One of the Garrison;

Or, A Mysterious Affair.

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd)

As I passed up the High street Mr. McNeil ran out from his office and beckoned to me to stop. "Our new tanants have gone out," he said. "They drove over this morning."

"I met them on the way," I answered. As I looked down at the little factor I could see that his face was flushed and that he bore every appearance of having had an extra glass.

"Give me a real gentleman to do business with," he said, with a burst of laughter. "They understands me and I understands them. 'What shall I fill it up for?' says the general, taking a blank check out o' his pouch and laying it on the table. 'Two hundred,' says I, leaving a bit o' a margin for my own time and trouble."

"I thought that the landlord paid you for that," I remarked.

"Aye, aye, but it's well to have a bit margin. He filled it up and threw it over to me as if it had been an auld postage stamp. That's the way business should be done between honest men—though it wouldna' do if one was inclined to take an advantage. Will ye not come in, Mr. West, and have a taste o' my whiskey?"

"No thank you," said I, "I have business to do."

"Well, well, business is the chief thing. It's well not to drink in the morning, too. For my own part, except a drop before breakfast to give me an appetite, and maybe a glass, or even two, afterwards to promote digestion, I never touch spirits before noon. It may be that I'm over particular, but it's as well to be on the safe side. What d'ye think o' the general, Mr. West?"

"Why I have hardly had an opportunity of judging," I answered.

Mr. McNeil tapped his forehead with his forefinger. "That's what I think o' him," he said, in a confidential whisper. "He's gone, sir, in my estimation. Now what would you consider to be a proof o' madness, Mr. West?"

"Why, offering a blank check to a Wigtown house-agent," said I.

"Ah, you're aye at your jokes. But between oorsels now, if a man asked ye how many miles it was frae a seaport, and whether ships come there from the East, and whether there were tramps on the road, and whether it was against the lease for him to build a high wall round the grounds, what would ye make of it, eh?"

"I should certainly think him eccentric," said I.

"If every man had his due, he would find himsel' in a house with a high wall round the grounds, and that without costing him a farthing," said the agent.

"Where then?" I asked.

"Why, in the Wigtown County Lunatic Asylum," cried the little man, with a bubble of laughter, in the midst of which I rode on my way, leaving him still chuckling over his own facetiousness.

The arrival of the new family at Cloomber Hall had no perceptible effect in relieving the monotony of our secluded district, for instead of entering into such simple pleasures as the country had to offer, or interesting themselves, as we had hoped, in our attempts to improve the lot of our poor crofters and fisher-folk, they seemed to shun all observation, and hardly ever to venture beyond the avenue gates. We soon found, too, that the factor's words as to the inclosing of the grounds were founded upon fact, for gangs of workmen were kept hard at work from early in the morning until late at night in erecting a high wooden fence round the whole estate. When this was finished and topped with spikes Cloomber Park became impregnable to any one but an exceptionally daring climber. It was as if the old soldier had been so imbued with military ideas that, like my Uncle Toby, he could not refrain even in times of peace from standing upon the defensive. Stranger still, he had victualed the house as if for a siege, for Begbie, the chief grocer of Wigtown, told me himself that the general had sent him an order for hundreds of dozens of every imaginable potted meat and vegetable.

It may be imagined that all these incidents were not allowed to pass without comment. Over the whole country-side there was nothing but gossip about the new tenants of Cloomber Hall and the reasons which had led them to come among us. The only hypothesis, however, which the bucolic mind could evolve was that which had already occurred to Mr. McNeil, the factor — namely, that the old general and his family were one and all afflicted with madness, or, as an alternative conclusion, that he had committed some heinous offense and was endeavoring to escape the consequences of his misdeeds. These were both natural suppositions under the circumstances; but neither of them appeared to commend itself as a true explanation of the facts.

It is true that General Heatherstone's behavior on the occasion of our first interview was such as to suggest some suspicion of mental disease; but no man could have been more reasonable or more courteous than he had afterward shown himself to be. Then, again, his wife and children led the same secluded life that he did himself; so that the reason could not be one peculiar to his own health. As to the possibility of his being a fugitive from justice, that theory was even more untenable. Wigtownshire was bleak and lonely, but it was not such an obscure corner of the world that a well-known soldier could hope to conceal himself there; nor would a man who feared publicity set every one's tongue wagging as the general had done. On the whole, I was inclined to believe that the true solution of the enigma lay in his own allusion to the love of quiet, and that they had taken shelter here with an almost morbid craving for solitude and repose. We very soon had an instance of the great lengths to which this desire for isolation would carry them.

My father had come down one morning with the weight of a great determination upon his brow. "You must put on your pink frock today Esther," said he; "and you, John, you must make yourself smart, for I have determined that the three of us shall drive round this afternoon and pay our respects to Mrs. Heatherstone and the general."

