One of the Garrison;

Or, A Mysterious Affair.

CHAPTER I.

I, James Fothergill West, student of law in the University of St. Andrews, have endeavored in the ensuing pages to lay my statement before the public in a concise and business-like fashion. It is not my wish to achieve lierary success; nor have I any desire by the graces of my style, or by the artistic ordering of my incidents, to throw a deeper shadow over the strange passages of which I shall have to speak. My highest ambition is that those who know something of the matter should, after reading my account, be able to conscientiously indorse it without finding a single paragraph in which I have either added to or detracted from the truth. Should I attain this result, I shall rest amply satisfied with the outcome of my first, and probably my last, venture in literature.

It was my intention to write out the sequence of events in due order, depending upon trustworthy hearsay when I was describing that which was beyond my own personal knowledge. I have now, however, through the kind co-operation of friends, hit upon a plan which promises to be less onerous to me and more satisfactory to the reader. This is nothing less, than to make use of the various manuscripts which I have by me bearing upon the subject, and to add to them first-hand evidence contributed by those who had the best oportunities of knowing Major-General J. B. Heatherstone. In pursuance of this design I shall lay before the public the testimony of Israel Stakes, formerly coachman at Cloomber Hall, and of John Easterling, F.R.C.P. Edin., now practicing at Stranraer, in Wigtownshire. To these I shall add a verbatim account extracted from the journal of the late John Berthier Heatherstone, of the events which occurred in the Thul Valley in the autumn of '41, toward the end of the first Afghan war, with a description of the skirmish in the Terda defile, and of the death of the man Gholab Shah. To myself I reserve the duty of filling up the gaps and chinks which may be left in the narrative. By this arrangement I have sunk from the position of an author to that of a compiler, but on the other hand my work has ceased to be a story and has expanded into a series of affidavits.

My father, John Hunter West, was a well-known Oriental and Sanscrit scholar, and his name is still of weight with those who are interested in such matters. He it was who first after Sir William Jones called attention to the great value of early Persian literature, and his translations from both Hafiz and from Feridedin Atar have earned the warmest commendations from the Baron Von Hammer-Purgstall, of Vienna, and other distinguished Continental critics. In the issue of the Orientalishches Scienz-blatt for January, 1861, he is described as "Der beruhmte und sehr gelehrnte Hunter West von Edinburgh"—a passage which I well remember that he cut out and stowed away, with a pardonable vanity, among the most revered family archives.

He had been brought up to be a solicitor, or Writer to the Signet, as it is termed in Scotland, but his learned hobby absorbed so much of his time that he had little to devote to the pursuit of his profession. When his clients were seeking him at his chambers in George street he was buried in the recesses of the Advocates' Library, or poring over some moldy manuscript at the Philosophical Institution, with his brain more exercised over the code which Menu propounded six hundred years before the birth of Christ than over the knotty problems of Scottish law in the nineteenth century. Hence it can hardly be wondered at that as his learning accumulated his practice dissolved, until at the very moment when he had attained the zenith of his celebrity he had also reached the nadir of his fortunes. There being no chair of Sanscrit in any of his native universities, and no demand anywhere for the only mental wares which he had to dispose of, we should have been forced to retire into genteel poverty, consoling ourselves with the aphorisms and precepts of Firdousi, Omar Chiam, and other of his Eastern favorites, had it not been for the unexpected kindness and liberality of his half-brother, William Farintosh, the Laird of Branksome, in Wigtownshire.

This William Farintosh was the proprietor of a landed estate the acreage of which bore, unfortunately, a most disproportional relation to its value, for it formed the bleakest and most barren tract of land in the whole of a bleak and barren shire. As a bachelor, however, his expenses had been small, and he had contrived from the rents of his scattered cottages, and the sale of the Galloway nags, which he bred upon the moors, not only to live as a laird should, but to put by a considerable sum in the bank. We had heard little from our kinsman during the days of our comparative prosperity; but just as we were at our wits' end, there came a letter like a ministering angel, giving us assurance of sympathy and succor. In it the Laird of Branksome told us that one of his lungs had been growing weaker for some time, and that Dr. Easterling, of Stranraer, had strongly advised him to spend the few years which were left to him in some more genial climate. He had determined, therefore, to set out for the South of Italy, and he begged that we should take up our residence at Branksome in his absence, and that my father should act as his land steward and agent at a salary which placed us above all fear of want. Our mother had been dead for some years, so that there were only myself, my father, and my sister Esther to consult; and it may readily be imagined that it did not take us long to decide upon the acceptance of the laird's generous offer. My father started for Wigtown that very night, while Esther and I followed a few days afterward, bearing with us two potato-sacks full of learned books, and such other of our household effects as were worth the trouble and expense of transport.

