One of the Garrison;

Or, A Mysterious Affair.

CHAPTER II.—(Cont'd)

When I reflected upon the massive door and ponderous shutters which guarded the lower story of Cloomber I could not but admit the force of my sister's objection. The untimely visitor must either have used considerable violence in order to force his way in, or he must have obtained possession of the keys. Piqued by the little mystery, I pulled for the beach, with the determination to see for yourself who the intruder might be, and what were his intentions. Leaving my sister at Branksome, and summoning Seth Jamieson, an old man-o-war's-man, and one of the stoutest of the fishermen, I set off across the moor with him through the gathering darkness.

"It hasna got a guid name after dark, yon hoose," remarked my companion, slackening his pace perceptibly as I explained to him the nature of our errand. "It's no for naething that him wha owns it wunna gang within a Scotch mile o't."

"Well, Seth, there is some one who has no fears about going into it," said I, pointing to the great white building which flickered up in front of us through the gloom. The light which I had observed from the sea was moving backward and forward past the lower floor windows, the shutters of which had been removed. I could now see that a second fainter light followed a few paces behind the other. Evidently two individuals, the one with a lamp and the other with a candle or rushlight, were making a careful examination of the building.

"Let ilka man blaw his ain parritch," said Seth Jamieson doggedly, coming to a dead stop. "What is it tae us if a wraith or a bogle chooses tae tak' a fancy tae Cloomber? It's no canny tae meddle wi' such things."

"Why, man," I cried, "you don't suppose a wraith came here in a gig! What are those lights away yonder by the avenue gates?"

"The lamps o' a gig, sure enough!" exclaimed my companion in a less lugubrious voice. "Let's steer for it, Master West, and speer where she hails frae."

By this time night had closed in save for a single long, narrow slit in the westward. Stumbling across the moor together, we made our way into the Wigtown Road, at the point where the high stone pillars mark the entrance to the Cloomber avenue. A tall dog-cart stood in front of the gateway, the horse browsing upon the thin border of grass which skirted the road.

"It's a' richt!" said Jamieson, taking a close look at the deserted vehicle. "I ken it weel. It belongs tae Maister McNeil, the factor body frae Wigtown—him who keeps the keys."

"Then we may as well have speech with him now that we are here," I answered. "They are coming down, if I am not mistaken." As I spoke we heard the slam of the heavy door, and within a few minutes two figures, the one tall and angular, the other short and thick, came toward us through the darkness. They were talking so earnestly that they did not observe us until they had passed through the avenue gate.

"Good evening, Mr. McNeil," said I, steping forward and addressing the Wigtown factor, with whom I had some slight acquaintance. The smaller of the two turned his face toward me as I spoke, and showed me that I was not mistaken in his identity, but his taller companion sprang back and showed every sign of violent agitation.

"What is this, McNeil?" I heard him say, in a gasping, choking voice. "Is this your promise? What is the meaning of it?"

"Don't be alarmed, general! Don't be alarmed!" said the little fat factor in a soothing fashion, as one might speak to a frightened child. "This is young Mr. Fothergill West, of Branksome, though what brings him up here to-night is more than I can understand. However, as you are to be neighbors, I can't do better than take the opportunity to introduce you to each other. Mr. West, this is General Heatherstone, who is about to take a lease of Cloomber Hall."

I held out my hand to the tall man, who took it in a hesitating, half-reluctant fashion. "I came up," I explained, "because I saw your lights in the windows, and thought that something might be wrong. I am very glad I did so, since it has given me the chance of making the general's acquaintance."

Whilst I was talking I was conscious that the new tenant of Cloomber Hall was peering at me very closely through the darkness. As I concluded he stretched out a long tremulous arm and turned the gig-lamp in such a way as to throw a flood of light upon my face.

"Good gracious, McNeil!" he cried in the same frightened voice as before, "the fellow's as brown as chocolate! He's not an Englishman. You're not an Englishman—you, sir?"

"I'm a Scotchman, born and bred," said I, with an inclination to laugh which was only checked by my new acquaintance's obvious terror.

"A Scotchman, eh?" said he with a sigh of relief. "It's all one now-a-days. You must excuse me, Mr.—Mr. West. I'm nervous, infernally nervous. Come along, McNeil; we must be back in Wigtown in less than an hour. Good night, gentlemen, good night!" The two clambered into their places; the factor cracked his whip, and the high dog-cart clattered away through the darkness, casting a brilliant tunnel of yellow light on either side of it, until the rumble of its wheels died away in the distance.

