

The Great Tontine

by
HAWLEY SMART
Author of "Broken Bonds," "Bound to Win,"
Etc.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

The testatrix, with the exception of two or three trifling legacies to servants, bequeathed what little she had to leave, including the furniture of the cottage, to Mary Chickster. This seemed all very natural and just as it should be to the half-don auditors, with the exception of Carbuclie and Ringwood. These two could not refrain from exchanging a glance of astonishment.

"What on earth has she done with her 'Tontine' share?" thought Mr. Carbuclie; "she cannot surely have forgotten all about it. If so, and it should by any fluke happen to come off in her favor, there will be a pretty misfortune of my poor old friend's intentions. She has I don't know how many nephews and nieces, while Mary Chickster is only her great-niece, and naturally all these others would come before her."

Here his reflections were interrupted by the attorney, who handed him a packet. "This, you will perceive, Mr. Carbuclie, is addressed to yourself. I know the contents, having indeed written them out at the wish of my late client; but as it is a matter placed by the deceased lady entirely in your hands, it is, of course, a private communication."

"This packet," said Carbuclie, as he and Ringwood returned together to town, "I have no doubt refers to that 'Tontine' share. I wonder why poor Miss Caterham has enclosed it to me in this mysterious manner; however, as soon as we get to my rooms we will see what she has done. You have been, and are, so deeply engaged in the affair, that I intend to take you into confidence at once."

As soon as they were comfortably installed in Mr. Carbuclie's chambers, that gentleman broke the seal, and drew two documents from the envelope. The first was a short legal document, by which the share, numbered 1477, of the "Great Tontine" life annuity, Terence Finnigan, was bequeathed to Mary Chickster; the second was a letter, written at Miss Caterham's dictation, in which she told him that she placed this share in his hands in trust for Mary Chickster, with the earnest injunction that the girl was to know nothing about it unless the thing should be actually decided in her favor.

The upshot of all this was that Ronald Ringwood came to a fresh determination with regard to Miss Chickster. Man has a natural desire to console a pretty woman in her affliction, and Ringwood felt that he could not see Mary in her sorrow without offering consolation; and that, over head and ears in love as he was, that must, of necessity, be of a somewhat impassioned kind, such as would be certain to result in a downright avowal of his love. The objections that stood in his way before Miss Caterham's death were there still; and it seemed to him that it would be now a downright mean thing to do to ask Mary to marry him while in ignorance of her possibly brilliant prospects. He resolved to hold aloof from her till the "Great Tontine" was decided. He would rather see said to him "nay" as possessor of eight thousand a year than she should unwittingly come into it as his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

Pegram and Son were considerably astonished upon the return of young Blinks, their spy, with his information. The boy had tracked Jack Phillimore to his hotel, and contrived to get hold of his name from some of the under servants, and the knowledge that Jack Phillimore in person had been playing the spy down in Rydland set them thinking, to say the least of it. Of course they knew perfectly well who Jack Phillimore was. Pegram senior had made it his business long ago to know everything connected with Lord Lakington's family; that was to be got at. But what could have been Jack Phillimore's object in seeking information about old Krabbe, and, further, in going to see him?

"There is only one possible solution to the question," argued the old lawyer, "Mr. Phillimore could have no object in doing this on his account; he must be simply acting as the agent of Lord Lakington. Now what on earth is his lordship's motive? and what could have made him think of wanting to know all about Krabbe? Somebody must have got hold of the Viscount, and been whispering stories to our disparagement. I suspect that is about what it is."

But lawyer Pegram, as Hemmingby said, was not the man to be frightened out of his game lightly.

"We must be unrelenting in our vigilance during the next three weeks," he remarked to his son, "and we must strenuously oppose any attempt to postpone the marriage. In the meantime, I will just slip over to Slackpool Super-Mare. It is just possible that inquiring young people like Mr. Phillimore may take it into their head to follow old Krabbe all through that little town of ours. I should be sorry, Bob, if they did not get every possible information; don't you? I will just make matters smooth for them," and the old gentleman chuckled slyly as he thought of an unsophisticated tracker like Phillimore seeking to follow a trail that he had been at some trouble to blind.

Next day Mr. Hemmingby visited the cottage to see Krabbe, but was not admitted. Bob Pegram went out to the cottage to hear about Hemmingby's visit, and he found Mrs. Clark in no slight state of perturbation.

