



CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

Esther was beginning to feel the quiet intolerable. She pushed the window open and walked across the lawn to the gate. Her heart was beating stormily; the flowers at her breast rose and fell with its rapid, heavy throbs. She had not been at the gate five minutes when she heard a horse's hoof-beats.

"They are coming! Oh, Percy!" she cried, with a sob of sudden relief and joy.

In her eagerness she opened the gate and went out into the road. She could see a trap coming along rapidly. Then a sudden shyness crept over her; she felt ashamed to be discovered there, on the lookout for her lover. Blushing even in the dark, and though there was no one to see her, she ran back to the walk, and when the trap drew up at the gate, she was standing on the doorstep. Only one man was in the trap, and it was not Percy!

Her heart failed her, yet not with actual fear; rather with a vexed impatience. This late arrival was Hugh Fleming. He walked quickly up to the door, but at sight of Esther's white figure on the threshold he came to a halt.

"Where is Percy? What has made you so late? We have been so uneasy about you."

"Then you have not heard?"

He answered her question by a question, staring hard at her in the uncertain light.

"We have heard nothing. What is it?"

Then at sight of his set, white face, a heat of tears rushed upon her, and she came down the steps and stood on the walk beside him, trembling and paling. She did not know why.

"Has anything happened? Is Percy—"

Her dry lips failed her, all the breath in her body seemed fluttering out of them.

He took her hands and wrung them, wringing them hard.

"My poor girl! But come into the house; you must not stand out here."

The dining room was the first he came to; he opened it and walked in.

"Esther, I don't know how to tell you what I have been sent here to tell you tonight. Any other creature could have done it better, I think. All the way here I have been praying that you might have heard it from someone else; but since no one has told you, I must."

The stood before him, her hands locked fast together, her dry eyes fixed upon his face. The life seemed frozen in her.

"Only out of those wild, wide-open eyes, the tortured soul looked, hungry, questioning. This look unmanned Hugh Fleming. If she had cried out, and clung to him, as other women might have done, he could have borne it better, perhaps. As it was, she frightened him.

"Eddy," he cried, going back in his deep excitement to the familiar name of his boyhood, "for heaven's sake try to bear up. Something has happened to Percy. He met with an accident going back from here last night; he—"

"Hush!" she said. "He is dead!"

She turned her head and looked over her shoulders at the table set out behind her—the long, glittering table, loaded with choice dishes, and rare fruits and wines. Her eyes followed hers, and then he saw, for the first time, that the wedding feast was spread. The mockery of it hurt him, like an actual blow. But only for an instant; he had time to think of nothing but Esther. She stood quite still and upright, her hands tightly folded across her breast. In the dim light of the room, her face, with its still lips and half-closed eyes, looked ghastly, corpse-like.

"Esther," he whispered, and laid his hand on her arm tenderly. He had never seen this girl dearly once, and the sight of her was agony to him.

"How can I live without him? Oh, Hugh, how can I?"

She stretched out her arms, and he caught her to him and laid her head against his breast. Suddenly she grew heavy in his arms; the face against his neck looked white as newly fallen snow. She had fainted.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was past midnight when Dulcie knocked at her Uncle's door at Jersey street. The man who opened it carried her to a little child, but that night she scarcely knew her. She had thrown her veil back for air, and her face, white and drawn, and with a vestige of its old fitting dimples, looked almost old in the lamplight.

"Where is my uncle, Giles?"

"He has just come in, miss! He did not expect you, I think—staring a little."

"No, he did not expect me to-night. Send someone to get my room ready. I will go to him."

She passed on to the room where she knew she was sure of finding her uncle at that hour. He was there, but not alone. A little shrewd-looking man in black was with him. She remembered his face vaguely; she had met him some time, perhaps, but she was in no mood to recall that night. At sight of her standing on the threshold, Durer Levesque rose quickly, pushing his chair back.

"My dear girl, is it yourself, really?"

"I think so, uncle. I am not quite well—smiling wanly, as she crossed the door to him.

she liked, in her way, however—ventured to speak to her of his love for her, she looked up at him in bold surprise. It was at the Embassy, and they had been walking together.

