

Old Blazer's Hero

By DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

"Well?" he said almost sullenly, without turning to look at her.

The hand which had touched him very gently and appealingly at first, tightened upon his sleeve and began to tremble strongly. At this he looked over his shoulder and met Hepzibah's beseeching gaze. There were tears in her eyes, and he noticed a curious little throbbing in her throat, as if a pianoforte hammer were tapping from within.

"Don't break your heart, Edward," she besought him, speaking with great difficulty. "Don't go to the bad for her! There's nobody as is worth that, my darling. What good can that do?"

"Don't worry about me, Hepzibah," he said miserably; "it isn't worth while." "What else have I got to worry for if it ain't the child I nursed when I was a child myself?" said Hepzibah, holding him with both hands. "And, oh, as I should ever have lived to have to ask you such a thing! But, oh, my darling, do, do come home—"

She paused, and Ned filled up the broken sentence.

"Sober, I suppose," he said.

"Oh, do, dear, do," she begged him, clinging to him.

"Very well," he said, with a gloomy laugh—two little spasmodic sounds, as he had from merriment as light from darkness—"You shall have our way for sure. You pretty generally get it here."

He stooped and kissed the hard-featured face, and Hepzibah, dropping her head upon his shoulder, clung to him and shook with silent tears and internal sobbing.

"I've got your word, dear?" she asked when she could trust herself to speak.

"Yes," he answered. "Good night, Hepzibah."

He set out on his seven-mile walk, and saving posted his letter in the town, turned back. A certain halfway house hugged at him as if it had a cord about his heart, but he broke past it with a surge of resolution, and walked straight home, and at once went up to his own bedroom. Hepzibah heard the assured and steady footstep, and was thankful for the news it brought her, though the best went like lead, and had not even a memory of their old lightness.

Next morning Ned Blaine's criminal pretense was delivered into Mary Hackles' hands, and she felt her heart altogether cheerful and strengthened by it. She wondered still at the personal silence her husband kept, but at least here was proof positive that he was not the heartless creature she had found herself beginning to believe him. He had not found it in his heart to forsake her and to cast her back upon her parents. And she herself could face the world again. He had really gone away on business of some sort; and though she was still inquiet about him, she had no longer the shame of being forced to believe that the affairs he had spoken of were no more than an abominable pretext.

But now came a consequence of the letter which the forger had not anticipated. Before the welcome banknote was so much as broken for the purchase of household necessities, Mary sat down and wrote a letter to that imaginary John Hargreaves who lived in the imaginary Keston Square:

"Sir—I should be greatly obliged if you would furnish me with my husband's present address. I am afraid that recent letters may have miscarried."

It is this little blind was something less than absolutely truthful, she posted it all the same, and saved her conscience with the hope that it might be true. Two or three days later her inquiry came back again, directed and redirected in half a dozen different ways, and at last officially marked "Misdirected; no Keston Square in Brocton." This amazed her and awoke new anxieties. Obviously Will is moving in crooked ways and was in hiding from her. It was easily possible that he might be concealing himself, and, inspired by some feeble hope of meeting him, she took the bus into town day after day and walked wearily up and down the principal thoroughfares, thinking that perchance she might catch sight of him.

She had never known it until now, but she was a little short-sighted, and a thousand times her heart leaped within her in the crowded street as she imagined that at least the errand advance in sight, and she would advance, hurrying from head to foot, to meet as absolute stranger. No habits of faithlessness lessened the shock of hope and fear and disappointment, and she would go home at night too tired to care for anything. Her whole life seemed to have grown into one constant dull and empty ache.

It seemed a strange and ghostly sort of life to lead, for she was altogether alone now, and hardly ever exchanged a word, except upon matters of mere necessity, with a fellow creature. She missed upon nobody, and nobody called upon her. Those people of the little town who had at first been indignant against John Howarth and his wife for their support of their daughter supposed now, naturally enough, since Mary went in crying to her husband's house, that the hinderer supplied the necessary funds, and so forgot their indignation.

