THE GOLDEN KEY

Or "The Adventures of Ledgard."

By the Author of "What He Cost Her."

CHAPTER VI.—(Cont'd).

"The concession," he remarked, "is granted to Scarlett Trent, and to one Monty jointly. Who is this Monty, and what has he to say to it?"

Trent set his teeth hard and he never blenched.

"He was my partner, but he died in the swamps, poor chap. We had horrible weather coming back. It pretty nearly finished me."

Trent did not mention the fact that for four days and nights they were hiding in holes and up trees from the natives whom the King of Bekwando had sent after them, that their bearers had fled away, and that they had been compelled to leave the track and make their away through an unknown part of the bush.

"But your partner's share," the Jew asked. "What of that?"

"It belongs to me," Trent answered shortly. "We fixed it so before we started. We neither of us took much stock in our relations. If I had died, Monty would have taken the lot. It was a fair deal. You'll find it there."

The Jew nodded.

"And your partner?" he said. "You saw him die! There is no doubt about that!"

Trent nodded.

"He is as dead," he said, "as Julius Caesar."

"If I offered you——" Da Souza began.

"If you offered me four thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds," Trent interrupted roughly. "I would tell you to go to glory."

Da Souza sighed. It was a hard man to deal with—this.

"Very well," he said, "if I give way, if I agree to your terms, you will be willing to make over this sixth share to me, both on your own account and on account of your late partner?"

"You're right, mate," Trent assented. "Plank down the brass, and it's a deal."

"I will give you four thousand pounds for a quarter share," Da Souza said.

Trent knocked the ashes from his pipe and stood up.

"Here, don't waste any more of my time," he said. "Stand out of the way, I'm off."

Da Souza kept his hands upon the concession.

"My dear friend," he said, "you are so violent. You are so abrupt. Now listen. I will give you five thousand for a quarter share. It is half my fortune."

"Give me the concession," Trent said. "I'm off."

"For a fifth," Da Souza cried.

Trent moved to the door without speech. Da Souza groaned.

"You will ruin me," he said, "I know it. Come then, five thousand for a sixth share. It is throwing money away."

"If you think so, you'd better not part," Trent said, still lingering in the doorway. "Just as you say. I don't care."

For a full minute Da Souza hesitated. He had an immense belief in the richness of the country set out in the concession; he knew probably more about it than Trent himself. But five thousand pounds was a great deal of money, and there was always the chance that the Government might not back the concession-holders in case of trouble. He hesitated so long that Trent was actually disappearing before he had made up his mind.

"Come back, Mr. Trent," he called out. "I have decided. I accept. I join with you."

Trent slowly returned. His manner showed no exultation.

"You have the money here?" he asked.

Da Souza laid down a heap of notes and gold upon the table. Trent counted them carefully and thrust them into his pocket. Then he took up a pen and wrote his name at the foot of the assignment which the Jew had prepared.

"Have a drink," he asked.

Da Souza shook his head.

"The less we drink in this country," he said, "the better. I guess out here spirit comes next to poison. I'll smoke with you, if you have a cigar handy."

Trent drew a handful of cigars from his pocket.

"They're beastly," he said, "but it's a beastly country. I'll be glad to turn my back on it."

"There is a good deal," Da Souza said, "which we must now talk about."

"To-morrow," Trent said curtly. "No more now! I haven't got over my miserable journey yet. I'm going to try and get some sleep."

He swung into the heavy darkness. The air was thick with unwholesome odors rising from the lake-like swamp beyond the drooping circle of trees. He walked a little way towards the sea, and sat down upon a log. A faint land-breeze was blowing, a melancholy soughing came from the edge of the forest only a few hundred yards back, sullen, black, impenetrable. He turned his face inland unwillingly, with a superstitious little thrill of fear. Was it a coyotte calling, or had he indeed heard the moan of a dying man, somewhere back amongst that dark, gloomy jungle? He scoffed at himself! Was he becoming as a girl, weak and timid? Yet a moment later he closed his eyes, and pressed his hands tightly over his hot eyeballs. He was a man of little imaginative force, yet the white face of a dying man seemed suddenly to have floated up out of the darkness, to have come to him like a will-o'-the-wisp from the swamp, and the hollow, lifeless eyes seemed ever to be seeking his, mournful and eloquent with dull reproach. Trent rose to his feet with an oath and wiped the sweat from his forehead. He was trembling, and he cursed himself heartily.

"Another fool's hour like this," he muttered, "and the fever will have me. Come out of the shadows, you white-faced, skulking reptile, you—bah! what a blithering fool I am! There is no one there! How could there be any one?"

