie owe their millions practically to the "cornering" of the markets.

There are some amusing features in the history of "corners," and some curious commercial enterprises have been suggested of late years. It is only two years ago that a group of New York financiers thought out a scheme for "cornering" the output of the world's Bibles. They arranged that all the great printing and distributing houses should combine, thus reducing the cost of production, administration, and distribution to a minimum. An all-round increase of 40 per cent. in prices was to be introduced, an enormous profits were estimated. But people in England refused to have anything to do with the idea, and thus an amazing American scheme was brought to an end—at least, so far as international business was concerned.

PARROT AND MONKEY TRUST

It was reported in 1906 that the waters of the Jordan had been "cornered," a certain American colonel having obtained from the Turkish Government the exclusive concession to export the water of this famous river. Indeed, there seems no limit to "cornering" propensities of the American financier; and, amazing though it may seem a combine was actually formed two or three years ago, with a capital of $500,000, to "corner" monkeys, parrots, and all cage pets.

Kneeling on the floor a married woman named Mileham was found dead at Yarmouth, with her head in a zinc washing bath containing two or three gallons of water.

Addington Palace, near Croydon, a Georgian structure which was formerly one of the homes of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and practically the whole Addington Village is for sale.

Some Saxon painting on an old Saxon wall and part of a Norman piscina have been discovered during repairs at Stoke D'Abernon Church, Surrey, while the sexton has unearthed the top of a censer of 1,000 A.D. in the churchyard.