CHAPTER XVII.

As if Mary had not had trouble enough upon her shoulders already, a new one descended upon her, and she began to be certain that the house, night after night, was being watched, and became convinced that the watcher was always the same person. The first suspicion which occurred to her came when, on a moonlight night about the middle of July, she went upon her bedroom window and observed upon the deserted road and the tattered, wind-blown field. She had a light, and the house and its neighbor were bathed in shadow on the road below, but in the hedge which faced their doors, beyond the distinctly marked

line of shade upon the field the moonlight lay in a broad, vapory whiteness, in which objects, though easily discernible, took strange and fantastic shapes. She had sat at the open window for a good five minutes, drawing in a sad tranquility from the moonlight and the silence, when a dry stick cracked behind the hedge and drew her startled gaze to the spot whence the sound proceeded. Following this came complete silence. She listened till the wide air made a singing in her ears like the lingering echo of the waves which children find in seashells. Hearing no repetition of the sound, but suspecting rather than discerning an added bulk of darkness somewhere in the shadows, she closed the window, drew down the blind and watched through the merest crevice between the bars. That something darker than the shadows began to move, and the cracking sound, heard more faintly through the closed window than before, again reached her ears. The moving object stole under the hedge for twenty or thirty yards, growing distinct from the other shadows whilst it moved, and melting back into them again whenever it stood still; and then, passing over a stile, appeared in the moonlight of the road, at that distance and in that light recognizable only as a man.

Mary never sat at her open window again after this, but she was often tempted to watch, and the watch was almost invariably rewarded by the earlier or later detection of the figure. Who the man was and why he was there she could not guess. But one night, as she sat in the darkness in the lower room before the hour of moonrise, she was aware of the shadowy watcher pacing dimly up and down, trusting solely in the darkness, and taking no advantage this time of the shelter of the hedge.

Vaguely as she had made out his aspect, she knew him for the same, and she watched his goings to and fro the door of the neighboring house was suddenly thrown open, and a broad ray of light darting from it fell full upon the mysterious prowler's face. The face was, of course, Ned Blaine's.

Mary was in a permanent mood now to be easily injured, and she rose up in wrath against this intrusion upon her privacy. What right had he, or any man, to hang about in that way, watching her and spying upon her? Some sense of the unobtrusive and wordless devotion of the watcher touched her here, and brought her down from the heights of anger. And yet the proceeding was intolerable, and sooner or later was sure to be discovered, to bring about new whisperings of scandal and new unmerited sorrows.

Blaine had recoiled at the sudden ray of light, and had disappeared before these varying thoughts and emotions had well had time to course through her heart and mind. But now he was back again, pacing up and down in the darkness. She could see the pale blur of his face turned steadfastly toward the house.

She determined to ignore him, and withdrew herself from the window. She would not even know of his being there, but that was difficult. Even when she had gone to her bedroom, and having prepared for her night's rest blew out the light, she peeped again through an interstice in the blind and saw the dim figure still going up and down.

The morning after this discovery Mary received a second letter from the mysterious Hargreaves, enclosing a second remittance, with the same formula as before. At first she did not notice any difference of address, but by and by her eye lighted upon the first line of the communication, and she saw that it was dated, not from Keston, but from Kirton Square. The forger had relied upon his memory, and his memory had played him false.

She set out at once for the great town, determined, if possible, to unravel the mystery, and at least to discover if Kirton stood in as airy a situation as his forerunner. There was no Kirton Square to be found or heard of, and she came back troubled.

That night the watcher came again. A painful fascination impelled her by this time to keep as regular a watch for him as he evidently kept upon the house, and as he came in sight a suspicion burst upon her mind with so vivid and sudden a light that it looked like certainty. She lit a candle hastily, ran upstairs, and emptied the contents of a drawer upon the bed, and from the tumbled heap of papers before her, after a search of a moment or two, took a letter from Ned Blaine to her husband, and setting this and the communication from John Hargreaves side by side, came, in spite of the stiff disguise of the legal-looking calligraphy, to the swift conclusion that they were written by the same hand.