CHAPTER II.

Branksome might have appeared a poor dwelling-place when compared to the house of an English squire; but to us, after our long residence in stuffy apartments, it was of regal magnificence. The building was broad-spread and low, with red-tiled roof, diamond-paned windows, and a profusion of dining-rooms with smoke-blackened ceilings and oaken wainscots. In front was a small lawn, girt round with a thin fringe of haggard and ill-grown beeches, all gnarled and withered from the blighting effects of the sea spray. Behind lay the scattered hamlet of Branksome-Bere—a dozen cottages at most—inhabited by rude fisher-folk who looked upon the laird as their natural protector. To the west was the broad yellow beach and the Irish sea; while in all other directions the desolate moors, grayish green in the foreground and purple in the distance, stretched away in long low curves to the horizon.

Very bleak and lonely it was upon this Wigtown coast. A man might walk many a weary mile and never see a living thing except the white heavy-flapping kittiwakes, which screamed and cried to each other with their shrill sad voices. Very lonely and very bleak! Once out of sight of Branksome and there was no sign of the works of man save only where the high white tower of Cloomber Hall shot up, like the headstone of some giant grave, from amid the firs and larches which girt it round. This great house, a mile or more from our dwelling, had been built by a wealthy Glasgow merchant of strange tastes and lonely habits; but at the time of our arrival it had been untenanted for many years, and stood with weather-blotched walls and vacant staring windows looking blankly out over the hillside. Empty and mildewed, it served only as a landmark to the fishermen, for they had found by experience that by keeping the laird's chimney and the white tower of Cloomber in a line they could steer their way through the ugly reef which raises its jagged back, like that of some sleeping monster, above the troubled waters of the wind-swept bay.

To this wild spot it was that fate had brought my father, my sister, and myself. For us its loneliness had no terrors. After the hubbub and bustle of a great city, and the weary task of upholding appearances upon a slender income, there was a grand soul-soothing serenity in the long sky-line and the eager air. Here at least there was no neighbor to pry and chatter. The laird had left his phaeton and two ponies behind him, with the aid of which my father and I would go the round of the estate doing such light duties as fall to an agent; while our gentle Esther looked to our household needs, and brightened the dark old building. Such was our simple uneventful existence until the summer night when an unlooked-for incident occurred which proved to be the herald of those strange doings which I have taken up my pen to describe.

It had been my habit to pull out of an evening in the laird's skiff and to catch a few whiting which might serve for our supper. On this well-rembered occasion my sister came with me, sitting with her book in the stern-sheets of the boat, while I hung my lines over the bows. The sun had sunk down behind the rugged Irish coast, but a long bank of flushed clouds still marked the spot, and cast a glory upon the waters. The whole broad ocean was seamed and scarred with crimson streaks. I had risen in the boat, and was gazing round in delight at the broad panorama of shore and sea and sky, when my sister plucked at my sleeve with a little sharp cry of surprise.

"See, John," she cried; "there is a light in Cloomber Tower!"

I turned my head and stared back at the tall white turret which peeped out above the belt of trees. As I gazed I distinctly saw at one of the windows the glint of a light, which suddenly vanished, and then shone out once more from another higher up. There it flickered for some time, and finally flashed past two successive windows underneath before the trees obscured our view of it. It was clear that some one bearing a lamp or candle had climbed up the tower stairs and had then returned into the body of the house.

"Who in the world can it be!" I exclaimed, speaking rather to myself than to Esther, for I could see by the surprise upon her face that she had no solution to offer. "Maybe some of the folk from Branksome-Bere have wanted to look over the place."

My sister shook her head. "There is not one of them would dare to set foot within the avenue gates," she said. "Besides, John, the keys are kept by the house-agent at Wigtown. Were they ever so curious, none of our people could find their way in."

(To be continued.)

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BLACK, GREEN and MIXED.

REAL MEANING OF POTLUCK.

One Plunge of the Ladle and Take What You Get.

The real origin of the word "potluck" is unknown to most of the people who use it. In Limoges, France, however, one runs into potluck itself. In a certain corner of that quaint city of jostling roofs there is still segregated, much as if in a ghetto, a Saracen population, probably a remnant of the wave of Saracens that swept over Europe hundreds of years ago. Here they live in their crooked, narrow streets, following old customs handed down from generation to generation. There are many butcher shops in the quarter, and outside of each steams a great pot of soup over a glowing brazier. In each pot stands a ladle as ancient as the pot.

