



CHAPTER XVII.

For a few moments, in that wild and hurried excitement, Vanity was forgotten. She had been a great favorite, and none of us knew whether she were alive or dead. But the detective went to her side, and saw that she breathed, although her eyes were closed, and she was quite unconscious. With professional presence of mind, he opened her lips and poured a little brandy into her mouth, and perhaps he saved her life, for an hour after, she was taken into the hospital, the doctor declared that she had just escaped death by exhaustion—a few beats of the pulse more, and she would have been past help and hope.

But let us return for one moment to the burning farm. As I said, the most complete silence prevailed within the walls. Hardware was neither seen, nor was any motion of him heard again. Just after the whisper went round that the fire was going out, the roof fell in with a crash. Hardware had made elaborate preparations for a conflagration; and the fire ran from room to room, and seemed to meet fuel everywhere. Its rapidity was equalled by the heat and fury; for when the ruins were searched there was absolutely nothing but a charred mass. Rake it with a rake, and you'll overturn every handful and sift it to the last particle through sieves; all was ashes, and nothing but ashes. They expected, perhaps, to find diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, cat's-eyes, and so forth. Blessed are they who expect not! Have you ever burned a lot of old letters in a corner of the grate? Within the four blackened walls of old Tumbledown Farm nothing was left but such thin ashes. All that raging flames could consume had vanished.

As Willie Snow came back with help a strange thing occurred. At a turn of the pleasant lane, under a shady tree where he and Vanity many a time had stood, there met him a party of bearers carrying his former sweetheart down to the hospital. Now, I don't by any means want to pile horror upon horror, and as Willie told me, there was no horror here; for she lay white and calm, beautiful beyond words, the sweetest repose upon her face.

"Is she quite dead?" Willie gasped.

"No, but going fast enough," some one replied.

"God, save her life!" the young man cried. "Oh, God, hear my prayer, and save her life!"

Under the excitement of the time, I suppose, the detectives cast off their silent ways and answered questions freely. Hardware was "wanted." About two years ago there had been a most extraordinary jewel robbery at Birmingham. From "information received" the police were led to believe that a man named Barnett had been connected with the robbery, and this man they traced into connection with old Hardware and his daughter.

Now, in this place I had better relate what came out afterward. Hardware was of respectable family, and had even been at Cambridge for one or two terms.

But he turned to evil ways, drank, gambled, and took to the race course. Subsequently it was found that he had "reformed," and had married the daughter of a clergyman. One daughter was born to them, and the mother stuck to him through all his dissoluteness and profligacy.

Barnett had early in life been celebrated as an amateur actor, and now, in his life as an adventurer, he took to the stage, and became a small manager. So he lived for several years. His wife died; his daughter, whose beauty and vivacity were well known, went upon the stage, and, for a time, father and daughter did tolerably well. Then the two vanished, and when they reappeared Miss Hardware had an aged father, very decrepit, but of excellent character. Under this disguise throwing it off artfully and by night, he had committed several burglaries, and left the police nowhere at all. It is fair to say that there never was any proof that his daughter was connected with his crimes, or even knew of them.

Barnett or Hardware had not only been in several burglaries, but there was little doubt that he was the hand which had shot one of the Birmingham police, who had tried to capture him. The detectives fully believed that Hardware—or Barnett, rather—had learned that the police were on his track, and their "theory" was that he intended to set fire to the farm, and to lead them to the belief that he and his daughter had perished in the flames.

Gracious Me lay stretched on the grass, just where he had fallen. At last, when the excitement had somewhat subsided, they went to examine the dead body, and were surprised to observe that the eyes remained open. Still more the observers were astonished to see the said eyes blinking in a curious way.

"Where were you hit?" inquired one of the less compassionate persons. "Which side did the ball enter?"

"Neither side," said little Gracious, trembling still. "You see, this is how it occurred. I was here, and he was there. He was going to fire, when—bang!—now I can't tell why—that if I was to drop down, do you see, and lie quite still, the affair might blow over. So I did. Hit? bleed you no! Not within a yard of me!"

