

The IDYL of TWIN FRIES

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

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We advanced to meet them, and as I glanced at my wife, and then at the ample female, I was curiously struck with their resemblance to a couple of strange dogs approaching each other warily. I fully expected to see the stout lady sniff; she had that kind of a nose.

"How do you do," said she. "I'm Mrs. Eckstrom. I presume this is Mr. and Mrs. Upton?"

Stella nodded.

"We are neighbors," she continued, with an air which said, "You are very fortunate to have us for neighbors." "We live in the first place toward the village. This is Mr. Eckstrom, and my daughter, Miss Julia."

"We can hardly offer our hands," said Stella. "Will you forgive us? You see, we are making a garden, and it's rather messy work."

"You like to work in the garden yourself, I see," said Mrs. Eckstrom. "I, too, enjoy it. I frequently pick rose-bugs. I pick them before breakfast, very early, while they are still sleepy. I find it is the only way to save my tea roses."

"The early gardener catches the rose-bug—I'll remember that," Stella laughed. "Perhaps you would care to see the beginnings of our little garden?"

We moved down through the orchard and surveyed the pool. I suppose it did look bare and desolate to the outsider, who did not see it, as we did, with the eye of faith—the bare soil green with grass, the lip ringed with iris blades, the shrubbery bordered with a mass of blooms. At any rate, the Eckstroms betrayed no enthusiasm.

"Mr. Upton spaded all that lawn up himself, and we made the bench together," cried Stella.

"Well, you must like to work," said Mr. Eckstrom. "It's so much simpler to sit a few men on the job. Besides, they can usually do it better."

Stella and I exchanged glances, and she caressed me with her eyes. But politeness was never my strong point.

"Sometimes," said I, "it happens that a chap who wants a garden lacks the means to sit a few men on the job. Under those conditions he may, perhaps, be pardoned for laboring himself."

There was a slight silence broken by Stella, who said that we were going to get some goldfishes soon.

"We can give them some out of our pool, can't we, father?" the other girl said, with an evident effort to be neighborly. "We really have too many."

"Certainly, certainly; have Peter bring some over tonight," her father replied.

"Oh, thank you!" Stella cried. "And will you have Peter tell us their names?"

"Their what?" exclaimed Mrs. Eckstrom.

"Oh, haven't they names? The poor things!" Stella said. "I shall name them as soon as they come."

"What a quaint idea," the girl said, with a smile. "Do you name all the creatures on the place?"

"Certainly," said Stella. "Come, I'll show you Epictetus and Luella."

This was a new one on me, but I kept silent, while she led us around the house and lifted the plank which led up from the sundial lawn to the south door. Under it were two enormous toads and two small ones.

"Those big ones are Epictetus and Luella," she announced, "and, dear me, two children have arrived to visit them since morning! Let me see."

She dropped on her knees and examined the toads carefully, while they tried to burrow into the soil backward, to escape the sun. Our callers regarded her with odd expressions of mingled amusement and amazement—or was it poor?

A son and daughter-in-law, she announced, rising. "They are Gladys and Gaynor."

A polite smile flickered on the faces of our three visitors and died out in silence. Stella once more shot a glance at me.

We turned toward the house. "If you will excuse me for a few moments, I will make myself fit to brew you some tea," said my wife, holding open the door.

"That is very kind, but we'll not remain today, I think," Mrs. Eckstrom replied. "We will just glance at what you have done to this awful old house. It was certainly an eyesore before you bought it."

"I liked it all gray and weathered," Stella answered. "In fact, I didn't want it painted. But apparently you have to paint things to preserve them. Still, the Lord made wood before man made paint."

"He also made man before man made clothes," said I.

A polite smile from the girl followed this remark. Her father and mother seemed unaware of it. They gave our beautiful living room a casual glance, and the man took in especially the books—in bulk.

"You are one of these literary chaps, I hear," he said. "I suppose you need all these books in your business?"

"Well, hardly all," I answered. "Some few I read for pleasure. Will you smoke?"

I offered him a cigar.

"Thanks, no," said he. "Doctor's orders. I can do nothing I want to. Diet, and all that. Bally nuisance, too. Why, once I used to—"

"Father," said the girl, "don't you want to see if the car is ready?"

The look of animation which had come over the man's face when he began to talk about his health again. He started toward the door.

"Let me," said I, springing ahead of him.