"It's what I have always dreaded, ever since you first told me that he had talked of coming out to see the old man. He took me so much aback that I declare to goodness I very nearly called him by his name straight out. I had no time to change my cap for one of a deeper border, to bring my hair more down, nor anything. I never dreamt of its being him, and opened the door as I might have done to any one. I did my best. After

the first glance I kept my eyes well down, and no man ever got shorter answers to his questions; I gave him as little chance to hear my voice as might be. But mark, Robert; for all that, he knew me!"

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed Bob Pegram, "that he recognized you?"

"He did, in a way. He could not quite put a name to me, but I know he felt certain that I was some one he had seen before."

"What is to be done?"

"Ah! that is just what I want you to tell me. I thought you would be here, or I should have sent a note up to say that I wanted to see you. Mr. Hemmingby certainly did not recollect me precisely when he went away. He might call me to mind afterwards, though I don't think he would; but if he sees me once or twice more he is sure to recollect me. Now, you know what my orders have been, always to let anybody see Mr. Krabbe when Mr. Krabbe is ready to receive."

"You have managed admirably, Kitty, so far; but this is awkward. The governor is from home, too, to make matters worse."

"I say, Bob dear, do you think he has the slightest suspicion who I am?"

"No, Kitty; he takes you simply for what you represent yourself to be—takes you simply for what all Rydland does, as a nurse that I picked up in London to take care of old Mr. Krabbe."

"If I had thought it was intended that that old gentleman was to live so long I'd have thought twice before I would have taken the situation."

"Come, come, Kitty; don't be cross. I know it is wearisome work for you, my dear; but remember, the thing is drawing to a finish now."

Old Pegram returned the next day in high spirits.

"Ah! Bob, my boy," he exclaimed, "it is a wonderful thing what a little good does, if you only apply it judiciously. If Mr. Phillimore and his friends ever get at our last lodgings they'll be pretty clever. The landlady and her sister were sensible women, and quite agreeable to know nothing when I produced my arguments. While as for the servant, she is luckily a new one since we were there; so I think that is pretty fairly settled. I don't suppose that blundering young fellow that was down here ever would have made anything out of it; but though I don't throw my money about it, it was just as well to spend a little there to make sure."

"I tell you what, father, something much more serious has taken place while you were away. Hemmingby has been down to see old Krabbe."

"Ahem! that is curious. He did not see him, I suppose."

"No," replied Bob, with a grin. "He was asleep, and could not be disturbed; but what is to be done if he comes down here again wanting to see him? I suppose we must let him do so."

"No, Bob," replied the old lawyer quickly. "I don't think that would do. Sam Hemmingby must be content to wait till after your marriage before he sees his old friend Mr. Krabbe. You may be clever, Bob, but you are no match for Hemmingby. I can't think myself it was anything more than a mere freak his wanting to see the old man. He always did ask after him, you know, and has talked half a dozen times of going to see him. What earthly motive could Hemmingby have for interfering in any way? why, he was out of the 'Tontine' five months ago or more. Poo! a mere whim, you may depend upon it. I don't suppose he will even think of asking to see him again."

"He knows Lord Lakington, remember."

"Of course he does," replied the old lawyer; "didn't he come here to try and compromise the 'Tontine' on his lordship's part in the first instance? It is hardly likely he would have done that if he had any evil suspicions about us."

"But you must recollect this Phillimore, this sailor; he is a relation of Lord Lakington's."

"Quite so; he is nephew and heir. I looked him out in the Peerage long ago; that is, I presume the young man who was here is the John Phillimore therein mentioned. But what of that? you never heard Hemmingby say anything about him. I doubt if Hemmingby even knows him."

"Well," rejoined Bob, "of course, we must do as you say; but I don't like Hemmingby's visit, and it is my opinion it would be less dangerous for him to see old Krabbe than not."

"Stuff and nonsense! I will have nothing of the kind. I don't at all suppose that he will call again; but if he does, the old man must be asleep or unwell, or something or other."