It was bitter enough in all conscience to have been deserted by her husband, even though she confessed to herself that she had never loved him; it was heart-breaking to be deserted by the people of her own flesh and blood; but to be insulted by the cheating charity of a rejected lover seemed tenfold worse than all.

She descended to the dining room, and taking the bank note from the table on which it lay, crumpled it wrathfully in her hand and walked swiftly from the room into the hall, and from the hall into the roadway. The furtive watcher was away at a round pace in an instant, but she followed and called upon him by name.

"Mr. Blaine! I will not be avoided. I order you to listen to me."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ned Blaine stood stock still in the dark and said nothing.

"How dare you insult me by your charity?" Mary asked him. She pointed with haste and excitement, and her hands were trembling.

Ned, with his hands in his jacket pockets, his shoulders rounded, and his head drooping a little, made no movement and

answered never a word. In the act of walking away from her he had paused at her call of command, and his back was still half turned toward her. Mary, who had not yet begun to cool from the impulse of indignant attack which had inspired her to rush after him, took a further step or two and stood before him.

"How dare you insult me by your charity?" she asked again, clenching the crumpled note in her hand.

Still he said nothing. His figure, dimly outlined in the dark as it was, had a look of dogged impassivity about it which was discouraging.

"This came from you," she said, holding out the crumpled bank note. "You must take it back again."

She held out the note almost timidly, and her eyes searched in vain for any sign of change or relenting in the dogged figure before her.

His immobility was exasperating, but it was not easy to see what ought to be done in face of it. She was more than half inclined for a moment to drop the note and go, but that would hardly have been courteous. It was difficult to be courteous to a man so obstinate. Possibly he might be amenable to reason. The reason of the position was certainly wholly on her side, and he could not be so stupid as to be blind to it. She began to reason with him.

"Surely, Mr. Blaine, you must see how wrong you are in sending this to me."

Mr. Blaine was apparently decided to see nothing. Any movement in the obdurate figure, any shuffle of the foot, for a sign of yielding or uneasiness, any silent negative to urge her to an argument, would have been welcome.

"I can't accept this," she went on desperately. "It was cruel to trap me into taking the other. What would you think of anybody, Mr. Blaine, who laid such a trap to humiliate you and catch your self-respect? How dare you pretend that this came from my husband? What right have you to send me money? What did I ever give you for treating me so?"

To all this the detected benefactor answered nothing.

"Take it!" she said imperiously, for by this time her own speech had warmed her anew into anger. He made no response, and when she had waited for a full half minute, with the note extended in her hand, she moved away. "I shall send this to you by post," she said frigidly, "and I will ask you not to write to me or speak to me again."

She walked from him indignantly, and when she had gone but a step or two turned her head to look at him. He kept his posture—head drooping, shoulders rounded, the obstinate hands rammed into the side pockets. But somehow it did not look as if obstinacy alone were expressed in the posture of the figure. Now that she was but a little distance away from it, it began to seem solitary, bitterly solitary. A sense of pity touched her. The thought of her own loneliness and unhappiness brought tears to her eyes. She could scarcely leave him in that ungrateful and ungenerous way, impracticable and obstinate as he was. She turned and spoke again, and the tears sounded in her voice.

"You must not think I don't feel that you meant to be kind, I know you meant to act delicately and like a friend. But you must see how impossible it is. Will you take this, Mr. Blaine? I would much rather you took it from me. Pray take it."

His continued silence drove her away in a new anger, and she did not turn again until she reached the gate. Then she could dimly see his figure in the roadway. A break in the hedge beyond where he stood allowed the drooping head to be seen in more defined outline against the sky. She entered the house and left him there, and all night long the fancy of the silent and solitary figure standing there oppressed her. She was often angered by it, and as often pitiful over it; but the gust of anger was strong and long, and the pity was a mere lull in the wind.