Vanity had been taken to the hospital, where for seven weeks she lay between life and death. Suddenly she began to mend. Then one morning, when some kind person called to ask after her, the reply was that she had gone. Where? Nobody knew. Neither doctor nor chaplain could tell anything except that she was gone.

Vanity had been dangerously wounded. The ball had entered her side, and the doctors had great trouble in extracting it. The patient suffered much; and from weakness she dropped into fever. The physicians said she would die, but she rallied, and, with a weary, heartsick look upon her face, turned, as it were, upon the toilsome road leading back to the life that was gone.

A lady was nursing in the hospital who was there to call him—only I believe now the saying is "sister," and she seemed to be drawn to Miss Vanity by what she was told. Somehow this lady, Sister Catherine, treated the sick girl like a daughter. Anyhow, she found the way to Vanity Hardware's heart.

Poor Vanity Hardware! Wounded in body and utterly broken in spirits, she clung to her new friend like a child, and told her all the story of her life. How her mother had been good and true through all her sufferings, until her death. How, when dying, she had called Vanity to her side, and put a little faded white flower into the child's hand, saying:

"There, darling, I laid that flower on

consideration for number one. Yet when this whispered in her heart? Why, as she listened to it, did her color deepen, and her eyes grow strangely bright, and her pulse beat fast?

"Willie Snow—the man who loved me once—who was stolen from me—who could not resist me even now—the man that I love still—what if I won him back after all?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Suddenly, as she sat at the window, she saw her handsome hostess appear, walking in a very sisterly way with the young horseman. They promenaded the gravel walk up and down, engaged in earnest talk.

"No, Tom," the lady said, "I don't agree with you; most decidedly not. I cannot call him handsome. Of course I don't care to say she is anything else."

"But, like the celebrated parrot, Maud," he replied, "you think a deal!"

"Besides, Tom—"Maud raised her fingers warningly—"mark my words; you will have the old lady on your hands. Charming mother-in-law, Tom."

"Oh, no, you know," Tom called out, in sincere alarm. "Take precautions, you know. Insert special clause in the lease. You see?" he knocked the ash out of his cigar—"what is a fellow to do? These beauties require such a lot of love-making, and it eats up a fellow's time. Now, Arabella is not excessive in that way."

"Then I suppose it is settled, Tom?"

"Don't think I could do better, Maud."

"Well, dear, I hope you will be happy."

But it ever a kind sister's voice expressed sorrow and disappointment, verging on disgust, it was Maud's voice then.

The cause of Maud Neville's exit did not at first appear. In about a quarter of an hour she came into Vanity's room, and Vanity noticed that her countenance was anxious. The letter of her aunt—Sister Catherine—had evidently not been the first communication made to her concerning the young actress, for she knew all her history, and Vanity felt grateful for the tact and delicacy with which she glided over things which would be painful to the poor wanderer. Every minute she grew more charmed by the kind manner of her new friend, and felt even ready to accept her guidance.

(To be continued.)

The Testy Judge.

A young man with a delicate, straw-colored mustache and football hair parted in the center and glued down to his temples, sauntered carelessly into one of the Superior Courts the other day. He eyed the Judge through his glasses, and sized up all the attorneys. Then he walked up to the bar and watched the other children with a tired expression. Vanity called this lady mama at once.

A gentleman sat in an easy chair reading the newspaper, and not taking notice of anybody. From the familiar way the two little children ran about him, Vanity judged him to be the father of the family. Next she remarked that on a settle there was posted an elderly lady very stout, very stiff, very dogmatic in her demeanor.

Now, Vanity Hardware had eyes like a raven or a hawk, and the light of the room, as I have said, was brilliant; so she saw how this old lady watched with shrewd and discerning eye a bit of by-play which was going on at the piano.

Beside the piano stood a well-furnished, ruddy young man, who had evidently just dropped into the drawing room. A young lady was sitting at the instrument, looking up with laughter into his face.

The Judge, who is nervous and testy, had observed the young man and frowned down on the glued hair and glasses. When the young man boldly walked up to the bar and took a glass of ice water, the Judge fairly boiled with indignation at such temerity amounting almost to contempt. The young man was just raising the glass to his lips when the Judge roared:

"That water, sir, is for attorneys and other officers of the court."