"A visit to Cloomber!" cried Esther, clapping her hands.

"I am here," said my father, with dignity, "not only as the laird's agent, but also as his kinsman. In that capacity I am convinced that he would wish me to call upon these newcomers and offer them any politeness which is in our power. At present they must feel lonely and friendless. What says the great Firdousi? 'The choicest ornaments to a man's house are his friends.'"

My sister and I knew by experience that when the old man began to justify his resolution by quotations from the Persian poets there was no chance of shaking it. Sure enough that afternoon saw the phaeton at the door, with my father perched upon the seat, with his second-best coat on and a pair of new driving-gloves.

"Jump in, my dears," he cried, cracking his whip briskly, "we shall show the general that he has no cause to be ashamed of his neighbors."

Alas, pride always goes before a fall! Our well-fed ponies and shining harness were not destined that day to impress the tenants of Cloomber with a sense of our importance. We had reached the avenue gate, and I was about to get out and open it, when our attention was arrested by a very large wooden placard, which was attached to one of the trees in such a manner that no one could possibly pass without seeing it. On the white surface of this board was printed in big black letters the following hospitable inscription:

General and Mrs. Heatherstone
have no wish
to increase
The Circle of Their Acquaintance.

We all sat gazing at this announcement for some moments in silent astonishment. Then Esther and I, tickled by the absurdity of the thing, burst out laughing, but my father pulled the ponies' heads round, and drove home with compressed lips and the cloud of much wrath upon his brow. I have never seen the good man so thoroughly moved, and I am convinced that his anger did not arise from any petty feeling of injured vanity upon his part, but from the thought that a slight had been offered to the Laird of Branksome, whose dignity he represented.

CHAPTER IV.

If I had any personal soreness on account of this family snub, it was a very passing emotion, and one which was soon effaced from my mind. It chanced that on the very next day after the episode I had occasion to pass that way and stopped to have another look at the obnoxious placard. I was standing staring up at it and wondering what could have induced our neighbor to take such an outrageous step, when I became suddenly aware of a sweet girlish face which peeped out at me from between the bars of the gate, and of a white hand which eagerly beckoned me to approach. As I advanced to her I saw that it was the same young lady whom I had seen in the carriage.

"Mr. West," she said, in a quick whisper, glancing from side to side, as she spoke in a nervous, hasty manner, "I wish to apologize to you for the indignity to which you and your family were subjected yesterday. My brother was in the avenue and saw it all, but he is powerless to interfere. I assure you, Mr. West, that if that hateful thing," pointing up at the placard, "has given you any annoyance, it has given my brother and myself far more."

"Why, Miss Heatherstone?" said I, putting the matter off with a laugh. "Britain is a free country, and if a man chooses to warn off visitors from his premises there is no reason why he should not."

"It is nothing less than brutal," she broke out, with a petulant stamp of her foot. "To think that your sister, too, should have such an unprovoked insult offered to her! I am ready to sink with shame at the very thought."

"Pray do not give yourself one moment's uneasiness upon the subject," said I, earnestly, for I was grieved at her evident distress. "I am sure that your father has some reason unknown to us for taking this step."

"God knows he has!" she answered, with ineffable sadness in her voice, "and yet I think it would be more manly to face a danger than to fly from it. However, he knows best, and it is impossible for us to judge. But who is this?" she exclaimed, anxiously peering up the dark avenue. "Oh, it is my brother, Mordaunt. Mordaunt," she said, as the young man approached us, "I have been apologizing to Mr. West for what happened yesterday in your name as well as my own."

"I am very glad to have the opportunity of doing it in person," said he courteously. "I only wish I could see your sister and your father as well as yourself, to tell them how sorry I am. I think you had better run up to the house, little one, for it's getting near tiffin time. No—don't you go, Mr. West. I want to have a word with you."

(To be continued.)

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Lady—"You poor man! What would you have done had it been summer time?"

It makes a man feel good when he is pretty certain he is going to miss a train and doesn't.

Caller—Is your mistress in? Parlormaid (whose mistress is a well-known suffragette)—Yes, she's in for two months again.

Mr. Baggy—If a cullud man was to call yo' a liah, sah, what would yo' do? Mr. Slack—What size cullud man, sah?

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SURPRISED LADY ABERDEEN.

A millionaire whose "mind-reading" once astonished Lady Aberdeen is Warren Y. Soper, vice-president of the Ottawa Electric Company and director of almost a score of others.

In his earlier days Mr. Soper was a telegraph operator, and a good one, so good, in fact, that his expert feats with the Morse code once led him to give an exhibition. Their Excellencies Lord and Lady Aberdeen—for it was during their stay in Canada—were present.

