# One of the Garrison;

## Or, A Mysterious Affair.

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued).

Miss Heatherstone waved her hand to me with a bright smile, and tripped off up the avenue, while her brother unbolted the gate, and, passing through, closed it again, locking it upon the outside.

"I'll have a stroll down the road with you, if you have no objection. Have a manilla." He drew a couple of cheroots from his pocket and handed one to me. "You'll find they are not bad," he said. "I became a connoisseur in tobacco when I was in India. Are you lit? I hope I am not interfering with your business in coming along with you."

"Not at all," I answered. "I am very glad to have your company."

"I'll tell you a secret," said my companion. "This is the first time that I have been outside the grounds since we have been down here."

"And your sister?"

"She has never been out either," he answered. "I have given the governor the slip to-day, but he wouldn't half like it if he knew. It's a whim of his that we should keep ourselves entirely to ourselves. At least some people would call it a whim; for my own part I have reason to believe that he has solid grounds for all that he does—though perhaps in this matter he may be a little too exacting."

"You must surely find it very lonely," said I. "Couldn't you manage to slip down at times and have a smoke with me? That house over yonder is Branksome."

"Indeed, you are very kind," he answered, with sparkling eyes. "I should dearly like to run over now and again. With the exception of Israel Stakes, our old coachman and gardener, I have not a soul that I can speak to."

"And your sister, she must feel it even more," said I, thinking in my heart that my new acquaintance made rather too much of his own troubles and too little of those of his companion.

"Yes; poor Gabriel feels it, no doubt," he answered carelessly; "but it's a more unnatural thing for a young man of my age to be cooped up in this way than for a woman. Look at me now. I am three-and-twenty next March, and yet I have never been to a university, nor to a school for that matter. I am as complete an ignoramus as any of these clodhoppers. It seems strange to you, no doubt! and yet it is so. Now, don't you think I deserve a better fate?" He stopped as he spoke, and faced round to me, throwing his palms forward in appeal.

As I looked at him, with the sun shining upon his face, he certainly did seem a strange bird to be cooped up in such a cage. Tall and muscular, with a keen dark face, and sharp, finely cut features, he might have stepped out of the canvas of Murillo or Velasquez. There was latent energy and power in his firm-set mouth, his square eyebrows, and the whole pose of his elastic well-knit figure.

"There is the learning to be got from books and the learning to be got from experience," said I, sententiously. "If you have less of your share of the one, perhaps you have more of the other. I cannot believe that you have spent all your life in mere idleness and pleasure."

"Pleasure!" he cried. "Pleasure! Look at this." He pulled off his hat, and I saw that his black hair was all flecked and dashed with streaks of gray. "Do you imagine that this came from pleasure?" he asked, with a bitter laugh.

"You must have had some great shock," I said, astonished at the sight; "some terrible illness in your youth. Or perhaps it arises from a more chronic cause—a constant gnawing anxiety. I have known men as young as you whose hair was as gray."

"Poor devils!" he muttered, "I pity them."

"If you can manage to slip down to Branksome at times," said I, "perhaps you could bring Miss Heatherstone with you. I know that my father and my sister would be delighted to see her, and a change, if only for an hour or two, might do her good."

"It would be rather hard for us both to get away together," he answered. "However, if I see a chance I shall bring her down. It might be managed some afternoon, perhaps, for the old man indulges in a siesta occasionally." We had reached the head of the winding lane which branches off from the highroad and leads up to the laird's house, so my companion pulled up. "I must go back," he said, "or they will miss me. It's very kind of you, West, to take this interest in us. I'm very grateful to you, and so will Gabriel be when she hears of your kind invitation. It's a real heaping of coals of fire after that infernal placard of my father's."

He shook my hand and set off down the road, but he came running after me presently, calling me to stop. "I was just thinking," he said, "that you must consider us a great mystery up there at Cloomber. I dare say you have come to look upon it as a private lunatic asylum, and I can't blame you. If you are interested in the matter, I feel it is unfriendly upon my part not to satisfy your curiosity, but I have promised my father to be silent about it. And indeed if I were to tell you all that I know you might not be very much the wiser after all. I would have you understand this, however,—that my father is as sane as you or I, and that he has very good reasons for living the life which he does. I may add that his wish to remain secluded does not arise from any unworthy or dishonorable motives, but merely from the instinct of self-preservation."

"He is in danger, then!" I ejaculated.

