THE MYSTERIOUS KEY

OR, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

CHAPTER XXIV.—(Cont'd)

"Oh, that Charlie could have lived till now!" she said, with a sob, as she caught Allison's hand almost passionately to her heart. "My dear! my dear! Can it be that I have found my own at last? Can you open your heart to your mother and try to love her a little at this late day?"

"I love you a great deal already," the beautiful girl replied, as she leaned forward and laid her lips against the soft cheek of the woman beside her. "How could I have been with you all these weeks and not grow fond of you? How perfectly lovely it will be," she added, with a tearful little laugh, as she threw her arms around her neck and drew the stately head down to her. "to have a mother all my very own!"

"And what an exceedingly fortunate circumstance for that same mother to have found her own daughter so opportunely," smilingly remarked Mr. Lyttleton. "I do not believe, my dear girl, that you half-realize that, through this discovery, you will come into an income of some thousands of pounds per annum, and also secure to your mother a very handsome annuity."

"Why, do you mean that this will stop all that litigation in connection with Lady Bromley's property?" cried Allison, astonished.

"I do mean just that. We shall now wind up that matter very shortly, and with very little trouble," the lawyer replied.

"Well, I am sure I do not half-realize it yet," she said, with a long breath. "Gerald," darting a roguish look at him, "do you hear? I'm no longer 'as poor as a church mouse.' Aren't you glad?"

"I do not know that I am especially delighted," he smilingly responded, "but if you are happier I can be contented."

"Do you happen to have anything besides that key in your possession to prove your identity?" Mr. Lyttleton here inquired.

"Yes, indeed, I have. Wait a moment, and I will show you," Allison replied, and starting eagerly to her feet, she flitted from the room before any one could detain her. She soon reappeared with the box in her hands. Putting it into Lady Bromley's hands, she observed:

"You must open it, and when you see what it contains I am sure you will feel that the chain of evidence is complete."

With trembling hands the woman threw back the cover, whereupon Mrs. Bryant came to her side, and both eagerly examined its contents, their tears falling thick and fast as they unfolded the dainty garments, every one of which they instantly identified.

Mr. Lyttleton also stood by, overlooking their movements, and when at length that note which had been found by Miss Nancy Porter pinned upon Allison's blanket was unfolded, he recognized at the first glance the handwriting of his sister's friend, for he had read many a letter which she had penned during the youthful correspondence of the two girls.

This, of itself, proved a great deal, and the careworn look which he had worn so long whenever he thought of the "Bromley Case" disappeared at once and forever from his face.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Miss Allison Brewster Bromley," he jocosely remarked, "in your joy over learning that you have a mother—that henceforth you are the heiress of Bromley Court—I trust you will not entirely overlook the fact that you also have an uncle."

"So I have!" she cried delightedly; "how my blessings are multiplying! Uncle Richard, I—I think the relationship demands ratification."

This was said with such a charming air of archness, accompanied by a blush, while she roguishly put up her red lips to him, that it brought down the house, and the equilibrium of everybody was restored in the general laugh that followed "the ratification."

Of course, there was a great deal to be talked over and many points to be discussed in detail, and it was late in the evening before the company separated.

Afterward, when Allison and her mother were alone together in the room of the latter, each poured out her heart to the other with a freedom which neither had experienced for years.

Lady Bromley had much to tell of her husband and her home, Allison listening with breathless interest to every word that flowed from her lips. All at once a question suggested itself to her.

"Lady B——" she began.

"Allison, my dear!" interposed her companion, a shadow of pain flitting over her face, "cannot you call me by the name which I have so longed to hear all my life?"

"With all my heart, mama," eagerly replied the fair girl, as she lifted the hand she was holding and kissed it lovingly. "Ah! it will be such a blessed privilege. It is years since I ave said it. How almost oppressively happy I am to-night!" she concluded, with a laugh that sounded almost hysterical.

"Hush, dear! You must not give way ti excitement," said her ladyship, in a tone of gentle reproof as she folded her arms about the slight form and drew the golden head upon her breast.

"We must not forget that the day after to-morrow will be a very important one in the calendar of your life, and we must keep you strong and well. But what were you going to say when I interrupted you?"

"I was going to ask you if this little key really unlocks anything or whether it is only an ornament?" Allison replied, as she toyed with the tiny trinket upon her neck.