He listened intently. From afar off came the faint moaning of the wind in the forest and the night sounds of restless animals. Nearer there was no one—nothing stirred. He laughed out loud and moved away to spend his last night in his little wooden home. On the threshold he paused, and faced once more that black, mysterious line of forest.

"Well, I've done with you now," he called, a note of coarse exultation in his tone. "I've gambled for my life and I've won. To-morrow I'll begin to spend the stakes."

CHAPTER VII.

In a handsomely appointed room of one of the largest hotels in London a man was sitting at the head of a table strewn with blotting-paper and writing materials of every description. Half a dozen chairs had been carelessly pushed back, there were empty champagne bottles upon the sideboard, the air was faintly odorous of tobacco smoke—blue wreaths were still curling upwards towards the frescoed ceiling. Yet the gathering had not been altogether a festive one. There were sheets of paper still lying about, covered with figures, a brass-bound ledger lay open at the further end of the table. In the background a young man, slim, pale, ill-dressed in sober black, was filling a large tin box with documents and letters.

It had been a meeting of giants. Men whose names were great, in the world of finance had occupied those elaborately decorated leather chairs. There had been cynicism, criticism, and finally enthusiasm. For the man who remained it had been a triumph. He had appeared to do but little in the way of persuasion. His manners had been brusque, and his words had been few. Yet he remained the master of the situation. He had gained a victory, not only financial but moral, over men whose experience and knowledge were far greater than his. He was no City magnate, nor had he ever received any training in those arts and practices which go for the making of one. For his earlier life had been spent in a wilder country where the gambling was for life and not merely for gold. It was Scarlett Trent who sat there in thoughtful and absorbed silence. He was leaning a little back in a comfortably upholstered chair, with his eyes fixed on a certain empty spot upon the table. The few inches of polished mahogany seemed to him—empty of all significance in themselves—to be reflecting in some mysterious manner certain scenes in his life which were now very rarely brought back to him. The event of to-day he knew to be the culmination of a success as rapid as it had been surprising. He was a millionaire. This deal to-day, in which he had held his own against the shrewdest and most astute men of the great city, had more than doubled his already large fortune. A few years ago he had landed in England friendless and unknown, to-day he had stepped out from even amongst the chosen few and had planted his feet in the higher lands whither the faces of all men are turned. With a grim smile upon his lips, he recalled one by one the various enterprises into which he had entered, the courage with which he had forced them through, the solid strength with which he had thrust weaker men to the wall, and had risen a little higher towards his goal upon the wreck of their fortunes. Where other men had failed he had succeeded. To-day the triumph was his alone. He was a millionaire—one of the princes of the world!

The young man, who had filled his box and also a black bag, was ready to go. He ventured most respectfully to break in upon the reflections of his employer.

"Is there anything more for me to do, sir?"

Trent woke from his day-dream into the present. He looked around the room and saw that no papers had been omitted. Then he glanced keenly into his clerk's face.

"Nothing more," he said. "You can go."

It was significant of the man that, notwithstanding his hour of triumph, he did not depart in the slightest degree from the cold gruffness of his tone. The little speech which his clerk had prepared seemed to stick in his throat.

"I trust, sir, that you will forgive—that you will pardon the liberty, if I presume to congratulate you upon such a magnificent stroke of business!"

Scarlett Trent faced him coldly. "What do you know about it?" he asked. "What concern is it of yours, young man, eh?"

The clerk sighed, and became a little confused. He had indulged in some wistful hopes that for once his master might have relaxed, that an opportune word of congratulation might awaken some spark of generosity in the man who had just added a fortune to his great store. He had a girl-wife from whose cheeks the roses were slowly fading, and very soon would come a time when a bank-note, even the smallest, would be a priceless gift. It was for her sake he had spoken. He saw now that he had made a mistake.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said humbly. "Of course I know that these men have paid an immense sum for their shares in the Bekwando Syndicate. At the same time it is not my business, and I am sorry that I spoke."

"It is not your business at any time to remember what I receive for property Scarlett Trent said roughly. "Haven't I told you that before? What did I say when you came to me? You were to hear nothing and see nothing outside your duties! Speak up, man! Don't stand there like a jay!"

The clerk was pale, and there was an odd sensation in his throat. But he thought of his girl-wife and he pulled himself together.

"You are quite right, sir," he said. "To any one else I should never have mentioned it. But we were alone, and I thought that the circumstances might make it excusable."

His employer grunted in an ominous manner.

"When I say forget, I mean forget," he declared. "I don't want to be reminded by you of my own business. D'ye think I don't know it?"