When a customer comes with a penny, in goes the ladle and comes up full of savory broth and chunks of meat, odds and ends, that the butcher has had left over. And what comes up the customer has to take. One can imagine how anxiously the hungry urchin or the mother of seven must eye the inexorable ladle and how a pretty girl might get another draw from the butcher's boy.

At any rate "to take potluck" means to take what you get and say nothing whether the pot is in Limoges or in the flat of the man who eagerly invites a friend of his youth to dinner.

When a man gets engaged to a girl all the other fair maids of his acquaintance begin to talk about his poor taste.

"Look here, now, Harold," said a father to his little son, who was naughty, "if you don't say your prayers you won't go to heaven." "I don't want to go to heaven," sobbed the boy; "I want to go with you and mother."

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On the Farm

A Useful Gate.

In feeding the little pigs with older hogs, it is necessary to have some sort of a separate feeding pen for the pigs.

The older ones can be kept out and the pigs prevented from entering the pen while the troughs are being filled by means of a swinging gate.

This gate swings outward ouly. It is held up while the little pigs enter the feeding pen, and being light, they can push it forward and go out at will.

It may be used to advantage in fattening hogs that run with the stock hogs. After putting out the feed the feeder raises the gate and lets in those to fatten, then lets it fall; all others are kept out, yet those in the pen may go out when through eating.

This style of gate is also convenient for the lamb lot where one uses a creep. The gate should be just large enough to admit a good-sized lamb.

Dairy Notes.

A scientific education combined with common sense and a natural love for the cow is the foundation of success in dairying and getting together a choice herd of cattle.

There is no better system of feeding for milk than to give each cow a ration according to the work she is doing and properly to nourish her body.

Opposition to a few reasonable reforms by a few crooked dairymen not only brings the dairy industry into bad repute, but turns people from the use of dairy products.

In connection with the feeding problem, do not underestimate the necessity of inducing the cow to drink large quantities of water.

A new effect in spring millinery—the girl with the Bulgarian turban hat and sailor collar.

Balky Horses.

Whenever you see a balky horse you may be sure that the fault lies with the man who trained him, or who over-loaded him, or beat him, or in some way robbed him of part of his senses. No horse balks from pure meanness, much as we may sometimes think so, and we have never yet discovered anything that will cure a balky animal. Occasionally a fine tempered beast may be coaxed and petted until his fear or anger is allayed and be taught to do his share of the work, but as a rule the horse that balks in the harness should never be used except under the saddle.

Successful Farming.

There is one thing about farming, which is not true of some other industries, and that is that each farmer is really benefited by the success of his neighbors. In a progressive neighborhood, where good stock is kept and where farming is generally profitable, roads and schools are better, the price of farm land is higher; and, owing to the fact that a great quantity of farm products is offered for sale, markets are better; so boost your neighbors, and by so doing help yourself.

The Compost Heap.

A few old fence rails, built together in a square in the garden, will hold all the rubbish that is fit for decomposing. Add to it the weeds from the garden and manure and all ashes from the house. Pour the wash water over it and allow it to pack thoroughly. It will be of value for next spring while it concentrates now all the waste refuse and prevents the hens from broadcasting it again.

Farm Notes.

One way to supply forage is to save all forage from the corn field by cutting the tops of the stalks off just above the ears. Of course this should be done before the fodder becomes quite dry.

Oat straw is a pretty good substitute and makes very good roughage when fed with plenty of grain.

A feeder may have his bin full of grain, but unless he has sufficient roughage to balance up the ration he will be shy on his profit at the end of the season.

The feed cutter should be in use on every farm, the corn shredder is an excellent thing, but why not put all of the corn crop in a silo as the best probable position to get every pound of value out of it.

It takes a little more than two per cent. of an animal's weight to keep it up to normal condition without making any gains and if exposure to cold and rain and storms is to be counted against it the feeder can easily see where his profit goes glimmering.

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HIS MAJESTY INVITED OUT

PEN PICTURE OF AN EVENING IN OUR RULER'S LIFE.

How He Is Guarded From the Time He Leaves the Palace Until He Returns.

His Majesty dines out to-night. Not at a great dinner-party, but at the house of an old friend. It is to be quite a quiet, informal entertainment, as is evident from the fact that the King is not wearing Court dress, but an ordinary dress-suit and white waistcoat.

It is 7.30, and his Majesty is going through his short toilet in his dressing-room. The chief valet unlocks a very heavy, solid old gold jewel-case, selects from a treble row of sleeve-links a pair of old purple enamels, gold framed. These are perhaps the most valuable links his Majesty possesses. They were a present from the Tsar. The enamels are many hundreds of years old, of the rarest quality, and are worth several thousand pounds.