"Yes; he is in constant danger."

"But why does he not apply to the magistrates for protection?" I asked. "If he is afraid of any one, he has only to name him and they will bind him over to keep the peace."

"My dear West," said young Heatherstone, "the danger with which my father is threatened is one that cannot be averted by any human intervention. It is none the less very real, and possibly very imminent."

"You don't mean to assert that it is supernatural," I said, incredulously.

"Well, hardly that, either," he answered with hesitation. "But, there," he continued, "I have said rather more than I should, but I know that you will not abuse my confidence. Good-by." He took to his heels and was soon out of my sight round a curve in the country road.

A danger which was real and imminent, not to be averted by human means and yet hardly supernatural—here was a conundrum indeed! I had come to look upon the inhabitants of the Hall as mere eccentrics, but after what young Mordaunt Heatherstone had just told me, I could no longer doubt that some dark and sinister meaning underlay all their actions. The more I pondered over the problem, the more unanswerable did it appear, and yet I could not get the matter out of my thoughts. The lonely isolated hall, and the strange, impending catastrophe which hung over its inmates, appealed forcibly to my imagination. All that evening, and late into the night, I sat moodily by the fire, pondering over all that I had heard, and revolving in my mind the various incidents which might furnish me with some clue to the mystery.

CHAPTER V.

I trust that my readers will not set me down as an inquisitive busybody when I say that as the days and weeks went by I found my attention and my thoughts more and more attracted to General Heatherstone and the mystery which surrounded him. It was in vain that I endeavored by hard work and a strict attention to the laird's affairs to direct my mind into some more healthy channel. Do what I would, on land or on the water, I would still find myself puzzling over this one question, until it obtained such a hold upon me that I felt that it was useless for me to attempt to apply myself to anything until I had come to some satisfactory solution of it. I could never pass the dark line of five-foot fencing and the great iron gate, with its massive lock, without pausing and racking my brain as to what the secret might be which was shut in by that inscrutable barrier. Yet with all my conjectures and all my observations I could never come to any conclusion which could for a moment be accepted as an explanation of the facts.

My sister had been out for a stroll one night, visiting a sick peasant or performing some other of the numerous acts of charity by which she had made herself beloved by the whole countryside. "John," she said when she returned, "have you not observed Cloomber Hall at night?"

"No," I answered, laying down the book which I was reading. "Not since that memorable evening when the general and Mr. McNeil came over to make their inspection."

"Well, John, will you put your hat on and come a little walk with me?" I could see by her manner that something had agitated or frightened her.

"Why, bless the birl!" cried I, boisterously, "what is the matter? The old Hall has not gone on fire, surely? You look as grave as if all Wigtown were in a blaze."

"Not quite so bad as that," she said, smiling. "But do come out, Jack. I should very much like you to see it."

I had always refrained from saying anything which might alarm my sister, so that she knew nothing of the interest which our neighbor's doings had for me. At her request I took my hat and followed her out into the darkness. She led the way along a little footpath over the moor, which brought us to some rising ground, from which we could look down upon the Hall without our view being obstructed by any of the fir-trees which had been planted round it. "Look at that," said my sister, pausing at the summit of this little eminence.

Cloomber lay beneath us in a blaze of light. In the lower floors the shutters obscured the illumination, but above, from the broad windows of the second story to the thin slits at the summit of the tower, there was not a chink or an aperture which did not send forth a stream of radiance. So dazzling was the effect that for a moment I was persuaded that the house was on fire, but the steadiness and clearness of the light soon freed me from that apprehension. It was clearly the result of many lamps placed systematically all over the building. It added to the strange effect that all these brilliantly illuminated rooms were apparently untenanted, and some of them, as far as we could judge were not even furnished. Through the whole great house there was no sign of movement or of life — nothing but the clear, unwinking flood of yellow light. I was still lost in wonder at the sight when I heard a short, quick sob at my side.

"What is it, Esther, dear?" I asked, looking down at my companion.

"I feel so frightened. Oh, John, John, take me home; I feel so frightened!" She clung to my arm, and pulled at my coat in a perfect frenzy of fear.

"It's all safe, darling," I said, soothingly. "There is nothing to fear. What has upset you so?"

"I am afraid of them, John; I am afraid of the Heatherstones. Why is their house lit up like this every night? I have heard from others that it is always so. And why does the old man run like a frightened hare if any one comes upon him. There is something wrong about it, John, and it frightens me."

