

The Great Tontine

by
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etc.

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

Hemmingway was right in the prediction about the nurse. She kept her face as much as possible turned away from him, and addressed herself to Ringwood in low, measured tones, which struck the manager as having been deliberately adopted. He was disappointed, for he had reckoned upon her voice to recall this woman to his memory. As yet it had told him nothing, and he felt pretty sure that she would allow him to hear as little of it as might be. Clearly, if possible, he must force her to talk.

"No," observed the manager; "the old critic don't recollect me a bit; and yet, poor old chap, he and I have been friendly for the last twenty years; but I suppose, ma'am, there are many of his old friends he don't recognize?"

"He recognizes very few of them now, sir," rejoined the nurse. In the same low, measured tones, she turned to Ringwood.

"He knows Mr. Pegram, of course," said Hemmingway carelessly.

"Who said anything about Mr. Pegram?" piped the octogenarian, from the depths of his cushions. "He never comes near me now; why should he? What does he want with a worn-out old fellow like me? But I'd like to see him, I'd like to see him."

A gleam of surprise flashed for a moment across the manager's face; but, transient as it was, the woman, who, from under her downcast lids was steadily watching him, saw it, and flinched nervously with her apron in consequence.

"It strikes me," continued Hemmingway, "that my old friend there is not quite so deaf as you make him out to be, Mrs. —"

"Clark, sir," she replied. "Excuse me; I told you just now that, though he really is very deaf, he exaggerates his deafness a good deal when out of humor. The name of Pegram would, of course, attract his attention."

"Pegram?" quavered the invalid again; "I want to see him about that right of foreclosure in front of Rydland Terrace. If he don't buy it, somebody else will, and build on it, likely as not. It will send his rents down in the Terrace if he lets any one build between him and the sea."

There was a twinkle in Hemmingway's eye, which did not escape Mrs. Clark, as he replied:

"Why, your head is as clear for business, Mr. Krabbe, as ever it was; if you would only take to an ear-trumpet, I believe, when you have got through the winter, you might resume your old place in the office. Don't you think, ma'am, he will come round with the spring a bit?"

The nurse shook her head, but made no further reply.

"Well, Ringwood," said the manager, rising, "you were sent down here to see Mr. Krabbe, and so put an end to a foolish rumor; I suppose you are satisfied now, and quite ready to vouch that he is alive, and in tolerably good case, for his age."

He was accompanied by Ringwood, about to leave the room when, to the intense astonishment of the latter, he turned swiftly round, crossed to the deaf man's chair, put his hand lightly on his shoulder, and whispered into his ear. Ringwood saw the invalid start as if the manager had bit him; but before he could observe more, Hemmingway hurried him into the lane, and led the way rapidly back to Rydland.

"Well," said Ringwood, as they turned into the high road, "what do you make of it all? and what, in heaven's name, possessed you to whisper into a deaf man's ear?"

"I can't explain matters more briefly," rejoined Hemmingway, laughing, "than by telling you what I said. It was merely this—'A little overdone, Bob; but you can have twenty pound a week at the 'Vivacity' whenever you like to join the profession.'"

"Why, you don't mean to say—" exclaimed Ringwood.

"Yes, I do," interrupted the manager. "Bob Pegram plays old Krabbe, and well he does it. As for the nurse, I still can't put a name to her; but would back her also to be theatrical."

CHAPTER XXIII.

As the footsteps of the visitors died away Bob Pegram sprang from his chair, and, throwing his rug and wrappers upon the ground, exhibited the comic picture of a young man partially made up to represent an old one.

"It's all up, Kitty," he exclaimed. "I told the governor it was madness to continue the deception; but he was obstinate and refused to admit that he was beaten. Of course, neither he nor I ever reckoned upon Hemmingway turning up in this way; I wish I had taken your advice. You said the minute you saw your old manager that it was best to say old Mr. Krabbe was too ill to receive visitors, that if we once played our little comedy before him he was certain to detect one, if not both of us; but I had bamboozled so many, that I was anxious enough to think I could deceive him. What do you think he whispered in to my ear before leaving, Kitty?"