"What do you see in me to love, Herr Switzer? Why?—laughing a little, and laying her hand on the shoulder of a marble-dryard near—'You might as well love this cunning bit of stonework. I have no more heart than she.'"

"I believe it," the young man answered, bitterly, gnawing at his mustache to keep better words back.

"Yes, you may," and then, with a swift change of the upturned face, and a look in the frank eyes that melted all his anger; "But do not blame me for it. It is not my fault," smiling sadly—"that I possess a heart of stone, in place of a heart of flesh like other women."

"I am not mistaken, Miss Levesque, this gentleman is an old friend of yours."

Dulcie turned round to look at the speaker. It was Count Otto von Brunnen, and one of the girl's few friends in Baden. He was standing behind her chair, and a tall gentleman in evening dress was standing a little way behind him.

"An old friend," she repeated, smiling. The tall gentleman stepped forward and bowed. Dulcie's heart gave a great bound as she looked up at him and recognized Hugh Fleming. This was an old friend, indeed—a ghost out of the past she had fled away from twelve long months before. She hardly knew if she was glad to see him, but she put out her hand. He drew a chair next to hers, and they began to talk.

When Hugh Fleming, looking at her gravely, said: "Esther grieved sorely for you, Miss Levesque, she thought it hard you should stay away from her in her trouble," she lifted her head and looked back at him, amazed.

"Her trouble?"—wonderingly. "What trouble? I did not know she had any."

"You knew about it at the time, of course, but perhaps you have forgotten. It is a year past now, and you said once, I remember, that you could forget anything in a year's time."

"Now don't speak to me like that, Mr. Fleming—laying one gloved hand on his arm and looking at him wistfully. 'You are thinking hard things of me, and I don't know why. Believe me, it never entered my thoughts even that Esther was anything but the innocent of the happiest.'"

It was his turn to look amazed. The band was playing noisily. Count Otto was laughing aloud at some dry remark of Durer Levesque's. A waiter, in passing, caught his foot in the lace of Dulcie's skirt, and hung a guttural apology in German. And Dulcie, in her rich dress, her hands folded on her lap, sat and looked at Hugh, the exquisite coloring of her cheeks and lips paling a little in the nervous shock his words had given her.

Was it all a dream? he asked himself. Was this only a phantom Dulcie, born of his own intense longing? Would he be awoken presently and find it was an illusion?

"What was her trouble, Mr. Fleming? Do tell me, please."

"Why, poor Percy's awfully sudden death," he answered her, looking at her in deep perplexity. "It went near killing her; as it is, even, she'll never be quite the same again."

"Percy's death?" Dulcie cried, in a kind of wall.

The count and her uncle had walked a little way off to smoke a cigar together, and just as it happened the crowd had drifted away from that corner for a while, so that they could talk undisturbed. Hugh Fleming was indescribably pained at the agony in her voice and look.

"That was poor Percy's trouble," he said, gently. "At the time, we made sure that you had known of it."

"Known of it?"—gaspingly. "No—tell!" She tried to smother, but she could not.

Great sobs rose, choking her. She clasped her hands tightly and did her best to keep back the sobs, but she could not. The horror of this new trouble was too strong for her. All the calm she had been two months in building up broke down at this blow. Looking at her, Hugh Fleming saw tears falling like rain down her white cheeks. Then he remembered Mrs. Hardinge's words, spoken to him in confidence, when the first bitter sorrow of her sister's illness had untied her tongue:

"There was something between him and Dulcie. I am confident of that. He was in the up-train, you say, the evening train, and he had never been near us that day, nor had Esther been out. But Dulcie had. He came down to her and not to Eddy. I am glad that he is dead."

Poor Percy was dead, and this girl had loved him; fate had dealt hardly with both. Very briefly he told her all that there was to be told. When she heard that it was in the railway carriage he had died, on his way back to town, after seeing her in Brierton Wood, she gasped. It seemed to her excited fancy as if she were partly to blame for that awfully sudden death.

"The doctors thought he must have lately passed through some excitement," Hugh Fleming told her.

"Oh, it was cruel," she said, at last, "for my uncle never to tell me! Esther might well think me 'hard.'"

