One of the Garrison;

Or, A Mysterious Affair.

CHAPTER VI.—(Cont'd)

"There would be nothing gained by your knowing. Indeed, you would hardly understand it if I told you. I must bid you good day now, for I have stayed with you too long. Remember, I count upon you as one of the Cloomber garrison now."

"One other thing, sir," I said, hurriedly, for he was turning away; "I hope that you will not be angry with your daughter for anything which I have told you. It was for my sake that she kept it all secret from you."

"All right," he said, with his cold, inscrutable smile. "I am not such an orge in the bosom of my family as you seem to think. As to this marriage question, I should advise you as a friend to let it drop altogether, but if that is impossible I must insist that it stand over completely for the present. It is impossible to say what unexpected turn of events may take. Good-bye!" He plunged into the wood and was quickly out of sight among the dense plantation.

Thus ended this extraordinary interview, in which this strange man had begun by pointing a loaded pistol at my breast and had ended by partially acknowledging the possibility of my becoming his future son-in-law. I hardly knew whether to be cast down or elated over it. On the one hand he was likely, by keeping a closer watch over his daughter, to prevent us from communicating as freely as we had done hitherto. Against this there was the advantage of having obtained an implied consent to the renewal of my suit at some future date. On the whole, I came to the conclusion as I walked throughtfully home that I had improved my position by the incident.

But this danger—this shadowy, unspeakable danger—which appeared to rise up at every turn, and to hang day and night over the towers of Cloomber! Rack my brain as I would I could not conjure up any solution to the problem which was not puerile and inadequate. One fact struck me as being significant. Both the father and the son had assured me, independently of each other, that if I were told what the peril was, I would hardly realize its significance. How strange and bizarre must the fear be which can scarce be expressed in intelligible language. I held up my hand in the darkness before I turned to sleep that night, and I swore that no power of man or devil should ever weaken my love for the woman whose pure heart I had had the good fortune to win.

CHAPTER VII.

In making this statement I have purposely couched it in bald and simple language, for fear I should be accused of coloring my narrative for the sake of effect. If, however, I have told my story with any approach to realism, the reader will understand me when I say that by this time the succession of dramatic incidents which had occurred had arrested my attention and excited my imagination to the exclusion of all minor topics. How could I plod through the dull routine of an agent's work, or interest myself in the thatch of this tenant's bothy or the sails of that one's boat, when my mind was taken up by the chain of events which I have described, and was still busy seeking an explanation for them? Go where I would over the countryside I could see the square white tower shooting out from among the trees, and beneath that tower this ill-fated family were watching and waiting, waiting and wishing—and for what? That was still the question which stood like an impassable barrier at the end of every train of thought. Regarded merely as an abstract problem, this mystery of the Heatherstone family had a lurid fascination about it, but when the woman whom I loved a thousandfold better than I did myself proved to be so deeply interested in the solution, I felt that it was impossible to turn my thoughts to anything else until it had been finally cleared up.

My good father had received a letter from the laird, dated from Naples, which told us that he had derived much benefit from the change, and that he had no intention of returning to Scotland for some time. This was satisfactory to all of us, for my father had found Branksome such an excellent place for study that it would have been a sore trial to him to return to the noise and tumult of a city. As to my dear sister and myself, there were, as I have shown, stronger reasons still to make us love the Wigtownshire moors.

In spite of my interview with the general—or perhaps I might say on account of it—I took occasion at least twice a day to walk toward Cloomber and satisfy myself that all was well there. He had begun by resenting my intrusion, but he had ended by taking me into a sort of half confidence, and even by asking my assistance, so I felt that I stood upon a different footing with him than I had done formerly, and that he was less likely to be annoyed by my presence. Indeed, I met him pacing around the inclosure a few days afterward, and his manner toward me was civil, though he made no allusion to our former conversation. He appeared to be still in an extreme state of nervousness, starting from time to time, and gazing furtively about him. I hoped that his daughter was right in naming the 5th of October as the turning-point of his complaint, for it was evident to me, as I looked at his gleaming eyes and quivering hands, that a man could not live long in such a state of nervous tension.