The car, of course, was waiting, the chauffeur sitting in it gazing vacantly down the road, with the patient stare of the true flunkie. I came back and reported. With a polite good-by and an invitation to call and see their garden, the guests departed.

Presently she picked up what appeared like a whole pack of calling cards from the table, and glanced at them.

"John," she said, "it's begun. They've called on me. I shall have to return the call. Are all the rest like them, do you suppose? Are they all so deadly dumb? Have they no playfulness of mind? I tried 'em out on purpose. They don't arrive."

"They're rich," said I. "Almost all rich people are bores. We bored them. The old man, though, seemed about to become quite animated on the subject of his stomach."

Stella laughed. "I'm glad we were in old clothes," she said. "And aren't Epictetus and Luella darlings?"

"By the way," I cried, "why haven't I met them before?"

"I just discovered them this noon," she answered. "You were working at the time. I was saving them for a surprise after supper. I'm glad Gladys and Gaynor brought no grandchildren, though. It would have been hard to name so many correctly right off the bat, and it's terrible to start life with a wrong name."

"As Mike would say, it is surely," I answered. "That is why they were careful to call you Stella."

"Do you like the name?" she whispered, creeping close to me. "Oh, John, I'm glad we're not rich like them" with a gesture toward the pack of calling cards—"I'm glad we can work in the garden with our own hands and play games with toads and just be ourselves. Let's never be rich!"

"I promise," said I, solemnly. Then we laughed and went to hear the hermit thrush.

CHAPTER XVII.

Autumn in the Garden.

I spent considerably more money in July and August. Some of the items would be regarded as necessities even by our rural standards; some my farming neighbors would deem a luxury, if not downright folly. I was a green farmer then; I am a green farmer still; but as I began to get about the region a little more than first summer, especially at haying time, I was struck with the absurd waste of machinery brought about by insufficient care and lack of dry housing, and I began to do some figuring. All my rural neighbors, even Bert, left their plows, harrows, hay rakes, mowers, and even their carts, out of doors in rain and sun all summer, and many of them all winter. A soaking rain followed by a scorching sun seemed to me, in my ignorance, a most effective way of ruining a wagon, of shrinking and splitting hubs, or loosening the fastenings of shafts even in iron machinery. Neither do rusted bearings wear so long as those properly protected. I began to understand why our farmers are so poor, and I sent for Hard Cider.

Just behind the barn he built me a lean-to shed, about seventy-five feet long, open toward the east, and shingled rainproof. It cost me \$500, but every night every piece of farm machinery and every farm wagon went under it, and the mowing machine was further covered with a tarpaulin. For more than a year my shed was the only one of the kind in Bentford, and that next winter I used to see machinery standing behind barns, half buried in snow and ice, going to pieces for want of care. I verily believe that the New England farmer of today is the most shiftless mortal north of the Mason and Dixon line—and he hasn't hookworm for an excuse.

My next expenditure was for a cement root cellar, which scarcely needs defense, as I had no sile on the barn, and it would not pay to install one for only two cows. But the third item filled Mike with scorn. I had been making him milk the cows out of doors for some weeks, taking a tip from one of the big estates, and keeping an eye on him to see that he washed his hands properly and put on one of the white milking coats I had purchased. His utter contempt for that white rig was egomical, but when I told him that I was going to have a cork and asphalt brick floor laid in the cow shed he was speechless. He had endured the white apron, and the spectacle of the tuberculin test (the latter because the law made him), but an expensive floor

in the barn was too much. He gave me one pitying look, and walked away. The floor was laid, however, and when it was completed, Hard Cider trimmed up the supports of the barn cellar door and the two cellar window frames behind, and built in substantial screens. Then I showed them to him, and told him he was to keep them closed under penalty of his job, and he was further to sprinkle chloride of lime on the nature once a week.

"Well, I never seen screens on a barn before," said he, "and I guess nobody else ever did. Shure, it's to be spendin' your money azy ye are. Are ye goin' to put in a bathroom for the horse?"