"I don't know," she replied; "but it does not matter. I saw that he had recognized you some little before that; whether he made me out also I cannot say; but that, I suppose, is not of much consequence now."

"Do you know what all this means, girl? Do you know that this means penal servitude for me? Why Hemmingway should turn against us in this fashion I cannot imagine; he could not have come here with that barrister fellow by accident. At all events, it is too risky for me, and I mean to be out of Rydland tonight."

Bob Pegram, as, having resumed his own clothes, he walked quickly back to Rydland, rapidly turned over in his mind all the details of his projected flight. There was but one difficulty that he saw

in the way of his stealthy retreat, and that was his father. To draw a good big sum from the bank, and slip quietly away from Rydland, was easy enough; but the bidding good-bye to his father was a different matter. Influenced entirely by his own selfish fears, he determined to spare the old lawyer that ceremony.

He kept carefully out of his father's way, but employed a part of his time at "The Crown" in writing a short note to him, in which, after explaining his own flight and his reasons for it, he strongly recommended the old man to follow his example. He further reminded him that he had already obtained two dividends from the "Tontine," by the fraudulent representation that old Krabbe was alive, and, consequently, placed himself at the mercy of Lord Lakington, or anybody else who chose to denounce him.

Hard as old Pegram was, he a little broke down under his son's note. It has been said that every human being must have something to love, that it is a necessity of our existence, and such love as lawyer Pegram was capable of giving he had centered on his son.

However, the old lawyer quickly recovered himself, and after the first half-hour, faced the situation as undauntedly as ever.

In the course of the afternoon there was a rumor afloat in the town that old Krabbe was dead, and inquirers at Mr. Pegram's office were told it was true that the old man had died very suddenly and unexpectedly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was quite open to question whether Lord Lakington was not as much dismayed at the explosion of the great Pegram fraud as the old lawyer himself. He was grateful to his nephew, no doubt, for preventing his falling a prey to a most audacious impostor; still the fact remained, that he, Viscount Lakington, was left in just as precarious a position regarding income as ever.

Although the Viscount might argue to himself that it was his nephew's bounden duty to marry money, wherewith to prop up the coronet that would eventually fall to him, yet he had an inward conviction that Jack Phillimore would please himself about choosing a bride; and though he might talk of speaking to his daughter concerning the palpable love-affair going on between herself and her cousin, yet he knew that he had tried Beatrice's obedience to its uttermost limit when she consented to marry Robert Pegram. His lordship was now thinking for himself; and now occurred to him that idea which had flashed across Ronald Ringwood on the discovery of Finnigan.

"Why," he exclaimed, "I can marry Miss Chickester and settle the 'Great Tontine' that way. I will do it, and with a little delay as possible. I had better, perhaps, take Beatrice into my confidence at once; it would be as well to have her on my side, and she can, if she chooses, aid me materially. Girls object at times to youthful stepmothers, but she and Miss Chickester appear to get on well together. Besides, if she means realizing her present love-dream, who the second Lady Lakington is can be of little consequence to her."

About two or three days afterwards the Viscount, rather to his amazement, was informed by his daughter that Miss Chickester was grateful to him, and all of them, for their kindness; she thoroughly appreciated and thanked Lord Lakington for the honor he had done her, and she was willing to meet his views about the "Tontine" in any way, but that arrangement consequently had to once more ponder in his study over that, to him, stupendous problem of "What is to become of me?"

It speedily occurred to him that the next thing to try was to effect a compromise. Miss Chickester had stated her readiness to meet his views in any way but matrimony, and he would therefore write to Carbuckle, and propose a division of the big lottery, stipulating further, as part of the arrangement, that there should be no prosecution of the Pegrams, as Miss Phillimore's name would be almost sure to be mixed up in such a trial.

When the servant one day announced Mr. Ringwood, there was no little flutter in the drawing-room in the Victoria Road. Mary felt that from that interview she should be able to decide as to whether Ringwood really cared for her or not.

