One of the Garrison;

Or, A Mysterious Affair.

CHAPTER VII.—(Cont'd)

General Heatherstone put his hand up, as if afraid that his companion might say too much. "I must thank you, Mr. West," he said, "for having shown this man my door. I would not willingly allow an old comrade, however humble, to go to the bad, and if I did not acknowledge his claim more readily it was simply because I had my doubts as to whether he was really what he represented himself. Just walk up to the Hall, corporal, and I shall follow you in a minute."

"Poor devil!" he continued, as he watched the newcomer hobbling up the avenue in the ungainly manner which I have described. "He got a 64-pound shot on his foot, and it crushed the bones, but the obstinate fool would not let the doctors take it off. I remember him now as a smart young soldier in Afghanistan. He and I were associated in some queer adventures, which I may tell you of some day, and I naturally feel sympathy toward him, and would befriend him. Did he tell you anything about me before I came?"

"Not a word," I replied .

"Oh," said the general, carelessly, but with an evident expression of relief. "I thought perhaps he might have said something of old times. Well, I must go and look after him, or the servants will be frightened, for he isn't a beauty to look at. Good-bye!" With a wave of the hand the old man turned away from me and hurried up the drive after this unexpected addition to his household, while I strolled on round the high black paling, peering through every chink between the planks, but without seeing a trace either of Mordaunt or of his sister.

I have now brought this statement down to the coming of Corporal Rufus Smith, which will prove to be the beginning of the end. I have set down soberly and in order the events which brought us to Wigtownshire, the arrival of the Heatherstones at Cloomber, the many strange incidents which excited first our curiosity and finally our intense interest in that family, and I have briefly touched upon the circumstances which brought my sister and myself into a closer and more personal relationship with them. I think that there cannot be a better moment than this to hand the narrative over to those who had means of knowing something of what was going on inside Cloomber during the months that I was observing it from without. The evidence of the two individuals whose statements I shall now lay before the reader, does not, it is true, amount to very much, but there are a few notable facts contained in it, and it corroborates and amplifies my own experience. Israel Stakes, the coachman, proved to be unable to read or write, but Mr. Mathew Clark, the Presbyterian minister at Stoneykirk, has copied down his deposition, duly attested by the cross set opposite his name. The good clergyman has, I fancy, put some slight polish upon the narrator's story, which I rather regret, as it might have been more interesting, if less intelligible, when reported verbatim. It still preserves, however, considerable traces of Israel's individuality, and may be regarded as an exact record of what he saw and did while in General Heatherstone's service.

CHAPTER VIII.

(Copied and authenticated by the Reverend Mathew Clark, Presbyterian Minister of Stoneykirk, in Wigtownshire.)

Maister Fothergill West and the meenister say that I maun tell all I can aboot General Heatherstone and his hoose, but that I maunna' say muckle aboot mysel' because the readers wouldna' care to hear aboot me or my affairs. I am na sae sure o' that, for the Stakes is a family weel kenned and respecked on baith sides o' the border, and there's mony in Nithedale and Annendale as would be gey pleased to hear news o' the son o' Archie Stakes, o' Ecclefechan. I maun e'en do as I'm tauld, however, for Mr. West's sake, hoping he'll no forget me when I chance to hae a favor tae ask.* I'm no able tae write mysel' because my feyther sent me oot to scare craws instead o' sending me tae school, but on the ither hand he brought me up in the preeciples and practice o' the real kirk o' the Covenant, for which may the Lord be praised!

It was last May twel'month that the factor body, Maister McNeil, cam ower tae me in the street and speered whether I was in want o' a place as a coachman and gaird'ner. As it fell oot I chanced tae be on the look oot for something o' the sort mysel' at the time, but I wasna ower quick to let him see that I wanted it. "It's a guid place, and there's mony would be glad o't. If ye want it ye can come up tae my office at twa the morn and put your ain questions tae the gentleman." That was a' I could get frae him, for he's a close man and a hard one at a bargain—which shall profit him leetle in the next life, though he lay by a store o' siller in this. When the day comes there'll be a hantle o' factors on the left hand o' the throne, and I shouldna' be surprised if Maister McNeil found himsel' amang them.