I pacified her as well as I could, and led her home with me, where I took care that she should have some hot port negus before going to bed.

(To be continued).


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# On the Farm

### Combating Crop Pests.

Conditions surrounding the agriculturist to-day are very different from those of a generation ago. They are more complex. As a rule, the farmer or horticulturist must be a better posted man in his particular line than formerly. To be this he must confine his attention to a few crops and know them thoroughly, and, as a rule, he should cultivate thoroughly smaller areas rather than large areas badly. Worn soils in comparison with the virgin soils of pioneer days, resulting from unwise farming, is one of the factors necessitating more intensive methods required to-day. Intimate knowledge of any crop to-day includes a degree of familiarity with the more important insect enemies and fungous diseases to which such crops are liable, with the means of cheaply combatting them, writes Ernest Walker.

A great decrease of the numbers and depredations of insect pests and plant diseases is incidental to the disturbing influences of advancing civilization and to the extension of areas devoted to special crops. Insects abandon their wild food plants and develop a fondness for related introduced species in cultivation. The species which previously was considered harmless may thus become a great pest. Under pioneer conditions abundance was easily produced and commonly the market value of ordinary farm products low. Insect damages, unless very extensive indeed, awakened in early days comparatively little concern—plenty anyhow. The grower expected it, and so long as he expected it, that even under the changed conditions of to-day he frequently continues to expect it as an inevitable and unavoidable part of his labor. But as far as many pests are concerned there is

### No Need of Expecting It.

That a large part of the damage done by insects and fungi can be prevented at a comparatively small cost has been settled, and in most sections of the country intelligent growers consider warfare on crop pests as much a part of production as tillage or the preparation of the land for crops.

The term spraying in its restricted sense means the application of poisonous or fungicidal liquids or powders to plants in the form of a mist or cloud-like spray for the purpose of preventing attack by injurious organisms or to destroy those already present. In a broader sense, however, the term may well be understood to include various other phases of warfare upon crop pests, such as destroying sources of infection, crop remnants and other breeding places; maintenance of the vigor of crops by thorough cultivation; the use of manures and good care generally, since, as it is well known, thrifty plants not only suffer less when attacked, but are less liable to diseases and insect pests than those weakened by neglect. Wild plants frequently harbor the fungi or insects which trouble the crops being cultivated. The good grower seeks out and destroys such as exist in dangerous promimity to his crops. Rotation of crops is a means of starving out certain pests and is of great value in the case of short-lived crops. Orchards being perennial, however, offer special opportunity for the increase and destructiveness of insect pests and plant diseases unless careful attention is given to the several means of holding them in check. Spraying alone, when properly done, gives good results, but for the best success the term should always be associated in the mind of the grower with the several practices above mentioned.

### Another General Suggestion

is the desirablility of co-operation among the growers of a given locality in fighting their common enemies. The spores of fungi readily fly through the air and insect pests readily fly from place to place as a rule. So while one grower is waging commendable warfare upon crop pests and benefiting the neighborhood in various ways as well as in this, his less progressive or careless neighbor who adheres to the old ideas and refuses to spray may be maintaining a breeding place for the pests, which not only injure him, but his good neighbor to some extent in spite of his industry.

Among those who have not fallen into line on the spray question there is still frequently met with a fear of poisons applied to fruits or other crops. Without going into detail on this matter which has long since been threshed over and settled, I will only say such fears are groundless when the ordinary spraying directions are followed, both as to humans eating the fruit or cattle eating grass under sprayed trees. In the use of vessels containing poisons, and in handling the poisons themselves, however, great care should be used. These should be kept out of the reach of children and marked or labeled distinctly. Vessels in which the arsenites have been mixed should be used for no other purpose.

The main thing when the need arises is to spray. Know the life and habits of the insect or fungus and apply the remedy. Be in advance. Be prompt, persistent, thorough. Some diseases injure the foliage of fruiting plants, and as in the case of apple scab, by the injury done the foliage, and perhaps its premature shedding, reduce the next year's crop. In the case of such plants we should spray even when there is no fruit on hand to be protected. Timeliness is half the battle.

### Those Bills.

"Yes, indeed, it's astonishing how many people call to see me when I'm not at home," remarked Mrs. Trifle

"It's always that way on the first of the month," replied the lady from next door with a very knowing smile.


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