"I have come, Miss Chickester, I regret to say, to break bad news to you," said Ringwood; "and if Mrs. Lyme Wregis will excuse us, I should prefer that you alone heard my evil tidings in the first place. Terence Finnigan is dead."

"Poor Terence!" replied the girl. "I am sorry for him; though when existence has become so merely mechanical as his was, one cannot but feel that death is deprived of all its terrors."

"By his death your share in the 'Tontine' becomes void; and I am sorry to inform you—and it is this more especially that Mr. Carbuckle wished me to point out to you—that the agreement between you and Lord Lakington being still unsigned, it is not worth the paper it is written on."

"I understand," replied Mary, quietly. "You mean to say that Lord Lakington takes the whole 'Tontine,' and that my prospect of being an heiress has melted into thin air."

"That, I regret to say, is the exact state of the case; and very, very hard luck for you it is."

"Well, Mr. Ringwood, I am not going to pretend to you that I am wholly indifferent to the loss of four thousand a year; but after all, remember, I only stand in the same position that I did three or four weeks ago, and never having had the spending of such an income, I shall always feel that I can never be sufficiently grateful to you for all the time and trouble you have wasted, first on my aunt's behalf, and then on my own."

"I have something more to say to you, but of little moment, it may be, to you, but a very great matter to me. I have loved you sincerely, and hoped to make you my wife, almost from the beginning of our acquaintance. If I have never ventured to tell you so before, the 'Tontine' must be my excuse. I was always in possession of the facts of the case, while you were not; and I dreaded not so much what the world might say as what you might think, when, supposing I had the good fortune to win you, you should discover that I had known of the possibility of your being an heiress all along. I could not face that; and I swore to keep aloof from you until this lottery was decided one way or the other. I could have

even dared to put my fate to the test had you won the whole and become a great heiress. There would, at all events, have been nothing underhand about my wooing then. Whatever answer you may give me now, you must, at all events, acquit me of mercenary motives, and feel sure that I love you for yourself. I love you very dearly, Mary; do you think you could love me well enough to be my wife?"

"You have taken me so by surprise that I hardly know," faltered the girl; "but, believe me, no one can more thoroughly appreciate the delicacy of your conduct than I do, and it is that which makes me now hesitate. Your wife, Mr. Ringwood, ought to be a woman who not only loves you dearly, but can enter fully into the career which I am sure is before you; and unless I feel certain I could be all this to you, I would say you 'nay,' whatever my own feelings might be. Will you give me a little time to think over it? Come and see me to-morrow, and I will honestly answer your question."

"It is more than I dared to hope for," replied Ringwood, as he raised her hand to his lips; "please make my adieu upstairs, and till to-morrow, good-bye."

That the finishing of the "Great Tontine" resulted in a double wedding it is almost superfluous to add; but that Lord Lakington, under the strenuous pressure of his nephew and daughter, was induced to settle ten thousand pounds upon Mary Chickester as a wedding gift is a fact that deserves to be recorded. The Viscount, after the somewhat manner of those who have been spendthrifts in their youth, developing a laudable ambition for the accumulation of riches in his mature age.

(THE END.)

PIPES THAT GROW ON VINES.

Meerschaum Said to Have a Rival in a South African Gourd.

Since the department of agriculture, through its bureau of foreign plant investigations, brought to the notice of the smokers of this country the fact that pipes could be grown that would wear well and smoke sweet and cool, great interest has been manifested in the enterprise.

This wonderful plant, known as the calabash gourd, says the Dallas, Tex., Farm and Ranch, is a native of South Africa, and produces, in the form of fruit, calabashes which are being made into the highest quality of pipe bowls. Annually many thousands of pipe gourds are exported, both in the rough and in the finished pipe.

The plants grow very fast, one plant producing from 100 to 200 bowls. It is about five months from the time the seed is planted until the fruit can be gathered.

Constant attention must be given to the plants when under cultivation, so as to insure a crop of suitable shapes for pipes. Many farmers of South Africa make a special study of growing the correct shapes.