Well, on the morn I gaed up to the office and there I foond the factor and a lang thin dour man wi' gray hair and a face as brown and crinkled as a walnut. He looked hard at me wi' a pair o' een that glowed like two spunks, and then he says, saye he, "You've been born in these pairts, I undersian'?"

"Aye," says I, "and never left them neither."

"Never been oot o' Scotland?" he speers.

"Twice to Carlisle fair," says I, for I am a man wha loves the truth; and besides I kenned that the factor would mind my gaeing there, for I bargained for twa steers and a stirk that he wanted for the stockin' o' the Drumcleugh fairm.

"I learn frae Maister McNeil," says General Heatherstone—for him it was and nane ither, "that ye canna' write."

"Na," says I.

"Nor read?"

"Na," says I.

"It seems tae me," says he, turnin' tae the factor, "that this is the vera man I want. Servants is spoiled noo-a-days," says he, "by ower muckle eddication. I have nae doobt, Stakes, that ye will suit me well eneugh. Ye'll hae three pund a month and a' foond, but I shall reserve the right o' givin' ye twenty-four hoors' notice at any time. How will that suit ye?"

"It's vera different frae my last place," says I, discontented-like. And the words were true eneugh, for auld Fairmer Scott only gave me a pund a month and parritch twice a day.

"Weel, weel," says he, "maybe we'll gie ye a rise if ye suit. Meanwhile here's the hansel shillin' that Maister McNeil tells me it's the custom tae give, and I shall expec' tae see ye at Cloomber on Monday."

When the Monday cam roond I walked oot tae Cloomber, and a great muckle hoose it is wi' a hundred windows or mair, and space enough tae hide awa' half the parish. As tae gairdening there was no gairden for me tae work at, and the horse was never taken oot o' the stables frae week's end tae week's end. I was busy eneugh for a' that, for there was a deal o' fencing tae be put up and one thing or anaither, forbye cleanin' the knives and brushin' the boots and such like jobs as is nair fit for an auld wife than for a grown man. There was twa beside mysel' in the kitchen, the cook Eliza, and Mary the hoosemaid, puir benighted things baith o' thim, wha had wasted a' their lives in Lunnon, and kenned leetle aboot the warld or the ways o' the flesh. I hadna' muckle tae say to them for they were simple folk wha could scarce understand English, and had hardly mair regard for their ain souls than the tods on the moor. When the cook said she didna' think muckle o' John Knox, and the ither that she wouldna' gie saxpence tae hear the discourse o' Maister Donald McSnaw o' the true kirk, I kenned it was time for me tae leave them tae a higher Judge.

There was four in family, the general, my leddy, Maister Mordaunt and Miss Gabriel, and it wasna' lang before I found that a' wasna' just exactly as it should be. My leddy was as thin and as white as a ghaist, and mony's the time as I've come on her and found her yammerin' and greetin' all by hersel'. I've watched her walkin' up and doon in the wood where she thought nane could see her and wringin' her hands like one demented. There was the young gentleman tae and his sister—they baith seemed to hae some trouble on their minds, and the general maist of a', for the ithers were up ane day and down anither; but he was aye the same, wi' a face as dour and sad as a felon when he feels the tow roond his neck. I speered o' the hussies in the kitchen whether they kenned what was amiss wi' the family, but the cook she answered me back that it wasna' for her tae inquire into the affairs o' her superiors and that it was naething to her as long as she did her work and had her wages. They were puir feckless bodies, the two o' them, and would scarce gie an answer tae a ceevil question though they could clack lood eneugh when they had a mind.