The Judge, who doesn't possess enough intelligence to hump up to and operate most any sort of farm machinery isn't wanted any longer on most farms. In looking for a good hand the farmer now counts skill worth as much as muscle. He knows, from sad experience, that in unskilled hands a machine will, in all probability, suffer injury and damage far beyond the amount of wages paid, and he strives to steer clear of this sort of unprofitable labor.

FARM AND GARDEN NOTES.

ITEMS OF TIMELY INTEREST TO THE FARMERS.

Grooming Horses—Symptoms of Tuberculosis—Skilled Farm Laborers Demanded.

Grooming horses is quite common among farmers, for far more men and boys take delight in working around the horse than will do the same thing for the cow. Yet to brush and curry the cow, especially at the time she is shedding her coat, is even more necessary than to groom the horse. It will aid greatly in keeping the milk free from the dust and hairs which introduce bacteria into it, and make it impossible to produce good butter from it. Besides, no domestic animal enjoys a thorough currying better than does the cow. Try it and see.

SYMPTOMS OF TUBERCULOSIS.

These are first a cough, accompanied by quick breathing, then a discharge from the lungs or throat, brightness of the eyes, loss of flesh, a bad-smelling breath, in a cow thin blue milk, deficient in casein (the curd) and rich in fat. The skin becomes drawn and the hair harsh and erect, the cough becomes worse; if the bowels are diseased, there is an incurable fetid diarrhea, and as the disease progresses the animal becomes skin and bone only, and very weak and tottering. Finally it lies down for the last time and slowly dies. If the milk organs are affected, as they may be, although the lungs and bowels may show the effects most, the milk is likely to affect persons who may use it, or the meat will be diseased and unfit for food, as carrying the germs of the disease with it, unless thoroughly cooked.

SKILLED FARM LABORERS DEMANDED.

Notwithstanding the fact that machinery has been introduced that does away with much of the hard labor that was performed on the farm by hand a few years since, laborers seem to grow scarcer year by year, and at times it is very difficult for the farmer to command all the help needed to push forward his work in busy seasons; and it is skilled farm laborers that are needed.

The man who doesn't possess enough intelligence to hump up to and operate most any sort of farm machinery isn't wanted any longer on most farms. In looking for a good hand the farmer now counts skill worth as much as muscle. He knows, from sad experience, that in unskilled hands a machine will, in all probability, suffer injury and damage far beyond the amount of wages paid, and he strives to steer clear of this sort of unprofitable labor.

IMPROVED ONION CULTURE.

The usual method of transplanting onions by hand and dibble is hard and tedious work. Often onion plants are set too deep in this way by the inexperienced, and the bulbs do not so readily form underground. During the first two years in my work with onions I have tested a method of transplanting young onion plants with a common turning plow, and found the method to work well. A furrow is opened with the plow, and the young onion plants are laid along on the straight side of the furrow, and then soil is thrown back on the roots with the same plow. After the earth is thrown on the roots it should be pressed with the foot by walking upon it, or a small roller may be used for the same purpose. In this way all the work may be done without bending the back except in dropping the young plants. Small boys may be employed for this work, and the setting of an acre can be done at a cost of \$2.50.

In starting onions early at the north, Mr. C. L. Hill writes to American Agriculturist: With varieties which require a long season for their full development, an early start in the spring is necessary. I plant the seed under glass in hotbeds, early enough to have plants of good size by the time the seed is sown directly in the field.

The asparagus of the vines, however, were unsatisfied, and a foot more of netting would have been covered. The expense of such an arrangement is light, and the profit and pleasure arising from clean, well-ripened fruit are satisfactory in every way.

FARM AND GARDEN NOTES.

Keep a cat for the rat, and the pig may get fat.

If you work yourself those around you will work.

One fat cow is worth a poor coach and scrubby six.

No need to buy a new farm so long as you can make the old one better.

As a manure-spreader, the sheep beats all the modern contrivances.

It is not he that sows, but he that manures well that gets the big crop.

Double the manure pile, and you may double the crop. It is better than buying a new farm.