Lady Bromley's face grew very sorrowful at the question. Gently releasing herself from Allison's embrace, she went to a trunk and brought forth a beautiful casket of ebony, inlaid with pearls and gold. This she placed upon the table beside which they had been sitting, unlocked it, and threw back the cover.

Allison uttered an exclamation of delight as she saw the array of precious and beautiful jewels that were thus exposed to her gaze.

"Almost all of them were given to me by your father, dear," said her ladyship tremulously; "but I rarely wear any of them now, for I am still in deep mourning for him. Here is a likeness he gave me just before he left me to go back to England."

She opened a beautiful locket as she spoke, and passed it to Allison, who found herself looking into frank, rather boyish, but altogether attractive face, with eyes very like her own, and smiling lips which she felt very sure never gave utterance to aught but kindly and courteous words.

She sighed as she softly closed the case and passed it back to her mother. She did not speak; there were tears in her eyes, a choking sensation in her throat, and she could not.

Presently Lady Bromley found what she was seeking for, a small golden cube about an inch and a half square, and richly studded with rubies and diamonds. She laid it in Allison's hand.

"Unlock it!" she gently commanded. "You have the key."

With an expression of wonder in her great blue eyes, the girl detached the mysterious key from the chain about her neck, inserted it in the lock, and turned it. Then, with a strange thrill quivering through all her nerves, she lifted the lid and saw, lying within a nest of white velvet, a plain but heavy circlet of gold. She lifted an inquiring look at her companion.

"There is an inscription engraved on its inner surface. Read it, dear," said Lady Bromley.

Removing it with reverent touch, Allison turned it to the light and read:

"C. B. to M. L., Dec. 24, 18—."

"It is my wedding-ring," her mother explained with tremulous lips, "but it has never been upon my hand since that one happy week which my husband and I spent together in Boston just after our marriage. The day before he was to leave me he brought me that tiny golden casket. 'My darling,' he said, 'it will never do for you to wear that telltale circlet when you go back to school, so I have brought you this to keep it in until I come back to you. Lock it safely away. I have had the key fixed so that you can wear it either as a pin or upon a chain, and now this secret will be yours and mine alone.' So I did as he wished. I never told even Helen about my little treasure-chest. It seemed very strange to me when, thinking of it afterward, that when she decided to take you away she should have been inspired to select from among so many trinkets the one thing of all which would deprive me of the only proof in my possession of my marriage. I cannot be thankful enough now that she did so, for the very peculiarity of the ornament and the fact that it alone will unlock the golden casket helps to prove your identity. After my husband rejoined me he wished to have the casket forced, so that I could have my ring. But I said no. Somehow, I felt myself unworthy to wear that sacred circlet. I was oppressed with a sense of guilt for even, in my weakness and despair, entertaining for a moment the thought of sending my child from me. He told me that I was foolish and notional. I suppose I was. Still, I could not help the feeling. He insisted that I must have something in place of it, then. It would not do for me to be going about without any symbol of marriage, and he bought me this"—showing a similar band—"which I have worn ever since, although I would not allow it to be marked."

Allison gently took her mother's left hand and drew off all the rings from the third finger.

Then, holding the original wedding-ring up before her, she asked:

"May I put this back now?"

"Yes, dear," said Lady Bromley, but with tears in her eyes.

Allison slipped it into its place, then replaced her other jewels above it, after which she bent and left a soft caress, like a benediction, upon the slender white hand.

(To be continued.)

FAITHLESS LOVERS.

Strange Penalties for Breach of Promise.

From the plaintiff's point of view, England is the best country on earth for breach of promise actions. Any girl who can bring evidence that her affections have been seriously trifled with will be almost certain to receive substantial damages from a sympathetic English jury.

In certain parts of the United States breach of promise actions are not allowed to be brought into court, and the man is at liberty to become engaged and disengaged to as many maidens as he pleases. In other parts of the States, however, huge damages are sometimes awarded on very slight evidence.

In Germany a special law has been framed which has completely abolished breach of promise actions. Should a young couple desire to become engaged, they visit the town hall and declare their willingness to marry, and sign, with witnesses, a series of documents which render a change of mind on the man's part practically out of the question. They are not engaged until this formality has been carried out.

Should either party discover that they have made a mistake and wish to withdraw from this agreement, the pair again visit the town hall, and another series of documents are formally signed, witnessed, and sealed. The authorities then determine the question of compensation for injured feelings.