Instructing the Guardian.

The valet selects these links because he knows that the Russian Ambassador is to be one of the King's fellow-guests to-night, and his Majesty, when putting on his shirt, catches sight of the links, and nods his approval of his valet's selection.

At 7.45 the King leaves his dressing-room and passes into the King's Room, where the equerry who is to be in attendance on his Majesty for the evening is engaged in conversation with a slightly-built man of medium height, dressed in a dark-grey suit. His eyes are keen, and the mouth firm and well-cut. He is listening attentively to the equerry, and occasionally jots down a few notes in a pocket-book. When the King enters the room the man in a grey suit salutes, and retires to the ante-room. He is the chief detective at Buckingham Palace, and is engaged in completing his arrangements for the evening.

In a few moments the equerry follows him to the ante-room, and informs the detective that the King will leave the Palace at a quarter-past eight, and tells him of the route he will take going to and coming from the house where he is dining.

Our Sovereign's Safeguards.

"Thank you, sir!" says the detective, shutting up his notebook, and then rushes off. He is at the telephone in another couple of minutes, and ere the King leaves the Palace every policeman on duty in the streets through which the King will drive that night has been notified to expect his Majesty; and a minute after the King leaves the Palace the chief detective himself will follow the Royal carriage on a bicycle, and will enter the house of the King's host a minute or so after his Majesty, and will not leave it until the departure of the Royal guest.

Whilst these arrangements for safeguarding the sovereign are being unobtrusively carried out, let us return to the King's Room, where his Majesty is being helped on with his overcoat by the equerry. A servant enters the room with a pile of letters and telegrams, which are placed on the King's desk. The equerry runs through the telegrams, and takes up two of the latter, the envelopes of which are marked with an "R." This signifies that they are from members of the Royal Family, and the King opens them. One is from the Queen, who left London that morning for Sandringham, and announces her safe arrival. The other is from the Duchess of Fife on a private family matter.

Guests of Distinction.

Whilst the King is reading these messages, the equerry has pressed the electric button on the King's desk, which summons a clerk on night-duty in the private secretary's department. The equerry hands him the letters and telegrams, and they will be sorted, opened, and got ready for the King's inspection on his return to the Palace, and, if necessary, any that require immediate attention will then be answered; otherwise the replies will go into the morning's correspondence.

Twenty minutes later the King is seated at a round dinner-table, beautifully decorated with crimson roses and white carnations. The room is filled with an exquisitely soft light, thrown from a myriad of little rose-shaded electric lamps with which the beautifully-painted ceiling is studded.

The butler of the King's host stands behind his Majesty's chair, and it is he who attends on the King during the meal. To the right of the King sits his host, and on his Majesty's left the Russian Ambassador. The other guests, who number but six, include a well-known figure in the political world, a distinguished French artist, a peer who is a famous shot, and two members of the Royal Household.

The conversation is bright, amusing, and very "anecdotal." The King tells a kindly but amusing story of a famous diplomatist which makes the Russian Ambassador laugh very heartily, and his Excellency replies with an equally witty anecdote concerning his early days in the diplomatic service. The French artist later on greatly amuses the company by some lightning sketches which he makes on the back of the menu-cards, at the King's request—good-natured, but exceedingly clever caricatures of present-day celebrities—and the King honors the artist by asking him to present him with one of them.

Direct From the Premier.

After coffee and a cigarette, the King rises. A servant at the same moment comes up to the King's host, who at once approaches his Majesty and informs his Royal guest that a messenger has arrived from Buckingham Palace with a letter for his Majesty, and he conducts the King and the equerry in attendance to his own library, where a Palace servant is standing with a long white envelope, which he hands to the equerry, who opens it.

The white sheet of paper is from the Prime Minister, seeking for an interview with the King the following morning. His Majesty sits down to write a short note to Lord Knollys at Buckingham Palace to inform the Premier at once that the interview will be granted the following morning at eleven. The servant from Buckingham Palace then departs.

The Silent Rider.

A few minutes later the King is playing a game of bridge with his host and two of the other guests. After the rubber his Majesty inspects his host's collection of stamps, in which he is much interested, and gives his host quite a useful and interesting little bit of information about a very rare class of Spanish stamp.

At 11.15 the King takes his departure, and, as the Royal carriage bowls rapidly along Berkeley Square, there comes stealing swiftly after it the grey-clad figure of a man on a bicycle, who has appeared suddenly apparently from nowhere. He passes with the Royal carriage through the gates of Buckingham Palace unchallenged, and speeds away to the back entrance of the Palace. He is the chief detective, and when he gets his report from the night detective on duty his day's work will be over.—London Answers.

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