Bob Pegram did not dare tell his father what was really the most alarming sign in Hemmingby's visit, viz., his seeming recognition of Kitty Clyde. To do that would have been to confess who Kitty Clyde really was, and to admit that the manager's memory of her might at length go back to the times in which she played non-speaking parts in the Vivacity Theater. So that, after all, his father's return brought but small comfort to the web of his father's scheme was not complicated enough, had thought fit to graft on it another of his own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The day fixed for the wedding draws very near, and it would be hard to say whether the Honorable Beatrice Phillimore or Robert Pegram regards it with most uneasiness. The more Beatrice thinks over this marriage, the more is she convinced that it is throwing away her life's happiness. She never half knew how dearly she loved her cousin till now, nor was she thoroughly alive to the wide difference between herself and her betrothed. They had not a sentiment in common.

Jack Phillimore is as general in his condemnation of things.

"What are we to do, Ronald?" he exclaimed. "You say you have completely lost all trace of old Pegram and old Krabbe."

"Yes," replied Ringwood moodily; "I am dead beat at present. It is very doubtful whether we unravel the mystery of old Krabbe in time. I tell you what; you must go straight to Lord Lakington, tell him what we suspect, and point out that it would be advisable to postpone the marriage for a month, or till such time as the thing is cleared up."

"You don't know my uncle, Ronald," rejoined Jack; "he would not listen to me.

He sees a big pile of money coming into the family through this marriage, and would be loath to believe it was not so. And then, what can I say?—nothing, but that Pegram and his invalid clerk changed their lodgings surprisingly often."

"I will own, Jack, I would infinitely prefer to thoroughly expose the Pegrams. I am pretty well convinced, in my own mind, that the old man they took away from Rydland is not the old man they brought back, the old man you saw; but we certainly cannot prove this as yet."

That Jack Phillimore should be on his way to Rydland by an early train the next morning was not much to be wondered at. Between his passion for his cousin, and his firm belief that she was about to sacrifice herself to an impostor whom she despised, Jack was wound up to a pitch of nervous excitement which made it a relief to do anything. Denunciation of the Pegrams, father and son, was the only thing that seemed to clearly point itself out to him, and that he could deliver that with considerable energy and figurative embellishment he entertained no doubt. He walked up the street towards Pegram & Son's office, he muttered to himself, "Be cool, Jack, my boy, be cool; cutting if you like, but be cool."

He gave his card as he entered the office, and was speedily ushered into the presence of Mr. Pegram. The old man was in the office alone, and bowed courteously to Jack.

"Some relation, I presume, of Lord Lakington's, Mr. Phillimore; and, under the present circumstances, I am only too delighted to see you. I trust you will dine with us to-night?"

Jack Phillimore was taken most thoroughly aback. He had fully expected to be received as an enemy endeavoring to pry into the secrets of Pegram & Son; instead of which he was welcomed as one of the family.

"Yes, I am a nephew of Lord Lakington's; I am afraid when you hear what I have to say that you will not feel disposed to be so friendly towards me. Has it never occurred to you, Mr. Pegram, that the proposed marriage between your son and my cousin is hardly suitable?"

"May I ask," replied the old lawyer dryly, "if you are speaking on behalf of his lordship?"

"Not exactly; I am speaking as one of the family. As next heir to the title, I should imagine I have some right to express an opinion on the subject. And I tell you," continued Jack, "that no man of the world could have two opinions about it. I am not for one moment impugning the respectability of your family, Mr. Pegram, but you must be aware that you are not exactly of the class with whom the Phillimores are wont to marry."

"Lord Lakington and Miss Beatrice appear to differ with you upon this point."

"Don't mention my cousin's name," exclaimed Jack sharply; "some undue influence has been brought to bear upon her, or else, I feel assured, she would never have given her assent to such a union. I know the whole story of the 'Great Tontine,' and how you have taken advantage of your share in it to make this infamous arrangement with my uncle. Beatrice is being sacrificed blindly that you may share this big lottery between you."

"You will allow me to remark, in the first place, that you can not possibly even know who my nominee is."

"There you are wrong; it is your old clerk, Mr. Krabbe."

"I decline to admit for one moment that you are right," rejoined Pegram; "but admitting that Mr. Krabbe is my nominee, may I ask you to point out where the fraud exists?"

"I don't believe that old mummy I saw was Mr. Krabbe a bit," returned Jack furiously.