"He acted for the best, I am sure."

"He had no right in such a case to judge what was best for me"—resentfully.

When Hugh Fleming bade them good-night at the door of their hotel he saw Dulcie's face in the full light. The wan pain on it moved his pity. What was that he should judge her? Whatever her faults, she had at least suffered for them. Why, that very night she had gone through a fiery trial, and gone through it bravely, too, as few women could have done! And Hugh Fleming had an Englishman's genuine admiration for "pluck" of any sort. Yet she did not seem angry with him, and he was glad of that.

It was nearly a week before he saw her again after that night.

"She has one of her tiresome nervous attacks," her uncle told him. "She is rather subject to them."

She came down one evening after dinner. She smiled, and gave Hugh Fleming her hand frankly enough, yet he saw she was not quite at her ease with him.

"She is angry with me," he said to himself, "and perhaps she has a right. Who can tell how the poor girl was tempted?" She sat down on a low chair, at the farther end of the long salon. He saw her through a vista of cool shadows, of flickering bars of sunlight. The windows were open, but the shades were down, and the light from the candle came into the room. True to her instinct, Dulcie dressed with care.

She wore a dinner dress of delicate gray silk, trimmed with creamy lace, and in the bosom of her dress was a pale tea rose, half blown and fragrant. She was lovelier than ever, he thought, and yet so different from the Dulcie that had blushed and laughed her way into his heart in Kent. He contented himself with looking at her for a while, and then—just as she had known he would be—he was drawn to go and speak to her. As she watched him crossing to her from the other end of the long, bare salon, she wondered a little at her own interest in him. He was not her judge, yet she longed to appease his anger.

"It is horrible," she thought, "for a man so good and clever to think ill of me; and besides he might turn Esther against me if I quarrel with him now."

So, for Esther's sake, and for fear of future prejudice, she set herself to soften this rigid law-giver. Alas for the citizen that has a foe without and inside a friend ready to throw wide the gates to him! Hugh Fleming's heart had not the ghost of a chance.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Dulcie, what makes you so restless today? Is it the heat, or has one of your old 'moons' come upon you?"

"I am sure I can't tell"—swinging her hat within an inch of the tiled floor. "I feel as hot and tired out—and as wretched as can be."

Esther Durrant laughed at that unfeeling. She was standing before a long dresser, piling a dish with great, ripe strawberries. Her fingers were stained with the juice of them, and there was quite a pink line about her mouth, which told she was "taking her pay" as she went on. But even strawberries could not keep Dulcie indoors any longer. She was leaning against the jamb of the kitchen door, half in, half out, the glaring yellow sunlight lighting her unadorned head and shoulders. The kitchen at Holm Farm was a picture, with its floor of tiles, delicately somber in tint and polished like marble, its one-sided walls, and wide windows, each on each side of the doorway. Then the pots and the pans, and the quaint old chairs and tables, the wood black with age. Though it was one of the hottest of August days, there was a fire burning on the hearth—there was a grate—in a huge covered recess which of itself would have gone a good way toward making a city kitchen. And over all flowed the sunshine, which came in through open door and windows, and turned the platters to gold plate, and the tiles to lap's lazuli.

In the heart of this shade and glitter stood Esther Durrant. Her tight-fitting chintz gown might have been her grandmother's; her arms were bare to the elbows, her pretty feet peeped from under her "bed-back" skirt—dainty feet in high-heeled shoes, which Dulcie declared reminded her of the fairy godmother's bot-tines in the story of "Goody Two Shoes"—a beautiful woman in a quaint idyllic setting.

(To be continued.)

All Kinds of Pupils.

In the Century, Anna Fulmer describes her experiences in teaching "The Three R's at Circle City." Miss Fulmer says of her school: Thirty-six pupils were enrolled, where I had expected hardly a dozen. In age they ranged from five to thirty. Three races were represented—Caucasian, American Indian, and Mongolian; that is to say, whites, Indians, and Eskimos, with all degrees of mixture of the three. The six white children who were in attendance during the entire school year did good work, though they were not far advanced. It was no trouble to classify them; but it was difficult during the first two weeks to classify the native children, very few of whom, however, were full-blooded Indians. The majority of them had attended school before, though few of them for a longer period than three months. Two bright girls of fourteen had lived for two years in the Church of England mission at Forty-Mile Post. Both were in the same reading, writing and spelling classes with a ten-year-old white boy who had had about the same amount of schooling.