The gourds require a hot, dry soil, with rain at the proper season to bring them to perfection. The curved stem of the calabash forms a light and appropriate shape. This is the gourd of commerce.

Curiously enough these gourds bear a resemblance to the capacious bowled meerschaum so popular in Germany. The calabash pipe not only yields a very sweet and cool smoke, but it colors beautifully. Its life is about as long as that of a briar pipe. It makes a very high polish. These pipes are usually lined with commercial meerschaum, although the cheaper grades are lined with tin. In South Africa they sell for \$1 to \$50, according to the finish and style.

The present market price of these pipes is rather high, owing to the fact that no two of them are of the same size and shape, necessitating the making of the mountings by hand. The industry in South Africa is such that there are shipped annually from 150,000 to 200,000 pipes.

The ease with which these gourds can be grown is such that it is thought American smokers will not be slow to appreciate this latest and best thing in pipes, which seems destined to oust the meerschaum.

An Impossible Combination.

They were talking of the strange-sights to be seen in a great city, and one man paid his tribute to New York. "I don't believe one of you could think of any combination of circumstances that hasn't at some time occurred on the streets there," he said.

"I reckon I know of one that's never occurred there," said Hiram Fowle.

"What's that?" asked the other, curiously.

"I guess," said Hiram, slowly, "that you've never seen, nor ever will see, a brass band going in one direction and the left of the folks going the other."

Ought to Have Known.

"Paw" queried little Tommy Toddlies, "what's a parasite?"

"How long have you been going to school, young man?" asked Toddlies, Sr.

"Four years," answered Tommy.

"Well," continued the old man, "there is something wrong with our educational system if four years of schooling hasn't taught you that a parasite is a person who lives in a Paris."

Canada's Railways.

Statistics of Canadian railroads for 1907 show that the capital invested was \$1,171,837,808, on which the net earnings were \$42,989,537. There were 22,452 miles of road in operation, of which 1,076 were double track. The increase in freight traffic over 1906 was 5,890,420 tons, and the gain in passenger carried 4,147,537. Locomotives increased 573, freight cars 17,649 and passenger cars 323. Persons killed numbered 587, and the injured 1,608.

A Sure Sign.

"Was it a bad play?"

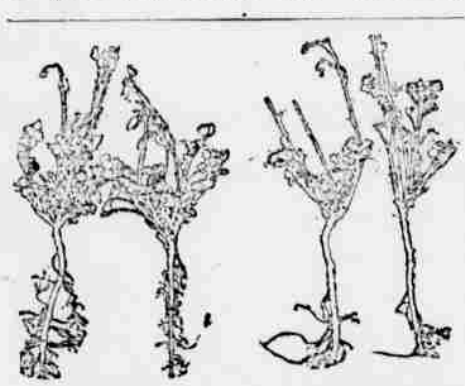
"It must have been bad. None of the debutantes would let their mamas go."—Birmingham Age-Herald.



Inoculation of Clover.

Clovers do not always grow as readily or as vigorously as might be expected from the richness of the soil. In recent years it has been discovered by scientists that the growth of plants of this class (clovers, peas and beans) is dependent to some extent on the presence of small nodules or bunches on the roots. These nodules contain bacteria which in some mysterious way assist the roots in taking up food from the soil. If these bacteria are not present in the soil the clovers will be likely to make poor growth—indeed, alfalfa may not make any growth. If the proper kind of bacteria are supplied and the inoculation of soil and root is successful the plants will show extra vitality.

Cultures containing these bacteria have been sent out to farmers from the Ontario Agricultural College for the past four years, with directions



for applying to the fields that are being seeded with clover. Last season 300 farmers reported that their alfalfa crops had been benefited by the application while 140 reported that there was no gain. With alfalfa clover the reports were equally favorable over 30 per cent of the experiments finding that the culture had improved the crop. With red clover the results were not so favorable, only 55 per cent having noted a gain. Peas and beans showed still less benefit from the application. As the work is still in its infancy it is probable that better results will be obtained as the methods of application are better understood.