Bert was almost as scornful of the screens as Mike, though he understood the cork-asphalt floor, having, in fact, unconsciously persuaded me to install it by telling me how the cows of a dairyman in the next town had been injured by slipping on a concrete floor. My floor had the advantage of concrete, but gave the cows a footing. There had never been screens on a barn in Bentford before, however, nor any chloride of lime used. This was too much for Bert. But Mrs. Bert was interested. After our screens had been on ten days and the barn cellar had been limed, Mrs. Pilling pointed out that the number of flies caught on the fly paper on the kitchen door had decreased at least 400 per cent. "And I think what's there now come down from your place," she added to Mrs. Bert. The next thing we knew, Bert was talking of screening his stable. Truth compels me to admit, however, that he never got beyond the talking stage.

In the face of these expenditures our garden expenses were a mere song, yet we had begun to plant and plan for the following year as soon as the pool was done. We knew we were green, and we did not scorn the advice of books and still more of our best practical friend—the head gardener of one of the large estates, who knew the exactions of our climate and the conditions of our soil.

"Plant your perennial seeds in as rich and cool a place as you can," he told us, "and expect to lose at least three-fourths of your larkspur. When your foxglove plants are large enough to transplant, make long trenches in the vegetable garden, with manure at the bottom and four inches of soil on top, and set in the plants. Do it early in September if you can, so that they can make roots before our early frosts. Then you'll have fine plants for bedding in spring. If you buy any plants, get 'em from a nursery farther north if possible. They have to be very hardy here."

We went through the seed catalogues as one wanders amid manifold temptations, but we kept to our purpose of planting only the simpler, more old-fashioned blooms at present. In addition to the bulbs, which came later, we resolved to sow pansies, sweet William, larkspur, Canterbury bells, foxglove, peach bells, oriental poppies, platycodon, veronica, mallow (for backing to the pool especially), hollyhocks, phlox (both the early variety, the *divaricata*, blooming in May, and, of course, the standard *decussata*). The May phlox we secured in plants. All these seeds were carefully planted in the new beds between the pool and the orchard, where we could water them plentifully, and Stella, with the instincts of the true gardener, babled and tended those seedlings almost as if they were human. Without her care, probably, they would never have pulled through the dry, hot weeks which followed.

We used to walk down to see them every morning after breakfast, when Stella watered them, dipping the water from the pool and sending Antony and Cleopatra scurrying. Antony and Cleopatra were the goldfish which the Eckstroms, true to their promise, had sent us. The poor things were unnamed when they arrived, but their aspect—the one dark and sinuous, the other pompously golden—betrayed their identity. Stella called a few days after their arrival to convey our thanks—carefully waiting till she saw the Eckstroms driving out in their car! Their curiosity having been satisfied regarding us, and our thanks having been rendered to them, further intercourse lapsed. We have never tried to maintain relations with those of our neighbors who bore us, or with whom we have nothing in common. Life is too short. Not only did Stella water the seedlings religiously, but she kept the soil mulched and the weeds out, working with her gloved hands in the earth. All the seeds came up well save the phlox, with which we had small luck, and the *Papaver Orientale*, with which we had no luck at all. Not a seed came up, and not a seed ever has come up in our soil. We have had to beg plants from other people. Even as the gardener predicted, the tender little larkspur plants mysteriously died. We ringed them with stiff paper, we surrounded them with coal ashes, we even sprayed them with bordeaux and arsenate of lead. But they still were devoured at the roots or the tops, or mysteriously gave up the ghost with no apparent cause. We started with two hundred, and when autumn came we had just thirty left.

"Still," said Stella, cheerfully, "thirty will make quite a brave show." "If they survive the winter," said I, gloomily. "I've not the patience to be a gardener." "It is a good deal like reform," Stella replied.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Australian Commonwealth has the sweetest tooth of all the countries in the world, its annual per capita consumption of sugar being 109 pounds.

BRITISH PILE UP SHELLS AT BASRA

End German Dream of Proposed Terminus of Berlin-Bagdad Railway Line.

CAPTURED SHIPS IN TIGRIS

Simple Possession of the River Tigris Is Sufficient to Control the Population for Many Miles inland.

General Headquarters Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, Basra.—The culmination of Germany's immediate eastern aspirations was the creation of Basra as the Persian gulf terminus of the Berlin-Bagdad railway system, writes Louis Edgar Browne in the Chicago News. The Germans in their wildest dreams could hardly have imagined Basra as it is today. It is the headquarters and main base for British operations in Mesopotamia. The term "base" has come to mean a place where thousands of troops are encamped in glistening white tents, carefully arranged in rows and blocks with military precision; mountains of food stores for the men and fodder for the animals; hospitals and headquarters and dispatch riders dashing about as though the angel of death were after them.