Ned heard the retiring footsteps, the retreating rustle of the dress, the clank of the gate latch, the faint sound of the closing door. He stood still for a long time. It was not worth while to hope. There was nothing to do, nothing to move for, nowhere to go. Nothing mattered very much. Nothing seemed alive very much to hurt him.

By and by he heard laughing voices coming down the lane. They were vulgar and discordant and the laughter was out of tune with everything. He walked on, taking little if any note of whether his footsteps led him, and at last, in something very like a waking dream, walked past his own house.

(To be continued.)

Another Lost Story.

Grandfather Hollis was ready and willing to tell stories as long as he had eager listeners, but once embarked on the sea of narrative, he allowed no ship to cross his bows. If one did he "put back to shore to once," to use his own words. His greatest trial was his own nephew, Abijah Hobbs, who apparently could not refrain from asking questions at every turn. Many a good story had been lost in this way, so when Grandfather Hollis started a famous tale at a Thanksgiving party, Abijah was requested to keep still.

"'Twas on a story night in November, '76," began Grandfather Hollis, "and the wind had been a moaning all day long; the sky also had a sort of a greenish color, and now and then there'd be a scud of gray clouds across it. I knew something was going to happen, and 'long about 8 o'clock in the afternoon I took a look about the farm to see that everything was all right, animals under shelter and so on; took the cows in, fixed up the barn tight and come back into the house."

"I was kind of uneasy and kept my eyes out of the windows, watching the clouds, and sighting the boats over on the bay side as they come in; but there wasn't anything really out of the way till about 8, or maybe quarter past. Then all of a sudden I heard a low muttering and I sprang to the back window. Just in a line with the window in those days there was a maple tree—"

The listeners were all breathless, bending toward Grandfather Hollis, and for one fatal moment Abijah's wife allowed her vigilant gaze to leave her husband's face.

"'Twas a sugar-maple," cried Abijah.

THE HOUSEHOLD

An Egg Opener.

The opening of an egg is a simple enough matter, but the operation is not and cannot always be performed in a tidy and economical manner. This may seem a most insignificant matter to those who have never had the task of making pies and puddings and pastries, and those other palatable dishes which delight the taste at the table.



THE EGG OPENER.

The maker and the baker in the kitchen.

A Connecticut genius rises to his feet to present mankind, and more particularly woman-kind, with an egg-opener that fills the bill. The little affair is placed surrounding the egg, the tiny spear points are forced through the shell, a slight twist is given the apparatus, and you have your egg neatly and nicely divided. None of the contents is split, and none of the shell falls into the egg.

Veal Cutlets and Macaroni.

Trim and season the cutlets, flatten so that they are rather thin, and dip into egg beaten up with a teaspoonful of butter. Arrange the cutlets side by side in a stewpan with three or four ounces of clarified butter. Set over a very slow fire; let the cutlets cook for ten minutes; then turn each, and allow the same time for the other side. Arrange on a long dish. Pour over a very little butter from the pan, and garnish with macaroni, which has been boiled or steamed in a savory tomato sauce. On each cutlet, the moment before serving, put a small, thin rasber of bacon.

German Coffee Cake.

To two cupsful of soft bread sponge that has been allowed to rise add one-half cupful of warm milk, a little salt, a quarter-cupful of melted shortening, two eggs beaten light with three-quarters of a cup of sugar. Add half a grated nutmeg, some raisins or currants and as much warmed flour as can be worked in with a spoon. Put into a greased pan and set to rise. When very light moisten the top with milk, sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon and bake in a slow oven forty minutes. Cover with paper for the first fifteen minutes of baking.

Apple Fritters.

Beat the yolks and whites of five eggs separately and stir into the thickened yolks three cupsful of milk, a pinch of salt and three teacups of flour that has been twice sifted with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Beat hard, then add the stiffened whites and a cup of peeled and thinly sliced apples. Drop by the spoonful in deep, boiling fat. Transfer when done to a hot dish and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Chicken Bouillon.