Dual Homesteadness.

Whilst I in Old-World capitals sojourn— In storied cities, rich with Time's acquiescent— A pilgrim from our wide, unstoried West, Forever homeward I in spirit turned: For me through each Atlantic sunset burned My homelands dawn in braver splendor, dressed.

The bird divine that sang from bosky trees, Beside my brown thrush scanty tribute earned. But now, when I once more sit down at home, What fond perversity my soul pursues! She roves afar, beyond her native pale, And asks Manhattan tale to pace through Rome;

Or leaves the brown thrush for the winged Muse— For moonlit Cadenabba's nightingale.—Century.

Sixth Sense in Pigeons.

Captain Renaud, the French specialist in charge of the military pigeon service, is a firm believer in a sixth sense in pigeons and other birds and animals possessed of homing instinct, which he calls the sense of "orientation." He has defended his theory at length in a paper recently read before the French Academie des Sciences, claiming to have amply proved it by special trials of various kinds.

Paper Cigars.

Americans are producing paper cigars as an article of commerce, and, what is more, are being backed up by connoisseurs of the fragrant weed. The cigars are prepared from sheets of paper which have been soaked in tobacco juice, and then pressed and cut into the requisite shape by means of specially constructed machinery.

Marriage Law in Greece.

In ancient Greece a law provided that if a man divorced his wife he could not subsequently marry a woman younger than his discarded partner.

AGRICULTURAL



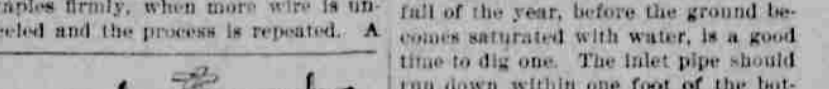
Putting Up Barbed Wire.

The illustration, from the American Agriculturist, shows a handy contrivance for "paying out" barbed wire when building a fence of this material. A stout stone drag has a round stake set in one corner well braced. The reel of wire is put on as suggested for attaching the upper wire and below the braces at various heights when putting on the other wires. This brings the wire right along beside the stakes and at just the height desired. When ready to staple, the driver of the team take hold of one arm of the reel to keep it from turning, starting up the team a few feet to stretch the wire. His companion then staples firmly, when more wire is un-reeled and the process is repeated. A

A Barn Cistern.

A barn cistern will be a very great advantage where a large number of cattle are wintered. The cistern should be placed on high ground, so that the water can be piped directly to the cattle stalls. The cistern should be built under ground. It may be built out of the ground six feet or more; use the earth that comes out of the bottom to bank up the outside. The earth bankment should be five feet thick and well sodded. This will keep the water cool in summer and warm in winter. A cistern fourteen feet deep and seven feet in diameter will hold 150 barrels of water, and can be built for \$50. The fall of the year, before the ground becomes saturated with water, is a good time to dig one. The inlet pipe should run down within one foot of the bottom. The inflow of water from every rain and the constant drawing of the water will keep the body of water stirred, and thus keep it pure. The rain water that falls upon a barn forty by twenty-six feet will keep the cistern full.—Baltimore American.

FOR MAKING WIRE FENCE.



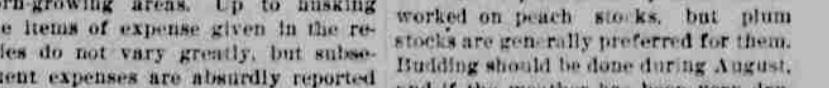
slow-moving team should be used, or it will not be safe to attempt holding the reel.

Cost of Growing Corn.