Weel, weeks passed into months and a' things grew waur instead o' better in the Hall. The general he got mair nairvous, and his leddy mair melancholy every day, and yet there wasna' any quarrel or bickering between them, for when they've been togither in the breakfast room I used aften tae gang round and prune the rose tree alongside o' the window, so that I couldna' help hearin' a great pairt o' their conversation, though sair against the grain. When the young folk were wi' them they would speak little, but when they had gone they would aye talk as if some waefu' trial were aboot to fa' upon them, though I could never gather from their words what it was that they were afeard o'. I've heard the general say mair than ance that he wasna' frighted o' death, or of any danger that he could face and have done wi', but that it was the lang weary waitin' and the uncertainty that had taken a' the strength and the mettle oot o' him. Then my leddy would console him and tell him that maybe it wasna' as bad as he thought and that a' would come richt in the end—but a' her cheery words were clean throwed away upon him. As tae the young folk I kenned weel that they didna' bide in the groonds, and that they were awa' whenever they got a chance wi' Maister Fothergill West tae Branksome, but the general was too fu' o' his ain troubles tae ken aboot it, and it didna' seem tae me that it was pairt o' my duties either as coachman or as gaird'ner tae mind the bairns. He should have lairned that if ye forbid a lassie and a laddie tae dae anything it's just the surest way o' bringin' it aboot. The Lord keond that oot in the gairden o' Paradise, and there's no muckle change between the folk in Eden and the folk in Wigtown.

There's ane thing that I havena' spoke aboot yet, but that should be set doon. The general didna' share his room wi' his wife, but slept a' alane in a chamber at the far end o' the hoose, as distant as possible frae every one else. This room was aye lockit when he wasna' in it, and nacbody was ever allowed tae gang into it. He would mak his ain bed, and red up and dust it a' by himself, but he wouldna' so much as allow ane o' us to set fut on the passage that led tae it. At nicht he would walk a' ower the hoose, and he had lamps hung in every room and corner, so that no pairt should be dark. Mony's the time frae my room in the garret I've heard his futsteps comin' and gangin', comin' and gangin' doun the passage and up anither frae midnight till cockcraw. It was weary wark to lie listenin' tae his clatter and wonderin' whether he was clean daft, or whether maybe he'd learned pagan and idolatrous tricks oot in India, and that his conscience noo was like the worm which gnaweth and dieth not. I'd ha' speer frae him whether it wouldna' ease him to speak wi' the holy Donald McSnaw, but it might ha' been a mistake, and the general wasna' a man that you'd care tae mak' a mistake wi'.

Ane day I was workin' at the grass border when he comes up and he says, says he, "Did ye ever have occasion tae fire a pistol, Israel?"

"Godsakes!" says I, "I never had siccan a thing in my hands in my life."

"Then you'd best not begin noo," says he. "Every man tae his ain weepon," he says. "Now I warrant ye could dae something wi' a guid crabtree cudgel!"

"Aye, could I," I answered blythely, "as weel as ony lay on the border."

"This is a lonely hoose," says he "and we might be molested by some rascals. It's weel tae be ready for whatever may come. Me and you and my son Mordaunt and Mr. Fothergill West of Branksome, who would come if he was required, ought tae be able tae show a bauld face—what think ye?"

"'Deed, sir," I says, "feastin' is aye better than fechtin'—but if ye'll raise me a pund a month, I'll no' shirk my share o' ither."

"We won't quarrel ower that," says he, and agreed tae the extra twal' pund a year as easy as though it were as many bawbees. Far be it frae me tae think evil, but I couldna' help surmisin' at the time that money that was so lightly pairted wi' was maybe no very honestly cam by.

I'm no' curious or a pryin' mun by nature, but I was sair puzzled in my ain mind tae tell why it was that the generel walked aboot at nicht and what kept him frae his sleep. Weel, a'e day I was cleanin' down the passages when my e'e fell on a great muckle heap o' curtains and auld cairpets and sic like things that were piled away in a corner, no vera frae the door o' the general's room. A' o' a sudden a thocht cam intae my heid and I says tae mysel, "Israel, laddie," says I, "what's tae stop ye frae hidin' behind that this vera nicht and seein' the auld mun when he doesna' ken human e'e is on him?" The mair I thocht o't the mair seemple it appeared, and I made up my mind tae put the idea intae instant execution.