Cut a large fowl into pieces and put over the fire with just enough cold water to cover it. Set where it will heat slowly and simmer gently for four hours. Season with salt, pepper and a dash of onion juice and set away to cool. When cold skim off the fat and strain out the bones and meat. Set on fire to get very cold and skim once more, removing every vestige of grease. Serve hot or ice cold.

Orangeade.

Mix together the juice of six oranges and two lemons. Boil three cups of water with one cup of sugar for ten minutes; take from the fire and add the fruit juice when the syrup cools. Put it where it will get very cold and serve in glasses of crushed ice.

Ham Sandwiches.

Chep lean ham fine and mix it with a very little French mustard and if you wish enough mayonnaise to make a paste of the meat. Spread on slices of crustless bread.

Short Suggestions.

A damp pantry and warm cupboard are both bad places in which to keep bread.

A piece of bread tied in a bit of muslin and dropped into the water in which greens are boiling will absorb the unpleasent odor.

It is a good idea to put a little shot in the bottom of tall vases. Then they are not so liable to be knocked over by careless hands.

As a sterilizer boiling water outside the bottles in sterilizing baby's milk and inside in cleansing them is invaluable knowledge for every young mother.

When lighting a gas stove it will often give a slight explosion and light wrong, thus giving no heat. Turn the gas off very quickly and on again. It will then light properly without any further trouble.

It is not generally known that eggs covered with boiling water and allowed to stand for five minutes are more nourishing and easier digested than eggs placed in boiling water—and allowed to boil furiously for three and a half minutes.

Old towels may be made to renew their youth, says an economic housewife, by cutting them through the center and sewing the two outside edges together. The reason of this is that the towels get thin down the center long before the sides are worn.

AGRICULTURAL



Smoking Meat.

Where one has but a little meat to smoke a barrel can often be used for this purpose. A correspondent sends us the following plan, which he regards for as perfectly satisfactory, says Orange Judd Farmer: A sugar barrel or other barrel of large size is preferable. With a keyhole saw cut a door near the bottom through two or three staves. After sawing the door nail a strip across the staves to hold them together. The hinges are old pieces of leather tacked fast and may be hung from the top. Make a cross to hang over the barrel, and from the hooks suspend the meat. When the meat is in place throw a blanket over

the cross to confine the smoke and light the fire, which should be placed in a pan. Great care must be taken with the fire so as not to burn up the meat or the barrel.

Barrel Smokehouse.



BARREL SMOKEHOUSE.

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Dairying that Pays.

In a series of institutes in the north-eastern counties of Pennsylvania I found that farmers are specializing to a much greater extent in that section than in many other sections of the State, says L. W. Lighty in National Stockman. Quite a number of dairymen are putting in plants of their own for buttermaking and are devoting all their thought and energies along that line. In a number of instances they sent their sons to the State college to take a short course and are putting on the market first class butter. In every instance of this kind I learned that the demand was greater than the supply of butter at a very good price. The universal verdict of those men was that, while dairying is hard and slavish work because of the minute and constant attention that the details of the business require, it pays a handsome profit.

Some Mixing of Fertilizers.

The editor of this department is a firm believer in the home mixing of commercial fertilizers, but only when one knows what his soil needs. If potash and phosphoric acid only are needed, there is assuredly no sense in laying a lot of other ingredients, and the same argument holds good on any combination. On the other hand, if one has had experience with the high-grade complete fertilizers and has found them profitable to use it would be folly to take up with the home mixing of fertilizers, particularly in large quantities. There seems to be no need of argument in favor of either plan except as given, for it all depends upon a knowledge of soil and crop requirement, and action accordingly.

Good Field Gate.

There is a sketch of a good field gate. Why use all the timber on the arm to brace a gate, when you can make all the brace out of one bar? The 2 foot long, and I will guarantee never to sag. This gate is 8 feet by 5 feet, made by 1x4 lumber. It will get either way and the brace will al-

low the gate. If any of your other farmers can beat this gate let me hear of it.—J. M. Beutvais.

Wheat Screenings.