"I am very sure that you do, sir," the clerk answered humbly. "I quite see that my allusion was an error."

Scarlett Trent had turned round in his chair, and was eyeing the pale, nervous figure, with a certain hard disapproval.

"That's a beastly coat you've got on, Dickenson," he said. "Why don't you get a new one?"

"I am standing in a strong light, sir," the young man answered, with a new fear at his heart. "It wants brushing, too. I will endeavor to get a new one—very shortly."

His employer grunted again.

"What's your salary?" he asked.

"Two pounds fifteen shillings a week, sir."

"And you mean to say you can't dress respectably on that? What do you do with your money, eh How do you spend it? Drink and music-halls, I suppose!"

The young man was able at last to find some spark of dignity. A pink spot burned upon his cheeks.

"I do not attend music-halls, sir, nor have I touched wine or spirits for years. I—I have a wife to keep, and perhaps—I am expecting——"

He stopped abruptly. How could he mention that other matter which, for all its anxieties, still possessed for him a sort of quickening joy in the face of that brutal stare. He did not conclude his sentence, the momentary light died out of his pale commonplace features. He hung his head and was silent.

"A wife," Scarlett Trent repeated with contempt, "and all the rest of it, of course. Oh, what poor donkeys you young men are! Here are you, with your way to make in the world, with your foot scarcely upon the bottom rung of the ladder, grubbing along on a few shillings a week, and you choose to go and chuck away every chance you ever might have for a moment's folly. A poor, pretty face, I suppose. A moonlight walk on a Bank Holiday, a little maudlin sentiment, and over you throw all your chances in life. No wonder the herd is so great, and the leaders so few," he added, with a sneer.

(To be continued.)

SMART CLOTHES FOR THE YOUNG GIRL.

The plaited skirt for the young girl is proving a great success, if we may take the great number seen at the summer resorts as a criterion. When the whole dress, shirtwaist and skirt, is made in plaited effect, the result is very pleasing indeed. This dress, Ladies' Home Journal Pattern No. 8988, has a raised waistline, and consists of a waist opening in front with yoke finished with a turn-down collar, full-length sleeves with open cuffs, and a fitted lining, a seven gore skirt, perforated for deep hem facing. The pattern cuts in size 14, 16, 18 and 20 years, requiring in size 16, 11⅜ yards 36-inch material.

Ladies' Home Journal Pattern No. 8980 is a Ladies' and Misses' Peplum Waist, opening in front with roll collar or Quaker collar and full-length or shorter sleeves, and a circular peplum. The pattern cuts in size 32 to 44 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 3⅝ yards 36-inch material.

Pattern No. 8981 is a Misses' One-Piece Skirt, gathered to a three-piece yoke, with slightly raised waistline. Suitable for flouncing. The pattern cuts in sizes 14, 16, 18 and 20 years. Size 16 requires 3⅝ yards 36-inch material.

Patterns, 15 cents each, can be purchased at your local Ladies' Home Journal Pattern dealer, or from The Home Pattern Company, 182-A George Street, Toronto.

HAS THE U.S. THE RIGHT TO SELL ARMS TO THE ALLIES?

Much has been said and written in our periodicals on the right of this country (the United States) to sell arms and munitions to belligerents in the European war. If the Government of this country were engaged in such a business, I can conceive that a very grave question would arise; but no one pretends to lay such a charge to the American Government.

But it is claimed that the U. S. should prohibit her citizens from carrying on such a business, as she is on friendly terms with all the nations engaged in the present European struggle. Granting this, it does not follow that it becomes the duty of this Government to interfere, as no buyers are discriminated against, and all have an equal right to purchase the arms and munition of war ad libitum. The only reason that Germany and Austria have protested is, not because the sale is an unfriendly act, but because of the impossibility of either of these countries to receive the goods should they purchase the same. The general blockade of their ports is so complete and effectual that delivery is out of the question, and only because they cannot secure their orders should they buy do they wish to deny the privilege of buying by the allies, who are sure of a prompt delivery.

We are accused of exporting arms and ammunition to the enemies of Germany. That would not be a breach of neutrality if true, but the fact is the buyers do their own exporting and pay the freight, assuming all the risks of transportation. President Wilson very aptly replied to this accusation when he informed the Germans that "American citizens have always had that right and cannot be deprived of it. They will sell to you on the same terms." Germany replies, "We do not want your arms and ammunition, as we have plenty of our own. We only want your wheat and cotton, but Great Britain puts a barrier in the way of our obtaining these things. We ask you to remove the barrier for us." In other words, Germany, true to her instincts, insists upon "Hogging" the whole business. But, be it said to Germany's credit, that the Imperial Government has never made such an outlandish claim, nor ventured to put such a narrow construction upon the great law of nations.