"I don't believe, for one moment, that you are Lieutenant Phillimore of the Royal Navy," rejoined the old lawyer coolly; "and am at this instant debating whether I shall send for a constable and give you in charge as a suspicious character. Now, mark me, my man, if you are to be found in Rydland to-morrow morning I'll give you in charge, as sure as you stand there; and you won't find it quite so easy to find bail down here, I am thinking."

"Very well," replied Jack, in a voice which shook with passion. "It is war, then, without quarter, between us; you may rest assured, you insolent old pettifogger, that neither shall this marriage ever take place, nor another shilling of the 'Tontine' find its way into your voracious old fingers." With which strong and personal, but hardly cool and cutting, climax, Phillimore took his departure.

(To be continued.)

Speaker Plays Both Ends.

Thousands and thousands of persons have done a good deal of wondering of late—why they have wondered, among other things, why it is that it has been so utterly impossible to get the House of Representatives to pass certain legislation clearly desired by the country at large—why it has even been impossible to get the House to bring this legislation to a vote. Such legislation, for example, is the bill for a White Mountain and Southern Appalachian Forest reserve. This bill, with others equally popular, has been chloroformed sweetly in one of Uncle Joe's committees. Not only does it slumber, but Uncle Joe has even forgotten to leave a call.

This and similar measures that the public approve have not been passed or even considered on the floor of the House for the simple reason that Uncle Joe and Company do not want them considered. But if you are interested in one of those slumbering bills and you appeal to Uncle Joe for help you are likely to come from his presence, in the celebrated Red Room where he reigns, convinced that the speaker is, as he will tell you, only one among 391 members of the House, whereas, as a matter of fact, the rest of the House are only 390 members among one Uncle Joe.—A. E. Thomas in Success Magazine.

The Sequel.

Stub—My parents were thrifty.

was often strappd when a boy for spending money foolishly.

Penn (gloomily)—I wasn't and that is why I am strappd now.

The French ministry of marine is contemplating an order for fifty aeroplanes for the coast guard service.

FARMS AND FARMERS



Plans for Farm Barn.

The many very marked changes in farm life would lead one to believe that the large farm is, or soon will be, a thing of the past. The high price of farm help, the necessity for better cultivation and farming, fewer and better bred stock, better care of stock, better buildings for housing the hay, grain and stock, has or soon will bring the small farm, and, so planned and arranged that a greater variety of products are raised.

Many instances are known where the man who had struggled for years with 200 to 500 acres, barely made a living, and of doubling their income by simply renting out all of the land except fifty to eighty acres. That several cows must be kept on such a farm goes without saying, not only for the monthly income and profit, but for the manure that is necessary to keep the soil alive.

Present sanitary requirements call for many devices and appliances that cannot be installed on the small farm, but cleanliness and kindness is within the possibilities of any of us, and while it is true that to house the cows in the same building with the horses has some disadvantages, it also has its advantages, and to build separate buildings for both, is not only expensive, but calls for extra help in caring for and feeding them.

A careful study of the barn shown in the illustration herewith will show what we will call a condensed arrangement, and, while the cows are in the same barn with the horses, a good, tight partition separates them from the horse barn, to keep out the dust and odors. For the same reason the silo is located where shown, for silage, no matter how well cared for, has an offensive odor, that is readily absorbed by milk.

The floor plan is self-explaining, the silo is an ordinary stave structure, with wire cables for hoops, as the cable is not so easily affected by contraction and expansion as the solid iron hoops.

The crib has the foundation left out as shown, and the floor is of 2x6 inch studding, with one-half-inch spaces between. The siding is drop siding, the same as the balance of the barn, but the top and lower edges are beveled.

ad a one-half-inch space is left between each board. This construction allows a free circulation of air, and keeps out the rain, snow and wind. The small amount of corn that drops through the floor is eaten by the poultry and hogs.

The studding are 12 feet, and the lower story is 8 feet; the cow stalls are of cement, with gutter, and all stalls have pounded clay floors. It will pay to plaster the walls and ceiling of the cow barn with cement. After the silo has been used for several years, it is intended to lath and plaster it with cement.

It will pay to use good material throughout, provide a good foundation and roof, and to keep all exposed wood work well painted.