I found on examination that he had had the loose rails securely fastened so as to block up our former trysting-place, and though I prowled round the whole long line of fencing, I was unable to find any other place where an entrance could be effected. Here and there between chinks of the barrier I could catch glimpses of the Hall, and once I saw a rough-looking, middle-aged man standing at a window at the lower floor, whom I supposed to be Israel Stakes, the coachman. There was no sign, however, of Gabriel or of Mordaunt, and their absence alarmed me. I was convinced that, unless they were under some restraint, they would have managed to communicate with my sister or myself. My fears became more and more acute as day followed day without our seeing or hearing anything of them.

One morning—it was the second day of October—I was walking toward the hall, hoping that I might be fortunate enough to learn some news of my darling, when I observed a man perched upon a stone at the side of the road. As I came nearer to him I could see that he was a stranger, and from his dusty clothes and dilapidated appearance he seemed to have come from a distance. He had a great hunch of bread on his knee and a clasp knife in his hand, but he had apparently just finished his breakfast, for he brushed the crumbs off his lap and rose to his feet when he perceived me. Noticing the great height of the fellow, and that he still held his weapon, I kept well to the other side of the road, for I knew that destitution makes men desperate and that the chain that glittered on my waistcoat might be too great a temptation to him upon this lonely highway. I was confirmed in my fears when I saw him step out into the center of the road and bar my progress.

"Well, my lad," I said, affecting an ease which I by no means felt, "what can I do for you this morning?" The fellow's face was the color of mahogany with exposure to the weather, and he had a deep scar from the corner of his mouth to his ear, which by no means improved his appearance. His hair was grizzled, but his figure was stalwart, and his fur cap was cocked on one side so as to give him a rakish, semi-military appearance. Altogether, he gave me the impression of being one of the most dangerous types of tramp that I had ever fallen in with.

Instead of replying to my question he eyed me for some time in silence with sullen, yellow-shot eyes, and then closed his knife with a loud snick. "You're not a beak," he said; "too young for that, I guess. They had me in chokey at Paisley and they had me in chokey at Wigtown, but by the living thunder if another of them lays a hand on me I'll make him remember Corporal Rufus Smith! It's a darned fine country this, where they won't give a man work, and then lay him by the heels for having no visible means of subsistence."

"I am sorry to see an old soldier so reduced," said I. "What corps did you serve in?"

"H Battery, Royal Horse Artillery. Bad cess to the service and every one in it! Here I am nigh sixty years of age, with a beggarly pension of thirty-eight pound ten—not enough to keep me in beer and baccy."

"I should have thought thirty-eight pound ten a year would have been a nice help to you in your old age," I remarked.

"Would you, though?" he answered with a sneer, pushing his weather-beaten face forward until it was within a foot of my own. "How much d'ye think that slash with a tulwar is worth? And my foot with all the bones rattling about like a bagful of dice? What's that worth, eh? And a liver like a sponge, and ague whenever the wind comes round to the east—what's the market value of that? Would you take the lot for a dirty forty pound a year—would you now?"

"We are poor folk in this part of the country," I answered. "You would pass for a rich man down here."

"They are simple folk and they have simple tastes," said he, drawing a black pipe from his pocket and stuffing it with tobacco. "I know what good living is, and while I have a shilling in my pocket I like to spend it as a shilling should be spent. I've fought for my country and my country has done darned little for me. I'll go to the Rooshians, so help me! I could show them how to cross the Himalayas so that it would puzzle either Afghans or British to stop 'em. What's that secret worth in St. Petersburg, I wonder!"

"I'm ashamed to hear an old soldier speak so, even in jest," said I sternly.

"Jest, indeed!" he cried, with a great oath. "I'd have done it years ago, if the Rooshians had been game to take it up. Skobeloff was the best of the bunch, but he's been snuffed out. However, that's neither here nor there. What I want to ask you is whether you've ever heard anything in this quarter of a man called Heatherstone, the same who used to be colonel of the 41st Bengalees? They told me at Wigtown that he lived somewhere down this way."