The value of wheat screenings is not understood by taking some note what experiment stations have done with it. In the Montana experiment station, where some comparative values were ascertained, it was shown that what screenings were the most profitable for feeding to lambs, while they proved the most efficient for pigs. One experiment, however, did not give conclusive proof of the value of any ration. Where corn is used it will be the universal gain in fattening sheep and lambs.

Farmers as a Science.

Farmers offers many opportunities for science. There is plenty of room for experiment, and every experiment, no matter how small, enables the farmer either to increase his

output or avoid mistakes. It is in the management of the details that the savings occur, and the keeping of accounts will enable the farmer to conduct his farm with a better knowledge of his operations.

Watering Cows in Winter.

It is not a pleasant sight to see a lot of cows in the barnyard with their noses thrust through a hole broken in the ice covering a tub of water. Nor is it any wonder that such cows are poor milkers. Years ago the writer worked on the old-time plan of watering them twice daily; then the plan was tried of furnishing water three times daily, during the winter, and a comparison of results showed that it paid well. The water given at morning and night is nearly warm, and the cows seem to enjoy it greatly during the cold days. That given at noon is colder, but the chill is removed and the animals drink it freely. Of course, it is considerable work to water cows in this manner, but if one has a number of animals, some contrivance can be put in operation which will make the work comparatively easy. Try it for the next two or three months, watch the results in the milk pail, and you will agree that it pays.

Where Beef Cattle Grow.

There is a widespread notion that the Western and northwestern cattle ranch States grow the bulk of the beef cattle of the country, but it is a great mistake. Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico, containing over 800,000 square miles and great cattle ranges, by the last census returns had only 4,890,549 head of cattle. While the single central agricultural State of Iowa alone had 5,367,920 head, to say nothing of the other Central States so rich in grain and cattle growing. These Central States can grow and maintain a steer to every two acres while these range States, for the most part have twenty acres to the steer except on the rich alfalfa and irrigated lands. On such lands a single acre will support a steer, so rich are the alfalfa pastures.

Hinders for the Hog.

I would suggest a plan to prevent a hog from catching chickens. My plan works like a charm and is perfectly humane. I procure a piece of heavy leather large enough to come down over the face well below the eyes to within about two inches of the end of the nose and fasten the upper side to each ear with a couple of ordinary hog rings. A device of this kind may lose off occasionally, but it is easily replaced.—Henry Moon.

The Farmer's Pork Barrel.

The farmer who raises a few pigs for his pork barrel may count the cow and affirm that pigs do not pay, but where a few pigs are raised they will consume a large amount of material that would be of no value except for their use. When the pork barrel is full the farmer is at least fortified for the winter with meat, and in many cases where no pigs are kept there is a waste of material that could be utilized with the aid of at least one or two porkers.

A Remarkable Cow.

According to a current item, an Indiana man, whose name is not given, wishes to show in the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 a cow named "The Queen of the West." It is a cow with five legs, five hips, two tails and two udders. She is 7 years old and raised a calf last year. Being so well-endowed with udders she ought to surpass every other cow in the world as a milker.

Agricultural Briefs.

Make 1904 a banner year in your farm efforts.

Clean up; make the old farm look new and start new methods, too.

Some farms carry a lot of worthless dogs. Why not get rid of them and keep a few sheep?

Hasty work is always at the cost of excellence. Take time enough to do everything well.

Gentleness with the cows pays. Cows that fear their owners are not as profitable as they might be.

Time to begin mending calculation about that good garden you've been promising your wife. Make selection and order seeds early.

In the "zones" where sugar-beet thrive and are produced with good saccharine percentage many farmers are making money on the crop.

Don't go to Smith's auction and buy a lot of truck you can't make use of. Be wise and sell your own rubbish, and take the money and buy some new implements you need.

Pleasant resolutions are worse than none. When you make up your mind to improve in any direction be in earnest, and success will crown honest efforts.

A hive or two of bees should be on every farm. The bees help fertilize the fruit blooms and honey is good on buckwheat cakes and the bees do light to work among the buckwheat blooms—a good combination.