The only objections have come from the German newspapers and a few irresponsible persons in this country. Officials of Germany well know that under the rules of international law they would have no right to object to the selling of arms and ammunition to belligerents.

They tell us that we could stop the war in short order if we would only prohibit these sales. Yes, by giving Germany the victory, perhaps. And we are asked to do this in the name of neutrality. To help Germany because she alone was prepared for the war by a military policy pursued for many decades.

If neutrality is to be placed on a higher plane than the law of nations, then we are bound to inquire upon which side the moral principles predominate. Who began the war? Which of the contending parties is responsible for all these horrors and the awful misery that follows in its wake?

We know the reasons advanced by Germany, and how spurious they have been shown to be. But Germany claims she is fighting for her own existence; and so claim the Powers on the opposite side. Who is to decide the moral quality in this strife?

There is no tribunal constituted with power to enforce its decrees. We must each judge of the right involved for himself and herself. We know that Germany, after proclaiming her entry into the war, to defend and save her own existence, immediately, and without warning, stepped over her own border and invaded a little kingdom she had given her solemn word to maintain her neutrality, come what might, and she carried fire and the sword into Belgium. This has not the appearance of remaining on the defensive to defend her own existence, and this act casts suspicion upon the sincerity of her whole claim.

The belief of fully 90 per cent. of the people of the U. S. is that Germany began this war without any just cause, and that when she invaded Belgium she committed an act that made her the great outlaw of the nations—a nation with whom no treaties or agreements have any binding force. It is the settled opinion of Americans that there exists in most irresponsible and incorrigible maniac at the head of the German Empire to be found in all Europe and that it is indispensable that he be disarmed and throttled at any price, before peace can be restored.

CHAS. M. BICE.

Denver, Colo.

"As you like it"

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B.20

PRACTICAL FARMING

Cow Testing Associations.

The cow testing associations is a plan of co-operation among dairymen for the purpose of regularly and economically testing their cows for production of milk and butter fat. A usual estimate places the average production of cows at 175 pounds of butter per cow per year. In these days people who are familiar with dairying think in terms of butter fat, and if the above average be translated to fat it makes about 150 pounds. At 30 cents a pound, which has been the average price for the last three years, the annual income per cow is $45.

If the above figures are taken as a foundation, it is very apparent that there are many cows which are not paying the cost of their keeping. The use of the scales and the Babcock test has discovered in almost every herd tested some cows that do not pay the cost of keeping. If dairying is to be made as profitable a business as it ought to be and as it has a right to be under proper management, these robber cows must be apprehended.

There is no means of knowing what a cow is producing without weighing and testing her milk at regular intervals. A dairyman selling milk by volume may not be concerned in the butter fat content farther than is necessary to keep up to legal standard, but one who is selling butter fat is vitally concerned in the amount each cow produces. Each dairyman may test his own cows, but facing the condition squarely it is known that very few do.

At a recent dairymen's meeting this point was raised—that a testing association was not necessary because each man could test his own cows. The question was then asked: "How many present have Babcock's testers?" Twelve out of a gathering of 70 answered in the affirmative. In reply to the question, "How many of you who have testers use them?" only one answered in the affirmative.

The object of cow testing associations is to make the use of scales and Babcock machine a community affair—to unite dairymen into a partnership for the purpose of employing a trained man to visit each herd at regular monthly intervals and weigh and test the milk of each cow. At the end of the year, this man gives each dairyman a record of the individuals in his herd with little work or trouble to him and at the cost of about $1 per cow.

The tester weighs and samples the milk of each cow at the evening and morning milking and tests the combined sample for butter fat. Before leaving, he makes calculations so that he may leave with the dairyman the record of each cow down to date.

In European countries and some of the states in this country, one of the duties of a tester is to weigh and keep a record of food consumed by the cows. The cost to the dairyman for complete testing varies from 80 cents to $1.50 a year for each cow. This variation is due to the number of cows in the associations and to the size of individual herds.

Business.

Madge—Why don't you tell him frankly that you don't like him as well as you do Charlie?

Marjorie—How can I, dear? I'm not just sure that Charlie will propose.

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Fashion Hints

Style Notes of the Moment.

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[illegible]

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C. O. O. F. No. 389. Court Markdale, Canadian Order of Chosen Friends, No. 389. [illegible] fourth Tuesday in the month [illegible] Ennis' Hall at 8 o'clock. [illegible] R. Smith, Chief Councillor; [illegible] Ennis, Recorder.

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