"He lives in that house over there," said I, pointing to Cloomber Tower. "You'll find the avenue gate a little way down the road, but the general isn't over fond of visitors."

The last part of the speech was lost upon Corporal Rufus Smith; for the instant that I pointed out the gate he set off hopping down the road. His mode of progression was the most singular which I have ever seen, for he would only put his right foot to the ground once in every half-dozen strides, while he worked so hard and attained such a momentum with the other limb that he got over the ground at an astonishing speed. I was so surprised that I stood in the roadway gazing after his hulking figure until the thought suddenly struck me that some serious result might come from a meeting between a man of such blunt speech and the choleric hot-headed general. I therefore followed him as he hopped along like some great clumsy bird, and overtook him at the avenue gate, where he stood grasping the ironwork and peering through at the dark carriage-drive beyond.

"He's a sly old fox," he said, looking round at me and nodding his head in the direction of the Hall. "He's a deep old dog. And that's his bungalow, is it, among the trees?"

"That is his house," I answered; "but I should advise you to keep a more civil tongue in your head if you intend to speak with the general. He is not a man to stand any nonsense."

"Right you are. He was always a hard nut to crack. But isn't this him coming down the avenue?"

I looked through the gate and saw that it was indeed the general, who having either seen us or been attracted by our voices, was hurrying down toward us. As he advanced he would stop from time to time and peer at us through the dark shadow thrown by the trees, as if he were irresolute whether to come on or no.

"He's reconnoitering!" whispered my companion with a hoarse chuckle. "He's afraid—and I know what he's afraid of. He won't be caught in a trap if he can help it, the old un!" Then suddenly standing on his tiptoes and waving his hand through the bars of the gate, he shouted at the top of his voice, "Come on, my gallant commandant! Come on! The coast's clear, and no enemy in sight."

This familiar address had the effect of reassuring the general, for he came right for us, though I could tell by his heightened color that his temper was at boiling point. "What, you here, Mr. West?" he said, as his eye fell upon me. "What is it you want, and why have you brought this fellow with you?"

"I have not brought him with me, sir," I answered, feeling rather disgusted at being made responsible for the presence of the disreputable-looking vagabond beside me. "I found him on the road here, and he desired to be directed to you, so I showed him the way. I know nothing of him myself."

"What do you want with me, then?" the general asked sternly, turning to my companion.

"If you please, sir," said the ex-corporal, speaking in a whining voice, and touching his moleskin cap with a humility which contrasted strangely with the previous rough independence of his bearing, "I'm an old gunner in the queen's service, sir, and knowing your name by hearing it in India I thought that maybe you would take me as your groom or gardener, or give me any other place as happened to be vacant."

"I am sorry that I cannot do anything for you, my man," the old soldier answered, impassively.

"Then you'll give me a little just to help me on my way, sir," said the cringing mendicant. "You won't see an old comrade go to the bad for the sake of a few rupees. I was with Sale's brigade in the Passes, sir, and I was at the second taking of Cabul."

General Heatherstone looked keenly at the suppliant, but was silent to his appeal.

"I was in Ghuznee with you when the walls were all shook down by an earthquake, and when we found forty thousand Afghans within gunshot of us. You ask me about it, and you'll see whether I'm lying or not. We went through all this when we were young, and now that we are old you are to live in a fine bungalow, and I am to starve by the roadside. It don't seem to me to be fair."

"You are an impertinent scoundrel," said the general. "If you had been a good soldier you would never need to ask for help. I shall not give you a farthing."

"One word more, sir," cried the tramp, for the other was turning away; "I've been in the Terada Pass."

The old soldier sprang round as if the words had been a pistol-shot. "What—what d'ye mean?" he stammered.

"I've been in the Terada Pass, sir, and I know a man there called Ghoolab Shah."

These last words were hissed out in an undertone, and a malicious grin overspread the face of the speaker.

Their effect upon the general was extraordinary. He fairly staggered back from the gateway, and his yellow countenance blanched to a livid mottled gray. For a moment he was too overcome to speak. At last he gasped out, "Ghoolab Shah!—who are you who know Ghoolab Shah?"