When the nicht cam roond I tauld the women-folk that I was bad wi' the jawache, and would gang airly tae my room. I kenned fine when ance I got there that there was na chance o' ony one disturbin' me, so I waited a wee while, and then when a' was quiet, I slippit aff my boots and ran doun the ither stair until I cam tae the heap o' auld clothes, and there I lay doun wi' one e'e peepin' through a kink and a' the rest covered up wi' a great ragged cairpet. There I bided as quiet as a rotten until the general passed me on his road tae bed, and a' was still in the hoose.

My certie! I wouldna' gang through wi' it again for a' the siller at the Union Bank o' Dumfries! I canna think o't noo without feelin' cauld a' the way doun my back. It was just awfu' lyin' there in the deid silence, waitin' and waitin' wi' never a soond tae break the monotony, except the heavy tickin' o' an auld clock somewhere doun the passage. First I would look doun the corridor in the one way, and syne I'd look doun in t'ither, but it aye seemed to me as though there was something coming up frae the side that I wasna' lookin at. I had a cauld sweat on my broo and my hairt was beatin' twice tae ilka tick o' the clock, and what feared me most of a' was that the dust frae the curtains and things was aye gettin' doun into my lungs and it was a' I could dae tae weep mysel' frae coughin'. Godsakes! I wonder my hair wasna' gray wi' a' that I went through! I wouldna' dae it again to be made Lord Provost o' Glasgie!

Weel, it may have been two o'clock in the mornin' or maybe a little mair, and I was just thinkin' that I wasna' tae see onything after a'—and I wasna' very sorry neither—when all o' a sudden a soond cam tae my ears clear and distinct through the stillness o' the nicht. I've been asked afore noo tae describe that soond, but I've aye foond that it's no' very easy tae gie a clear idea o't, though it was unlike any other soond that ever I hairkened tae. It was a shairp ringin' clang, like what could be caused by flippin' the rim o' a wine glass, but it was far higher and thinner than that and had in it' tae a kind o' splash, like the tingle o' a rain drop intae a waterbutt. In my fear I sat up amang my cairpets, like a puddock amang gowan-leaves, and I listened wi' a' my ears. A' was still again noo, except for the dull tickin' o' the distant clock.

Suddenly the soond cam again, as clear, as shrill, as shairp as ever, and this time the general heard it, for I heard him gie a kind o' groan, as a tired man might what has been roosed oot o' his sleep. He got up frae his bed, and I could make oot a rustling noise, as though he were dressin' himsel', and presently his footfa' as he begun tae walk up and doun in his room. Mysakes! it didna tak lang for me tae drap doun amang the cairpets again and cover mysel' ower! There I lay tremblin' in every limb, and sayin' as mony prayers as I could mind, wi' my e'e still peepin' through the keek-hole, and fixed upon the door o' the general's room.

I heard the rattle o' the handle presently, and the door swung slowly open. There was a licht burnin' in the room beyond, an' I could just catch a glimpse o' what seemed tae me like a row o' swords stuck alang the side o' the wa', when the general stepped oot and shut the door behind him. He was dressed in a dressin' goon, wi' a red smokin' cap on his heid, and a pair o' slippers wi' the heels cut off and the taes turned up. For a moment it cam into my heid that maybe he was walkin' in his sleep, but as he cam toward me I could see the glint o' the licht in his e'en, and his face was a' twistin', like a man that's in sair distress o' mind. On my conscience it gies me the shakes noo when I think o' his tall figure and his yelley face comin' sae solemn and silent doun the lang lone passage. I haud my breath and lay close watchin' him, but just as he cam tae where I was my vera hairt stood still in my breast, for "ting!"—lood and clear, within a yaird o' me cam the ringin' clangin' soond that I had a'ready hairkened tae. Where it cam frae is majr than I can tell, or what was the cause o't. It might ha' been that the general made it, but I was sair puzzled tae tell hoo, for his hands were baith doun by his side as he passed me. It cam frae his direction, certainly, but it appeared tae me tae come frae ower his heid; but it was siccan a thin, eerie, high-pitched, uncanny kind o' soond that it wasna' easy tae say just exactly where it did come frae. The general tak nae heed o't, but walked on and was soon oot o' sicht, and I didna' lose a minute in creepin' oot frae my hidin' place and scamperin' awa back tae my room, and if a' the bogies in the Red Sea were trapesin' up and doun the hale nicht through, I wud never put my heid oot again tae hae a glimpse o' them.