In France breach of promise actions are extremely few. The French law requires the plaintiff to prove in court that she has suffered pecuniary loss by her fiance's fickleness. Throughout France a bride almost invariably has a marriage dot, large or small, and the fact is likely to weaken her case.

The same law has been adopted in Austria and Holland, where the number of such cases is small. In most of the Continental cities the parties concerned take the law into their own hands and get their big brothers or muscular friends to administer a severe thrashing to any fickle man who breaks his promise to marry.

Still another method is followed in Italy. The law requires the person suing for breach of promise, of whichever sex, to produce a written promise to marry from the defendant, otherwise the case is instantly thrown out of court. The difficulty of producing such evidence is, of course, practically insurmountable, and cases are rarely tried. Many an Italian girl, therefore, whose affections have been blighted does not hesitate to revenge herself by means of the stiletto.

BOTTLING UP A FLEET.

The German Navy Could be Shut Up in Kiel.

From an article in a Danzig newspaper, quoted by The Navy, on the recent Baltic cruise of the British armored cruiser Cornwall, it appears that fears as to the bottling up of fleets are not entirely confined to English writers on the Germans.

The journal reports that on the occasion of the Cornwall's visit to Kiel, a dense mist prevailed, and the harbor authorities, who had been advised of her pending arrival in the evening, did not expect her to put in an appearance before morning.

However, when day broke, there she was, moored at her assigned position, and appearing to be quite at home. She had navigated the difficult Kiel ford in the darkness and mist without a pilot on board. This performance she repeated at Danzig and Swinemunde, according to the report, in both places without a pilot.

"From this performance," says the journal, "we are compelled to ask what would happen in the event of a sudden outbreak of war with England. . . . They would not have the slightest difficulty in bottling up the high seas fleet in Kiel or elsewhere."

Even if all that glitters isn't gold, lots of people are satisfied with it.

The Farm

BEEF TYPE OF CATTLE.

The general appearance of the beef animal, when of correct type shows a distinctly meat-producing form. The animal is compact and broad of back from shoulder points to hips; has a wide, deep body; short and somewhat thick neck; wide, deep full bosom; rather broad, thick, fleshy hind quarters; and a generally deep, wide body. Viewed from one side, the top and bottom line of body run rather parallel with the back quite level. From front or rear the outline should be rather full and broad. Cattle of this type are referred to as "blocky" indicating compactness and neatness of form. If the body is inclined to be long, it may be termed "rangy," while animals long of leg, showing too little depth and fullness of body, may be termed "leggy."

The head should have a broad, strong muzzle, indicating superior grazing and feeding capacity. The nostrils, when somewhat prominent and large, with a wide nose show ample nasal capacity to supply the lungs with air. A Roman nose sometimes occurs with cattle, but it is neither attractive nor desirable. The distance from the muzzle to the point immediately between the eyes is preferably short, with some curve or "dish," as it is termed, just below the eyes which should be wide apart, large and indicate a gentle temperament. A quiet eye means an easy feeder, while a nervous, restless eye shows an animal unsatisfactory to handle and care for. The forehead, as indicating mental capacity, should be broad and reasonably full. The face and cheeks, in a superior head are full and deep, connected with a rather broad, strong lower jaw. If on the horned type the horns should not be coarse at the head, but should show plenty of fine texture and quality, and be graceful and of harmonious proportions. An abundance of rather long hair should crown the poll or top of the head. It is very desirable that the ear should be neatly attached to the head, without coarseness, and that is should be of superior quality and neatly pointed and covered with silky hair, with long hair at the edges or tips.

The neck of the beef animal tends to be short, thick and muscular, of medium depth, and should be neatly attached to the head and smoothly blended to the shoulders. The bull at maturity show a neck of more length, with heavier muscles, some arch and a heavy coat of hair. The female will have a shorter, lighter neck, with less thickness and less depth. The steer should have a shorter, thicker, fuller, smoother fleshed neck than the cow. When in perfect pose, with head up, the top line of the neck should be slightly raised above the height of the withers.

The shoulders should extend well into the back, lying smoothly covered with flesh, blending neatly with the body. A high type of shoulder is uniformly covered with flesh from shoulder point to top of withers. Rough angular shoulders, unevenly covered, are among the most common defects of cattle. A prominent shoulder also emphasises the development behind it.