"Take another look," said the tramp; "your sight is not as keen as it was forty years ago."

The general took a long, earnest look at the unkempt wanderer in front of him, and as he gazed I saw the light of recognition spring up in his eyes. "God bless my soul!" he cried. "Why it's Corporal Rufus Smith."

"You've come on it at last," said the other, chuckling to himself. "I was wondering how long it would be before you knew me. And first of all just unlock this gate, will you? It's hard to talk through a grating. It's too much like ten minutes with a visitor in the celle."

The general, whose face still bore evidences of his agitation, undid the bolts with nervous, trembling fingers. The recognition of Corporal Rufus Smith had, I fancied, been a relief to him, and yet he plainly showed by his manner that he regarded his presence as by no means an unmixed blessing.

"Why, corporal," he said, as the gate swung open, "I have often wondered whether you were dead or alive, but I never expected to see you again. How have you been all these long years?"

"How have I been?" the corporal answered gruffly. "Why I have been drunk for the most part. When I draw my money I lay it out in liquor, and as long as that lasts I get some peace in life. When I'm cleaned out I go upon tramp, partly in the hope of picking up the price of a dram, and partly in order to look for you."

"You'll excuse us talking about these private matters, West," the general said, looking round at me, for I was beginning to move away. "Don't leave us. You know something of this matter already, and may find yourself entirely in the swim with us some of these days."

Corporal Rufus Smith looked round at me in blank astonishment. "In the swim with us!" he said. "However did he get there?"

"Voluntarily, voluntarily," the general explained, hurriedly sinking his voice. "He is a neighbor of mine, and he has volunteered his help in case I should ever need it."

This explanation seemed, if anything, to increase the big stranger's surprise. "Well, if that don't lick cock-fighting!" he exclaimed, contemplating me with admiration. "I never heard tell of such a thing."

"And now that you have found me, Corporal Smith," said the tenant of Cloomber, "what is it that you want of me?"

"Why, everything: I want a roof to cover me, and clothes to wear, and food to eat, and above all brandy to drink."

"Well, I'll take you in and do what I can for you," said the general slowly. "But look here, Smith, we must have discipline. I'm the general and you are the corporal; I am the master and you are the man. Now, don't let me have to remind you of that again."

The tramp drew himself up to his full height and raised his right hand with the palm forward in a military salute. "I can take you on as gardener and get rid of the fellow I have got. As to brandy, you shall have an allowance and no more. We are not deep drinkers at the Hall."

"Don't you take opium, or brandy, or nothing yourself, sir?" asked Corporal Rufus Smith.

"Nothing," the general said, firmly.

"Well, all I can say is, that you've got more nerve and pluck than I shall ever have. I don't wonder now at your winning that cross in the mutiny. If I was to go on listening night after night to them things without ever taking a drop of something to cheer my heart—why, it would about drive me silly."

(To be continued.)

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Character.

Character is made up of small duties faithfully performed, of denial, of self-sacrifice, of kindly acts, of love and duty. The backbone of character is laid at home, and whether the constitutional tendencies be good or bad, home influences will, as a rule, fan them into activity. Kindness begets kindness, and truth and trust will bear a rich harvest of truth and trust. There are many trival acts of kindness which teach us more about a man's character than many vague phrases.

A Gloomy Forecaster.

"Don't you want to see the world a place of complete peace and harmony?"

"No," replied Mr. Growcher. "Just as soon as you get the world peaceful and harmonious, a lot of people will arise and kick because competition has been eliminated."

Many a girl who has engaging ways never catches a husband.

Tramp—I haven't always been poor. I used to ride in my own carriage. Friend—When was that? Tramp—When I was a baby.

SIR THOMAS LIPTON.

Sportsmen the world over are delighted to learn that Sir Thomas Lipton is desirous of making another attempt to lift the America Cup. This will be his fourth, and he has already spent $2,000,000 endeavoring to secure the highest honor in the yachting world. If sporting conditions can be arranged, his new yacht is to be called Shamrock IV., and like every Irishman, he has great belief in the luck of the four-leaf shamrock.