"What do you think of our new neighbor, Jamieson?" I asked after a long silence.

"Deed, Mr. West, he seems, as he says himself, to be vera nervous. Maybe his conscience is oot o' order."

"His liver, more likely," said I. "He looks as if he had tried his constitution a bit. But it's blowing chill, Seth, my lad, and it's time both of us were indoors." I bade my companion good night, and struck across the moors for the cheery rudy light which marked the parlor windows of Branksome.

CHAPTER III.

There was, as may well be imagined, much stir among our small community at the news that the Hall was to be inhabited once more, and considerable speculation as to the new tenants and their objects in choosing this particular part of the country for their residence. It speedily became apparent that, whatever their motives might be, they had definitely determined upon a lengthy stay; for relays of plumbers and of joiners came down from Wigtown, and there was hammering and repairing going on from morning till night. It was surprising how quick the signs of the wind and weather were effaced, until the great square-set house was all as spick-and-span as though it had been erected yesterday. There were abundant signs that money was no consideration to General Heatherstone, and that it was not on the score of retrenchment that he had taken up his abode among us.

"It may be that he is devoted to study," suggested my father, as we discussed the question at the breakfast table. "Perhaps he has chosen this secluded spot to finish some magnum opus upon which he is engaged. If that is the case, I should be happy to let him have the run of my library."

Esther and I laughed at the grandiloquent manner in which he spoke of the two potato-sacks full of books.

"It may be as you say," said I, "but the general did not strike me during our short interview as being a man who was likely to have any very pronounced literary tastes. If I might hazard a guess, I should say that he is here upon medical advice, in the hopes that the complete quiet and the fresh air may restore his shattered nervous system. If you had seen how he glared at me, and the twitching of his fingers, you would have thought it needed some restoring."

"I do wonder whether he has a wife and a family," said my sister. "Poor souls, how lonely they will be! Why, excepting ourselves, there is not a family that they could speak to for seven miles and more."

"General Heatherstone is a very distinguished soldier," remarked my father.

"Why, papa, however came you to know anything about him?"

"Ah, my dears," said my father, smiling at us over his coffee-cup, "you were laughing at my library just now, but you see it may be very useful at times." As he spoke he took a red-covered volume from a shelf and turned over the pages. "This is an Indian army list of three years back," he explained, "and here is the very gentleman we want—'Heatherstone J. B., Commander of the Bath,' my dears, and 'V. C.', think of that, 'V. C.'—'formerly colonel in the Indian infantry, 41st Bengal Foot, but now retired with the rank of major-general.' In this other column is a record of his services—'capture of Ghuznee and defense of Jellalebad, Sobraon, 1848, Indian Mutiny and reduction of Oudh. Five times mentioned in dispatches.' I think, my dears, that we have cause to be proud of our neighbor."

"It doesn't mention there whether he is married or not, I suppose?" asked Esther.

"No," said my father, wagging his white head with a keen appreciation of his own humor. "It doesn't include that under the heading of 'daring actions—though it very well might, my dear, it very well might."

All our doubts, however, upon this head were very soon set at rest, for on the very day that the repairing and the furnishing had been completed I had occasion to ride into Wigtown, and I met upon the way a carriage which was bearing General Heatherstone and his family to their new home. An elderly lady, worn and sickly looking, was by his side, and opposite him sat a young fellow about my own age and a girl who appeared to be a couple of years younger. I raised my hat, and was about to pass them, when the general shouted to his coachman to pull up, and held out his hand to me. I could see now in the daylight that his face, although harsh and stern, was capable of assuming a not unkindly expression.

"How are you, Mr. Fothergill West?" he cried. "I must apologize to you if I was a little brusque the other night—you will excuse an old soldier who has spent the best part of his life in harness. All the same you must confess that you are rather dark-skinned for a Scotchman."

"We have a Spanish strain in our blood," said I, wondering at his recurrence to the topic.

"That would, of course, account for it," he remarked. "My dear," to his wife, "allow me to introduce Mr. Fothergill West to you. This is my son and my daughter. We have come here in search of rest, Mr. West—complete rest."

"And you could not possibly have come to a better place," said I.