The University of Illinois has been trying to find out what it costs the Illinois farmers to raise corn. It had replies from 300 farmers in all the corn-growing areas. Up to husking the items of expense given in the replies do not vary greatly, but subsequent expenses are absurdly reported to vary 11.3 cents in one county to 38.8 cents in another. The average cost of raising corn was found to be for the state \$8.72 per acre, or 16.1 cents per bushel. Including interest on the farmers' equipment and the cost of the cribs, shelling and in hauling to market the conclusion is reached that in 1896, which was an average year, with an average yield of fifty-four bushels per acre, the cost from breaking the ground to delivery of the corn at the elevator was 19.5 cents. This covers the rent of the ground or interest on the value of the land, interest on depreciation on plant and wages for the farmer and others engaged in the work of raising the corn. At this rate, if he got 29.5 cents per bushel he cleared \$5.40 per acre. He got this clear in addition to wages, interest, depreciation and other costs.

Comfortable Fruit Ladder.

Upon the ordinary fruit ladder one must stand for a long time and endure the strain and the cutting into the feet of a small round. A fairly broad, flat step gives firm and comfortable support to the feet. The ladder can be made light, too, as the one shown in the illustration. Make one in winter according to this pattern, while you have plenty of time, and it will be ready for next season's fruit picking. The top of such a ladder can narrow to a point if desired. The main piece must be of some light material free from knots and other imperfections. Dress all the material together, then paint. If kept under shelter when not in use it will last many years.



Thin the Apples.

Most of the early apples are abundant bearers and are apt to be small. Those that are sweet are not good for much until ripe, but Early Harvest and the Twenty Ounce apple will bear picking when two-thirds grown and make excellent pies. If this is done in all parts of the tree, plucking a few apples where they are fullest on the bough, it will make what apples remain much larger and better, besides supplying early apples for household use, says an exchange.

Keeping Fowls Out of Mischief.

Something more than feed is necessary to keep fowls from running to the garden or the newly planted corn field, and scratching among the dirt. Hens do this, less to secure the grain than to rid themselves of vermin by thoroughly dusting themselves. If a place close by the henhouse is kept plowed, and is strewn twice a week with grain and harrowed, fowls will rarely leave it for anything.

Clean Milk.

A correspondent of the Practical Farmer says: To have clean milk, it must always be kept so. Commence when milking. My sister, who has spent four years on the Isle of Jersey, saw the way they milked their Jersey cows in that country. It was through

Fertilize the Orchard.

It is certain that any crop will exhaust the soil in time, whether of grain, grass or fruit. On some farms may be seen orchards of apple trees over half a century old. Every year these trees have produced fruit, and in return have received nothing in the form of fertilizer. It is estimated that an ordinary apple crop removes from an acre of soil about 50 pounds of nitrogen, 40 pounds of phosphoric acid and 75 pounds of potash. When clover is grown in the orchard the land is benefited by having its proportion of nitrogen increased, but it will gain nothing in mineral matter. The land devoted to apples should receive fertilizer or manure every year, and when there is a heavy crop of apples in sight the fruit should be thinned out in the early stages of growth.

Crop Experiments.

The area of ground that can be used for conducting a number of experiments need not be large. An acre will give sixty-four plots each 25 by 25 feet square, and a comparison of different crops, under various methods of cultivation, will give more practical experience and information to those interested than can be gained by many years' cultivation without regard to system or regularity.

Summer Pruning.

Attention should be paid to summer pruning fruit trees. A topping of the growing shoots just before they finish growth will generally cause them to set fewer buds for the next season. Besides this it is the best time to prune in order to thicken the trees.

Poultry Notes.

Better fatten and eat the stunted chickens. Do not mix the bone meal with the food. Sell poultry alive during the next two months. Keep eggs in a cool place until they are marketed. Sell the young ducks as soon as they are ready for market. Mixed with milk buckwheat makes a good fattening ration. It is easier to avoid disease in the flock than to cure it. As a rule the eggs of hens grow smaller as the moulting season advances. When the fowls are too fat an exclusive diet of oats will soon reduce them. Poultry and eggs are inseparable if a fair profit is derived from the investment. In the smaller breeds beauty of form and plumage are the first requirements. One of the disadvantages with guineas is that they are not a good market fowl. The second year of the hen is more profitable than at any other time during her life. A crower estimates that something like 6000 infants are overlaid by their mothers yearly in London. Infants, he said, should sleep in cots, as it takes little to suffocate them.