The breast and chest are most important. The former should be carried well forward and be broad and full in the bosom. As one stands and views a beef bull in show form, a great breadth of breast and strength of brisket meets the eye. Sometimes the breast and chest have great depth and the brisket comes within fifteen inches of the level of the foot. Viewed from one side it may curve forward like the prow of a ship. With the cow considerable bosom may show, but not in so great a degree, and with less breadth and feminine outline. The chest which lies between the shoulders and just back of them should be full at the crops, showing much spring of rib and also well filled out in the front flanks. The most beautiful front on the beef animal no matter whether bull, cow or steer, is a smoothly laid, well fleshed shoulder, with a strong arch of rib behind, leaving little or no depression. Much depression behind the shoulders or a narrow, contracted, low chest indicates lack of constitution.—Plumb's Types and Breeds of Farm Animals.

SIFTING THEM OUT.

A correspondent writes: "What is a proper way to test a cow's milk in order to find out whether she is worth her keep?"

First, get a pair of scales and hang them up in the cow stable, together with a sheet of paper and pencil. Weigh your milk morning and evening, and set down the amount in pounds of milk. Then get a Babcock test. A four-bottle one will be large enough.

Once a week test the milk of each cow to ascertain the per cent. of fat. The number of pounds the cow gives multiplied by the per cent. of fat will give the amount of butter fat.

One test, however, will not enable you to determine it. Some cows, especially cows that have not been kept for dairy use, will give a fine flow of milk for about four or five months in the year and then go dry. Such cows are seldom worth keeping. Others will give a good flow of milk through the season, and if this contains 4 per cent. of butter fat or over these are worth keeping. A cow may give a smaller amount of milk, but if it contains 5 or 6 per cent. of butter fat she may be worth keeping.

What you are working for is to get the largest amount of butter per annum and it will require a year under ordinary circumstances to determine whether a cow is worth keeping. New beginners will probably find that one-third of their cows are not worth keeping.

No cow should be kept in the dairy that gives less than 150 pounds of butter fat a year. A cow that gives two hundred pounds is always profitable in the corn belt, and a new beginner should be satified with that at the first. Our correspondent is evidently a new beginner, and he has a great deal to learn, which can be learned only by experience. If he will resolve not to keep any cow longer than one year which does not give more than 150 pounds of butter fat a year, and then keep striving for greater yields, he will find it an exceedingly profitable business. It requires, however, care and pains which few men are willing to take. Perhaps it is fortunate that it is so because until men learn how to weigh and test and feed for the purpose of producing the maximum quantity of milk and select cows that give a profitable yield of butter fat the price of butter and milk will always be high enough to make a good living for those who are willing to take the pains to find out how to do it.

FARM NOTES.

Paint on the houses goes with prosperity. Tumbledown and weather-beaten buildings are a pretty sure indication that things are not going as they should.

It is good policy even in country markets for those who have eggs of different shades of color to keep each sort by itself. They may not bring any more in every case, but they look better and are more acceptable to both dealers and consumers and in the end it will be found to pay.

It is fortunate for many farmers that the house-well sometimes goes dry, because it gives an opportunity for cleaning it. If it has not been cleared for two or three years, pump it dry and go at it. Anyone will be surprised to see how much sediment a well accumulates even when its top is carefully guarded. Bad water is the cause of much sickness in the family.

Superphosphate of lime contains a large proportion of sulphate of lime or gypsum, in this way the phosphate of lime is mixed with sulphuric acid; the acid takes two-thirds of the lime from the phosphate, leaving what is known as one lime phosphate, or superphosphate; that is, there is three times as much phosphoric acid in proportion to the lime in the superphosphate as in the phosphate. These two proportions of lime combine with the sulphuric acid, making sulphate of lime, or gypsum. But some of the sulphuric acid remains free in the mixture and this is hurtful to the young plants.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

An important point in the poultry business is a good house. No matter what kind of a house, whether it is modern or not, just so it is light, dry and wind-proof.

Cows calving in the spring give more milk for three months after calving than those calving in the fall. This situation is reversed from the seventh to ninth months. Fall cows show smaller variations in milk flow than cows calving in the spring.

For pigs grind one bushel of flaxseed with eight bushels of oats, or all the flaxseed that can be ground without sticking to the millstones. Then mix 100 pounds of this ground oats and flaxseed with 200 pounds of bran. This will be the best kind of feed for young pigs, and it will be good for them all the time up to fattening; and besides this they will be smooth, rangy pigs, making good roasters at any time. In other words, they will grow and fatten every day of their lives.