If all that is wasted in the kitchen could get back to the farm the farmer would become rich.

The farm that is without a wind-mill lacks one of the greatest conveniences that a farm can have.

Peach and plum trees are not benefited by a little trimming, while cherry trees need but little trimming.

There is no danger of manuring a soil too early for vegetables, while the crops all grow much more tender and the growth is more rapid.

Even under the most favorable conditions after a tree is transplanted some time must elapse before its roots secure such a hold upon the soil as to supply the plant food necessary to make a vigorous growth.

If you have occasion to kill a hen from your flock and you find her rolling in fat put that down as the reason your hens are not laying. Just let up on the food for a few days, and you will see an improvement. Don't waste your time.

There is no better cross for a general purpose fowl than the Brown Leghorn and the Plymouth Rock. The Rock increases the size and the Leghorn carries with it the laying qualities. What more can you expect to accomplish with any other cross?

If any of your fowls snore when they breathe it is because they have caught cold through that crack or knot hole you neglected to plug up last fall. Nothing will invite a cold to locate in a hen's head like an overhead draught at night, and in this respect hens and people do not materially differ.

Kansas is Growing.

In Kansas the farm and live stock products combined show an increase in value over the preceding year of \$15,128,668, or 13.3 per cent.

will lose more of them. Not only are they caught by hawks, but there are other dangers which beset them. Most provoking of all is to have your neighbor's cat dine off chicken daily, while you wonder how Blackie manages to lose one or two chickens every day. By-and-by you catch the innocent-looking pussy in the very act of springing upon the chick, and the mystery is solved.

It must never be forgotten that the coops, as well as the feeding and drinking vessels, must be kept clean. Filth breeds disease always and everywhere. The mites which are so annoying, especially in warm weather, soon infest an unclean coop.

For the first four or five weeks of their lives they will need to be fed at least five times daily. "Little and often" is a good rule to follow in feeding. Corn bread made by mixing the meal into a batter with buttermilk, using twice as much soda as the measure of milk, as if for the table, makes one of the best foods for small chicks. This quantity of soda will make the bread crumble readily. Possibly the crust may need soaking. It is not a great deal of trouble to bake once a day enough to last until the next day, and as food it is certainly an improvement on raw cornmeal mixed with water, which some of us can remember used to be the regulation food for young chicks. If the skim milk is not fed to the calves or pigs it can be given to the chickens to drink; or, better still, after it has clabbered, heat until the curd and whey separate. There is nothing better than the curd for young chickens, especially during the first three or four weeks of their lives. As soon as they are old enough to eat wheat, give all they will eat of this grain for the last feed at night. Cracked corn may alternate with the wheat, and at a later period whole corn.

TRAINING TOMATOES.

Referring to the tomato-trellis recently described, I would say that for several seasons I have used wire netting in my garden for training tomatoes in preference to stakes and strings. Netting three feet wide, securely tacked to strong stakes set at intervals of three and a half or four feet apart, was formerly used, but greater width is desirable. This forms a perpendicular trellis about four feet high, as the wire should be placed ten or twelve inches from the ground. Stakes two by four inches are heavy enough if braced, the first season, although I have used three-inch hard-hack fence-posts. A light strip of wood may be run across the top for staying the upper end of the wire, but this is not essential unless heavy blankets are to be used for protection against light frosts in autumn. Raffia, once used for tying the vines to the wire, will never be superseded by strings. It is always soft, pliable and strong, never stretching in wet weather or slipping if properly tied.

This method of training tomatoes admits air on all sides, and does not interrupt the sun's rays. The fruit ripens evenly, is easily picked and readily protected on cold nights.

An ideal trellis of this sort was developed in a neighbor's garden the past season. Ten-foot stakes and netting two feet wide were used. But the growth of the Ponderosa is phenomenal, and two strips of wire were added, with a space of a few inches between them. The result was a handsome screen fully eight feet high, thickly decorated with crimson fruits. The aspirations of the vines, however, were unsatisfied, and a foot more of netting would have been covered. The expense of such an arrangement is light, and the profit and pleasure arising from clean, well-ripened fruit are satisfactory in every way.

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