"Oh, you think so?" he answered: "I suppose it is very quiet indeed, and very lonely. You might walk through these country lanes at night, I dare say, and never meet a soul, eh?"

"Well, there are not many about after dark," I said.

"And you are not much troubled with vagrants or wandering beggars, eh? Not many tinkers or tramps or rascally gypsies—no vermin of that sort about?"

"I find it rather cold," said Mrs. Heatherstone, drawing her thick sealskin mantle tighter round her figure. "We are detaining Mr. West, too."

"So we are, my dear, so we are. Drive on, coachman. Good day, Mr. West." The carriage rattled away toward the hall, and I trotted thoughtfully onward to the little county metropolis.

(To be continued.)

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On the Farm

Feeding for Milk Production.

There are two factors which largely control the ecenomical production of milk. One is the adaptability of the cow used for this purpose and depends upon her individual breed characteristics. The other is the amount and kind of food eaten. The problem confronting the dairyman is the production of the largest amount of milk and butter at the least expense. In order that this may be realized, both the important factors mentioned must receive careful attention, writes Mr. C. H. Eckles.

In most cases the largest direct expense is for feed. Everyone familiar with the prevailing conditions knows that a large amount of feed is used without producing the results it should. It would be safe to say that the average yearly milk production per cow could be increased by one-half or three-fourths by following better methods of feeding.

Every owner of a cow welcomes the time when the animal can be turned out to pasture. Not only is the labor and expense connected with winter feeding done away with, but each cow is expected to give the best results of the year on grass. In changing from dry feed to grass, it is best to go somewhat slowly, especially with heavy milking cows. The young, immature grass of early spring contains a large amount of water and a small amount of dry matter, and it is almost impossible for a heavy milking cow to eat enough of such feed to supply the necessary amount of nutrients.

Wheat and Rye Pastures

are of the same nature. Another reason for putting cattle on pasture gradually rather than suddenly is the effect on the taste of the milk. When a cow is changed at once from a grain ration to grass a very marked taste is developed in the milk, while if this change in feed is made gradually and not suddenly the change in the taste of the milk is scarcely noticed.

Soon after the cows are on pasture they reach the maximum production of milk for the year. This suggests what the dairyman must do in order that the production of milk may be the largest. It is to imitate these summer conditions as far as possible throughout the remainder of the year. This is what the careful dairyman and skilled feeder does, and the results correspond closely to the success with which these summer conditions are maintained. The summer conditions which bring about the maximum production and which are to be maintained as far as possible throughout the year, are described in the following statement:

First—An abundance of palatable food.

Second—A balanced ration.

Third—Succulent feed.

Fourth—Moderate temperature.

Fifth—Comfortable surroundings.

There is some difference of opinion regarding grain feeding while on pasture from the viewpoint of economy.

There is no question but that a cow will produce more milk if fed grain while on pasture, and if a large yield is of more importance than economy of production, grain should certainly be fed. The cow that gives a small average quantity of milk will produce but little more if fed grain while on pasture. However, with the heavy producing cow the case is quite different and it is necessary that she be fed grain or she will not continue on the high level of production long. The necessity of feeding grain to the high producing cow arises from the fact that she cannot secure a sufficient amount of nutrients from the grass alone, and must have some concentrated feed in the form of grain in order to continue to produce

Large Quantities of Milk.

As long as fresh pasture grasses are abundant, the ordinary cow is about as well provided for as she can be to produce milk economically. Unfortunately, the season of abundant pasturage is sometimes short. In many localities, a dry period, often of several weeks, occurs during the middle or latter part of summer and the pastures become short and insufficient to maintain a full flow of milk. This season is often the critical time of the year for the dairy cow. It is probable that as much loss occurs one year with another by lack of feed at this time as occurs from improper feeding during the winter season. When the season of dry feeding arrives, the farmer expects to feed his stock and is prepared for it. On the other hand, as long as the cattle are on pasture and the field work is pressing, the tendency is to let the cows get along the best way they can.

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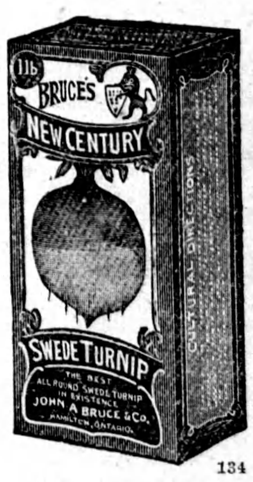

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