I didna' say a word tae anybody aboot what I'd seen, but I made up my mind that I wudna' stay muckle langer at Cloomber Ha'. Four pund a month is a good wage, but it isna' eneugh tae pay a man for the loss o' his peace o' mind, and maybe the loss o' his soul as weel, for when the deil is aboot ye canna' tell what sort o' a trap he may lay for ye, and though they say that Providence is stronger than him, it's maybe as weel no to risk it. It was clear tae me that the general and his hoose were baith under some curse, and it was fit that that curse should fa' on them that had earned it, and no on a righteous Presbyterian, wha had ever trod the narrow path. My hairt was sair for young Miss Gabriel—for she was a bonnie and a winsome lassie—but for a' that, I felt that my duty was tae mysel' and that I should gang forth, even as Lot ganged oot o' the wicked cities o' the plain. That awfu' cling-clang was aye dingin' in my luge, and I couldna' bear to be alane in the passages for fear o' hearin' it ance again. I only wanted a chance or an excuse tae gie the general notice, and tae gang back to some place where I could see Christian folk, and have the kirk within a stone-cast tae fa' back upon.

(To be continued.)

*The old rascal was well paid for his trouble, so he need not have made such a favor of it.—J. F. W.

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Mrs. J. Merkhuger, Waterloo, Ont., enthusiastically recommends Na-Dru-Co Dyspepsia Tablets. Her experience with them, as she outlines it, explains why.

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On the Farm

Farm Notes.

Weeds in the orchard are neither profitable nor pretty.

There is pleasure and satisfaction both in well bred stock on the farm.

Plants have greater need for their leaves and can be more easily killed in the growing season than when partially dormant.

Sometimes little leaks lead to large ones, which eventually turn profit into loss. It is the successful man who looks after the leaks.

The farmer often makes a mistake by trying to do too much. Till less ground and cultivate it better and there will be more profit in it.

No class of commercial fertilizers will be able to do the work of farmyard manures, and the more that is made upon the farm the better.

When mares are bred much will be gained if they are mated with some general object in view—that the colt shall be a draft horse, saddle horse, farm horse or something definite.

Grindstones sometimes become so hard that they are almost useless. If they are buried in the ground for a while it will soften them. If the stone is large, it will require several months.

Nature very seldom makes a mistake. Like is as sure to produce like in stock raising as in planting seed. The weak and poor will not produce good results anywhere. The tendency is downward rather than upward.

Gottlieb Von Jagow.

Foreign Minister of Germany, from his latest picture.

Barnyard manure gives the best results of any of the fertilizers. In some way the soil is most beneficially affected by it. It lightens up the soil and lets in the air, which is necessary to the vigorous life of the rootlets.

When cows are salted only once a week, they eat too much at a time, and it causes looseness of the bowels. They will eat a little salt nearly every day if it is kept where they can get at it especially when the grass is fresh and abundant.

Probably no animal is so valuable as a weed eradicator as the sheep. They not only eat a large variety of weeds and grasses, but they masticate so thoroughly that almost all the seeds are destroyed or digested, and do not sprout from the manure.

Don't have any stagnant water about the place or you will have more mosquitoes than is pleasant or profitable. The rain water barrel, if uncovered, will often act as a mosquito hatchery. A little coal oil thrown on the water once a week will prevent hatching.