In breeding sheep for wool, start with thoroughbred or grade ewes as large in size as they can be had, of good length and thickness of wool, neither too coarse or gummy. Use for breeding none but those of strong constitutions that have not been pampered. Procure a good thoroughbred Merino ram as near perfection as you can find, of large size, square build, long and as evenly wooled as possible. See that the fleece is not too gummy or wrinkly, and let the animal show for himself that he has a strong constitution. Get him from some well-known and reliable breeder; never mind how long or short his pedigree is or whether he has any, if you are satisfied he is a thoroughbred and will get good stock.

CLEVER WOMEN.

Noticeable Feature at Unique Exhibition of Clothing.

A striking feature of the unique exhibtion of clothing held at the Madison Square Garden (writes The London Chronicle's New York correspondent), was the large number of women exhibitors representing factories which as the result of their enterprise have sprung up all over the country within the last few years.

These women have in no case been engaged in the manufacture of women's clothing more than three or four years. The story of their success reads like a fairy tale. One of them—the daughter of English parents—was left some ten years ago with several small brothers and sisters to support. She entered the business house of Marshall Field in Chicago, and three years afterwards found herself established in Paris as their buyer for ladies' underclothing.

Three years ago she decided to manufacture in her own behalf. She began with twenty workwomen. Now she employs 600, in addition to nearly a hundred agents traveling in every part of the world. Miss Leona Forster, who has built up this enterprise, is still in the early thirties. She is petite and as dainty as a rosebud. She wears Parisian gowns exquisitely cut and of charming simplicity. She tells me that by living rationally and dressing comfortably she finds herself able to spend the day in her factory from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. in summer and from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. in the winter. Miss Forster explained that her success was due to her entire devotion to her business.

"English girls," she declared, "of the better class make their business a subsidiary matter to their social success. So many of them, pouring out by the hundred from schools and colleges every year, are seeking some genteel occupation which will leave them free to play tennis and attend unlimited numbers of afternoon teas. Few of them succeed in business in England because their habits are not businesslike."

With Miss Forster are exhibiting two Scotswomen who are daughters of professional men in Scotland. They went to America to teach, and have found a more profitable livelihood in business. One of these ladies lamented that so little was done to further the emigration of women of the better class. There is a demand for them in America, she declares, because they are better educated and more reliable than the young women of America.

IS NO EXCUSE FOR HER.

The Untidy Woman Who is a Blot on Her Sex.

There is no excuse for the untidy, disorderly woman—she who leaves odds and ends wherever she goes.

It is a sad fact that a great many husbands are far neater about their belongings than their wives, and many a man has decided that matrimony was a failure because the house resembled a rag box rather than a home.

Every neat man with orderly habits ought to be such a reproach to the opposite kind of woman that she should retire from society until she changed her ways.

If we are neat and methodical in our ways we are lacking in the chief attribute of woman. She is meant to keep the world in order and so make life beautiful, while man gives his whole time to work.

Not all the good qualities in the world can redeem the sloppy woman from being a failure as a woman.

She can be brilliant, witty and good, but she is a poor creature if she is slovenly in appearance and if her home is one jumble of dust and things out of place.

We cannot all have rich and beautiful things around us. Some of us must go clad in cotton and eat from pine boards. But those boards should be scrubbed until they glisten like snow, and the cotton dress should be as fresh as the morning.

And, maiden there is no need of your wearing cheap jewellery that needs repairing, cheap laces that need washing and cheap feathers that won't curl, and you don't have to use in your house spotted tablecloths, dust covered bric-a-brac and broken furniture.

Better an empty room with four bare walls.

ELECTRIFYING AN ELEPHANT

A very curious accident occurred in Mysore, India, recently. A Palace elephant mahout, seated on a huge tusker, happened to pass under the main-line wires conveying current from the power-station. Thinking he would test the truth of anyone being killed if the wire were touched, he was foolish enough to place his hand on the wire. The effect was disastrous. Both mahout and elephant were knocked down instantly, and lay insensible. The elephant, after a short while, got up, and rushed about in a dazed manner, wrecking carriages, posts, etc., in its mad career. After a most exciting chase, the semi-electrocuted elephant was captured by means of two other elephants.