On the stage, blind-folded, sat a gentleman, while Mr. Soper, passing through the audience, was handed a number of articles. Each he scrutinized, but he neither spoke nor made any sign. In every case the "subject" on the stage called out an accurate description of the article.

Then Lady Aberdeen supplied the supreme test. Writing upon her programme a sentence, she handed it to Mr. Soper, requesting that he transmit it mentally to the man on the stage. "I see a sentence of five words" called out the "subject" a few seconds later, and he repeated the exact words. The astonishment was profound.

Warren Y. Soper.

But when the excitement had died down Mr. Soper simply said: "Not telepathy, but telegraphy." And from his pocket he took a small coil of wire, the other end of which, enclosed under a carpet, was in the pocket of the "subject." The messages had simply been transmitted by his expert touch system.

Shiloh 25¢
The family remedy for Coughs and Colds. "Shiloh costs so little and does so much!"

On the Farm

The Value of the Milk Shed.

Every farmer should build a small shed or compartment of some kind in which to stand the cows at milking time. The nearer the barn the better.

It should be well ventilated in the summer and made warm during the winter months by setting up fodder around it or lining it with building paper or roofing material.

The shed may be of any size desired, but ample room for one cow is all that is necessary. Have nails arranged on the wall for hanging milk pails in places of safety while the cows are being led to and from the shed.

If there are any sore teats, caked udders or other ailments to be treated, the milk shed offers a safe place in which to do it quick and any trouble with the animals in hand will cause no disturbance among the other members of the herd. Spraying solution is also easier applied in the shed than anywhere else.

Where one feeds the cows at milking time the milk shed removes the difficulty of feeding the cow that is being milked in sight of the other animals. Some cows will fret and worry away a large portion of their milk if another cow is being fed in sight or hearing of them. Then, feeding the cow in the milk shed makes it unnecessary to use so many feed troughs.

By keeping it well cleaned out and properly drained the milk shed is always ready to lead the cow into and milk under agreeable and sanitary conditions. If it be in the summer time the shed may be darkened and the pesky flies thus got rid of, which means a lot of solid comfort to both the cow and the milker, as well as a greater amount of milk. With proper ventilation such a shed is also much cooler than the sweltering dairy barn where the animals' breath combined with the heat of their bodies contribute liberally toward the maintenance of a high temperature.

Danger from Rotten Apples.

One of the first things to be done is to pick up and burn or bury all refuse fruit in the orchard which is decaying or entirely rotten. These form a veritable hotbed for the numerous orchard pests to hibernate in during the winter months, being also ideal places in which the same pests deposit their eggs for season's hatching, and by shaking off all the apples that are still clinging to the branches of the trees and picking up all that are under them, next year's crop of orchard pests will be considerably cut down.

Do Not Feed Moldy Corn.

Moldy corn will produce blind staggers in horses, and it should never be fed to them. Every year there is considerable trouble with this disease in the West, and in almost every case the cause is moldy corn. If this corn does not produce blind staggers, it will tend to injure the physical condition of the animal. So don't feed it, and be careful about pasturing the horses in stalk fields where there is moldy corn.

Good Poultry Rules.

It is urged that all farmers and poultrymen adhere strictly to the following rules in handling their poultry and eggs:

First—Keep the nests clean; provide one nest for every four hens.

Second—Gather the eggs twice daily.

Third—Keep the eggs in a cool, dry room or cellar.

Fourth—Market the eggs at least twice a week.

Fifth—Sell, kill or confine all male birds as soon as the hatching season is over.

"OBEY" LEFT OUT OF SERVICE

M.P.'s Daughter Who Married Athlete Is a Suffragette.

The recent wedding of Miss Cicely Corbett, the daughter of C. J. Corbett, the late English Member of Parliament for one of the Sussex divisions, had a special interest, as the ceremony was arranged so as to avoid those parts of the Church service which include the wife's promise to "obey."

The bridegroom was C. D. Fisher, who was a three-quarter back in the Oxford Rugby team of 1903. Miss Corbett is a keen suffragist and a number of people interested in the movement were present at the wedding. It was held at Horsted Keynes, where her father lives, and the place was the Congregational Hall of the village.

At one end of the hall was a platform with four chairs upon it, and to this platform advanced the bride, her father, the bridegroom and the best man, while a march was played upon the organ. Then entered the registrar, and the bride and bridegroom made the legal declarations, which were supplemented by the exchange of wedding rings.

The registrar then retired, and after a solo had been sung Hugh Chapman of the Savoy, whose sympathies with the suggestion for the omission of the "obey" sentence from the service are already well known, gave a short and eloquent address. It should be said that by this time the bridegroom had exchanged places with the bride's father, so that the bride and the bridegroom sat together on one side of the platform and the best man and the bride's father on the other.

It takes a girl with a vivid imagination to see the beauty of love in a cottage.

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