Sometimes sheep get so fearful of dogs that they will start up and run the moment a man or other object comes among them. No flock of sheep that is as worried as this ever can do well. The very thought of being chased takes away from their usefulness, and sooner or later it will ruin the fold.

If one is to build a barn the first consideration should be the location. It should be a dry, clean spot not too far from the dwelling. Do not build the cattle tie-ups less than thirteen feet wide, and sixteen feet is better. A driving floor ten feet in width will take in a large load of hay. Finally, if building new, make it large. You will find this a great incentive to raising large crops.

Apple trees up to a foot in diameter may be top worked, if unsatisfactory. Care, however, should be used that too much of the top is not removed in any one year. Cut off about one-third of the top the first year and insert scions or stubs not more than two or three inches in diameter. The next year remove more of the top and insert other scions, and the following year complete the work.

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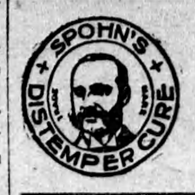

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CLIMBING FOR LIFE.

A Government Surveyor Tells of a Thrilling Experience.

Most adventures that explorers meet with result from a lack of forethought. In his book, "Trailing and Camping in Alaska," Mr. A. M. Powell, a government surveyor, tells how one of his party—very likely Mr. Powell himself—was led into a most hazardous predicament.

We landed on a grassy nook at the foot of a precipitous mountain spur. After supper, one of the trio tried to climb a ledge of white spar that could be plainly seen from the camp. After an hour's hard work, he reached the place, but it proved disappointing. He then saw that he could not descend without eyes in his toes. If he could ascend a few hundred feet, he might lower himself down a draw by the help of scattering alder brush. He spent another hour in getting to that place, only to discover a precipice in the path he had expected to descend.

There was another chance left; he might climb to the top of the spur, far above. No living man could have clung to the face of that precipice a minute if it had not been for the moss that was rooted in the small crevices.

He continued climbing until about ten o'clock, when he paused to look down on the camp-fire and the water, more than a thousand feet below him. He felt a sickness come over him, so he turned his gaze to the rock wall, a foot from his face.

When near the summit, he found himself face to face with a perpendicular wall about twelve feet high. There appeared to be a small bench on top of this wall, on which he might rest if he could reach it. He sat for a few moments on a large rock that lay at the foot of the wall; then with his knife he cut niches for finger and toe-holds. Holding on by these, he climbed up and dug a sort of trench through the moss on the rim above, through which he might draw his body. Then he descended to the rock for a long rest before making the final effort.

He finally nerved himself to the task, put his fingers in the niches, and drew himself from the rock which, with the pressure of the departing foot, said good-bye, and went bumping down, down, down. The man was left clinging to the niches—hope and life above, sure death below.

Big drops of sweat stood on his forehead as he steadily worked up, up, and held with one hand while he dug the other into the moss above. Half of his body finally rested on the edge, while the other half hung in space without a foothold. It seemed impossible to move from that position until he saw an alder stem, an inch in diameter, that had grown on the little flat bench apparently for the purpose of giving help on this occasion. He tried its strength. It enabled him to pull himself up and lie on the narrow bed of moss, where he thought of childhood days, friends far away, and his own folly.

There was but one way out, and that was along a six-inch shelf about one hundred feet to the westward that ended on the sloping ridge. Along this a man could edge his body by holding on to the jagged places in the rock wall. He took off his shoes and set off along that sloping path, but he had to be careful not to look down from his dizzy height to the distant campfire.

The feat was accomplished safely, and a thankful mortal lay on the green grassy ridge in complete collapse. His aneroid barometer recorded 2,140 feet above the sea, and his watch told him that it was half-past twelve in the morning.

Employer—Yes, I advertised for a strong boy. Do you think you will suit? Applicant—Well, I have just finished thrashing three other applicants out in the passage!

The old-fashioned mother and her slipper have qualified many a man for high honors—even if he didn't land.

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