When Sir Thomas went over to America to watch the fight put up by Shamrock II., an inquisitive reporter asked him: "Is the report correct that, in the event of Shamrock winning, Mr. Watson and you intend to get married?" Sir Thomas replied that he could not speak for Mr. Watson, but as for himself he thought one big job was enough to tackle at a time, and he considered he had quite sufficient trouble ahead without doing anything so rash. Years have passed,

Sir Thomas Lipton.

and this popular millionaire still remains a bachelor. In fact, the fair sex have come to class Sir Thomas and Lord Kitchener as "hopeless."

Beyond the fact that he has not yet lifted the America Cup, there are few ambitions which Sir Thomas Lipton has been unable to gratify. Beginning life as an errand boy, he built up a vast provision business by energy and tact, and to-day he finds himself in the unique position of a millionaire without enemies. He is immensely popular wherever he goes. He was honored with the friendship of the late King Edward, is a member of dozens of clubs in Britain, and honorary member of nearly one hundred in America. He follows sport simply for the pleasure it gives him. "I have yet to make my first bet," he said on one occasion. "I race purely for pleasure of the sport, and I would not bet on my own boat or on any other."

Helping Some.

"And Sam, do you do anything toward helping to get the wherewithal to support the family?"

"'Deed I do boss; why, only las' week I went down n' ordered a washin' machine for m' wife."

He—That woman I see you with so often looks very sad. Is she unhappily married? She—No; unhappily unmarried.

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On the Farm

Feeding the Dairy Calf.

The calf may be left with the cow for three or four days or until the milk is fit for use. The calf should then be taken away and placed in a separate stable, if it is possible, as the cow will give less trouble if she cannot see her calf, writer Mr. J. C. McNutt.

By missing one feed, the calf will usually be hungry enough to start to drink readily and will usually give little trouble when it finds the bucket contains milk. Four pounds of milk per feed three times a day for the first ten days will give the calf a good start when a small amount of skim milk may be substituted for a part of the whole milk, the amount of the skim milk being increased, so that when the calf is a month old it is getting skim milk entirely. When the calf is two weeks old the feeds may be changed to two per day with the amount of milk increased, as the calf shows ability to handle it. After three weeks the calf will begin to eat a little grain. An excellent grain mixture for calves is made of cornmeal, oats and wheat bran in equal parts, with a little linseed meal added.

To grow calves well they should have just what they will clean up readily at each feed. Plenty of green grass is good for them, but in very hot or very cold weather a fine quality of clover hay will produce excellent results.

Calves should have milk until they are five or six months old, for best results. If they are forced to subsist on coarse feeds and grain too young they will be stunted, as their digestive system is not developed enough to handle such food exclusively at an early age.

Cotton seed meal should never be fed to calves under twelve months of age. It always proves detrimental to development of the young calf. This being true, it is better to feed such feeds as oats, bran and corn, which are known to be satisfactory. To secure good size the animal should continue to grow steadily until mature.

What to Feed the Poultry.

The following is an excellent ration for fattening poultry:

One part cornmeal, one part oat flour, one part barley meal, one part beef scrap, eight parts buttermilk or skim milk.

This makes what is called slop feed, as it is thin enough to pour. The best feeding results are had with crate feeding. The birds, five or six in number, are placed in a slat coop. The bottom is of lattice work, and that makes it self-cleaning. There is plenty of room in the coop, but the idea is to prevent exercise.

The crate should be put in a protected place, but not in a house. Under a tree or at the side of a building is a good place, if it is where other fowls cannot molest them. They are given no food for 24 hours previous to the feeding period, which should last from two to three weeks. The milk will be sufficient to allay their thirst. Feeding in this way has brought gains of from 25 to 85 per cent. It costs from five to seven cents' worth of grain to put on a pound of gain. But if it did not pay from a feeding viewpoint it would in other ways, for the flesh of a bird fattened in this way is far better, being much whiter in appearance and more juicy and much more palatable.

Father—"Why, when I was your age I didn't have as much money in a month as you spend in a day." Son—"Well, pa, don't scold me about it. Why don't you go for grandfather?"

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