Basra is all that and more. Never was there a more unique campaign than this one, where there is every contrast between east and west. The Tigris is all important in the campaign. It is fickleness personified. It floods, subsides and spreads cholera with absolute impartiality. Hardly two engagements out of all the furious encounters that have marked the steady progress of British troops up the river have occurred more than eight miles from its banks. The British objective has been to take possession of the river. The Turks have tried only to hold it. Simple possession of the river is sufficient to control the population for many miles inland.

BRITISH SHIPS EVERYWHERE.

One stands on the army commander's pier and realizes that Britain does control the seas. As far as one can see, either up or down the river, there are ocean-going ships tugging at anchor chains drawn taut as bow strings by the swift current. The ships are anchored one behind the other in a long column. They hail from many corners of the earth and among their cargoes one may find everything from a big howitzer shell to a skein of embroidery for some Arab harem. The ships are nearly all British. They fly one of the varied designs of the British flag. It may be the white ensign of the royal navy or the red ensign of the mercantile fleet or the blue ensign with India's rising sun or the Australian flag with its four stars depicting the southern cross.

Every day a few ships draw into midstream and with half exposed propellers thrash their way toward the sea. They have before them a terrible tossing about by the Arabian sea monsoon, but even at that they must be thankful to the depths of their souls. Basra is all that is vile. The very air one breathes is rank poison. The temperature runs up to 118 degrees on

the river. It will go higher. The shore is a smelling swamp where dangerous mosquitoes breed by billions. Heat apoplexy hangs over every man's head like a sword suspended by a thread. Cholera comes in the night.

Tried to Block Channel.

A funnel top, a jumble of topmasts and a few shreds of loose cordage snapping in the breeze bear mute evidence of the way the Turks attempted to block the river. British monitors were pressing close upon the retreating Turkish army, hurling high explosive shells into its rear guard. The Turkish admiral hurriedly threw three ships across the river and scuttled them. The middle ship was a fine German liner containing cargo. The British contemplate salvaging her. The others were smaller ships—one a light ship and the other a small steamer. The plan was admirable, but it was engineered with characteristic Turkish inefficiency, and the small steamer on the right swung clear of the channel and fouled the liner before she sank. The Turks are a bit superstitious about the Tigris and they declare the river foiled their plans because it did not wish to bore through the river bank to form a new channel, which it would have done had the admiral been successful.

Anchored in the stream is a great black ship, with a golden star and the letters "P. S. S." painted on her funnel. The letters translate "prize steamship." I have seen so many prize steamships in the East that it seems as though British captures of Germany's mercantile marine must compensate largely for her losses through Germany's submarine campaign. The prizes still retain their German names, probably for the purpose of identification, although they fly the red ensign and are operated by government crews.

HOBOS' VEST HELD FORTUNE

Discarded Garment Snatched From Furnace in a Pennsylvania Hotel Just in Time.

Bedford, Pa.—Twelve thousand three hundred and six dollars, the savings of a lifetime, which Tony Colombo of the East side, New York, had saved in his vest, was saved from a blazing furnace in a local hotel by a narrow margin.

George Regover, cellist in the orchestra at the hotel, while motoring noticed a hobo pick a piece of bread from the ground where a picnic had been held several days ago. Regover took the man in his car and carried him back to the hotel. In the servant's quarters he was bathed, given a new suit of clothing and then a meal. Later he started on his way to New York.

He had been gone only a short time when he returned hastily, crying that his savings of a lifetime were sewed in the old vest which he had discarded, and which the management of the hotel had ordered consigned to the furnace. A hasty search was made and the money was found, as Colombo said.

ELOPERS GO WITHOUT FOOD

Fearing Wrath of Girl's Parents, Maryland Couple Drive 160 Miles to Marry.

Frederick, Md.—Fearing the wrath of the girl's parents, more especially the mother, and egged on by the remembrance of an interrupted marriage in Washington in June, Lucy H. Fitzgerald, twenty-one years old, and Cecile B. Steel, seventeen years old, of Vesuvius, Va., drove 160 miles into

SHELLS DIG BIG HOLES

These four French soldiers have kindly consented to make a human ladder, in order to show the depth of a hole one of the French big guns digs. The picture was taken in captured German lines.

Frederick, and stopped their machine only when the courthouse was reached. The couple had traveled without food in an effort to obtain