As the various climates demand slightly different construction, and the lumber used is not the same in all sections, it would be simply a waste of valuable space to describe them here.—J. E. Bridgman, in St. Paul Dispatch.

Fertilizing the Garden.

Don't be afraid of getting the soil too rich for any of the vegetables whose leaf or stem is edible. If you cannot have plenty of well rotted manure, a top dressing of nitrate of soda just before planting will furnish the plant food needed of nitrogen, but other elements may be needed for a proper balance. Wood ashes, if available, are a good source for potash, but sulphate or muriate of potash may be used instead and frequently a dressing of hyperphosphate is beneficial.

If one is growing only a small garden for home use, the droppings from the poultry house will furnish enough fertilizer to keep the soil in a good state of fertility; but if growing truck on a large scale, it would be well to inquire of your experiment station what commercial fertilizers would be of most help in securing maximum crops of the vegetables you wish to grow.

Rotation of Forests.

The necessity of the rotation of crops is well recognized among modern farmers, and now it appears that in India nature is seen practicing the same thing in the forests. The soil becoming exhausted after a long period of one kind of forests, seedlings of other species gradually replace the old trees as they die out. On the Indian soil, the deodar tree has been observed taking the place of the blue pine, pine and oak slowly exchange places, and spruce and silver fir have been noted gradually extending into a forest of falling oaks.

Notes of the Pig Pen.

Give growing pigs food to produce bone and muscle rather than fat.

The pig should have a warm, dry bed kept clean and free from dust.

No domestic animal responds so quickly to good treatment as the hog.

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Cultivation That Damages Corn.

The corn is often damaged by the roots being broken in deep cultivation. This is not the case to a serious extent early in the season, when the corn is small, but the check to the crop may be quite marked if cultivated deep late in the season, when the corn has reached a height of 2 to 3 feet or more, particularly if the previous cultivation has been shallow or neglected. If dry weather happens to follow such treatment the damage to the crop is much increased. When not followed by some form of cultivation that will level down the ridges left by the large shovel cultivator, the ground will dry out quite deeply and in the furrows between the ridges this drying readily reaches the roots of the corn. To obviate this as much as possible, when the old-fashioned large shovels are used, the work should be followed as soon as possible with something to level down the surface. Unless there is something to be gained by it, deep cultivation should not be followed.—Oklahoma Station.

Co-Operation Among Farmers.

Men in all other lines of business organize and work together. Farmers are beginning to see the need of concerted action, but as a rule we still work single-handed. At Lombard, Ill., about twenty miles west of Chicago, the farmers who produce milk for sale in the big city have tried several times to organize in order to force the milk trust to pay them a price in accordance with what the customer pays, but the trust is always able to hire some farmer to break the rules of the local association or to talk against the project to such an extent as to defeat its ends. That is one great difficulty in forming protective measures among farmers. There are always a few men in the community who are willing to sacrifice future advantages to gain a few cents in present price.—Agricultural Epitome.

Easily Regulated Gate.

The gate hanger illustrated in the drawing is very handy for use where it is desired to let hogs pass from one pasture to another while cows are confined to one. As shown, the hanger is a piece of strap iron bent around the post and supported by pegs. These pegs may be inserted in holes at varying heights. This is also a good device for raising the gate above the snow in winter.—Sam Avery, in Farm and Home.

All in Management.

Folks say that if you want any class of stock that can always be sold at a profit, from weaning time until tottering old age, you want a mule. We do not raise mules, so can not speak from experience. This much we do know, however, several good friends of ours have been dickering in mules for years without making any money. Perhaps these are the exceptional cases that prove the rule. Others have raised and bought mules and made good money. We surmise it's more the man and his management than it is the mule, that reaps the profit. The same man dealing in razorbacks might make some money.—Farmers' Mail and Breeze.

Fertilizer for Potatoes.

For potatoes the past year we used 1,200 pounds of fertilizer to the acre, one-third applied broadcast and the rest scattered in the furrow, brushing the fertilizer into the soil of the furrow before planting the seed. After planting, the surface was kept well stirred to prevent weeds starting and the cultivator was run often enough to keep down the weeds. A little hand hoeing was done. The yield was 250 bushels per acre. The crop followed corn and the land was very thoroughly harrowed before potatoes were planted. Plenty of harrowing and liberal use of fertilizers may be depended on to give a good crop.

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