The illustration shows the comparative growths of inoculated and uninoculated alfalfa plants. In a bulletin just issued it is stated that the cultures will again be distributed for 1909 at a price of 25 cents for each bottle containing enough for 60 pounds of seed.—Montreal Star.

Soil Temperature and Seed Germination.

Scientists have discovered that the lowest soil temperature at which the process of growth begins in most cultivated crops is 45 to 48 degrees Fahrenheit, but the maximum results are attained only after the soil has reached a temperature of 68 to 70 degrees. The germination of wheat, rye, oats and flax go forward most rapidly at 77 to 87.8, and corn and pumpkins germinate best at 92 to 101. Corn will grow at a temperature of 51, requiring eleven days to come through, while it will germinate in three days at 65.3 degrees. Oats require seven days to germinate at 41, whereas they will germinate in two days at 65 degrees.

These facts emphasize the importance of soil cultivation in the earliest possible period. Our deep soils where irrigation has played hob can not warm up because they must first evaporate the water. Sandy soils warm more quickly than adobe for reasons which everybody understands. The depth of planting also has a great deal to do with the germination, and we are hoping that this spring will not linger long in the lap of winter as was the case with the last two or three seasons.—Denver Field and Farm.

Balancing Ration.

When one has corn, corn fodder, ensilage and clover hay, it is considered the best practice for one to procure a food rich in protein, such as bran, cotton-seed meal or linseed meal, with which to balance the ration. If one mixes bran, corn and cotton-seed meal in the proportion of 5 parts bran, 3 parts cornmeal, 2 parts cotton-seed meal, and feeds 10 pounds of the mixture each day, with 30 pounds of ensilage and 10 pounds of clover hay, he will get very good results. Molasses is ordinarily fed by sprinkling over the hay or ensilage.—Country Gentleman.

Worms in Colts.

For intestinal worms in colts the following mixture is used by some veterinarians: Mix together as a base 1 pound each of salt and granulated sugar; in this mix 1/2 pound of tobacco dust of fine cut tobacco, 4 ounces of sulphate of iron powder, 6 ounces of powdered worm seed. Give a heaping teaspoonful in the feed at first once a day, then twice a day, and keep up for three weeks.

CHASES SHIP 16,000 MILES.

Mailbag's Long Pursuit of the U. S. Cruiser Milwaukee.

A sack of mail which left here four months ago has just landed in Bremerton, Wash., says the New York Times. Since it left New York it has traveled over 16,000 miles in an effort to overtake the United States armored cruiser Milwaukee, for the officers and men of which it was intended. Before it finally caught up with the big cruiser this sack of mail had been to San Francisco, then to Honolulu, and back to San Francisco; next to Panama, then to Honduras, back to San Francisco again, and finally to Bremerton.

When a ship is at sea and the length of its stay in any one port is uncertain the navy department directs the relatives and friends of the officers and men of that ship to address all letters for the ship in care of the postmaster at New York. In the general run of things the Milwaukee's mail in the New York postoffice accumulated until there was a well-filled sack of letters and parcels waiting for shipment.

One day in last July this sack of mail was placed aboard a fast mail train and hurried to Chicago, where it was transhipped to one of the transcontinental express for San Francisco, where the Milwaukee was in port. But before the mail arrived Commander Rogers of the Milwaukee received a hurry-up order from Washington to sail for Honolulu.

On the day before the Milwaukee was due in Honolulu the sack of mail was started on the same journey in a fast mail steamer, but the Milwaukee was 1,000 miles out, bound for Panama, 5,000 miles away, when the mail steamer was sighted off Honolulu. Two days later the sack was on its way back to San Francisco, where it arrived in due time, and as the Milwaukee was still between 1,500 and 2,000 miles out of Panama then, the San Francisco postmaster hustled the bag on a Panama-bound steamer. The cruiser, however, reached Panama first, only to be ordered to Amapala, Honduras, a thousand miles to the north, and was well on her journey when the mail steamer arrived.

The Panama postmaster found that a vessel was leaving for Amapala within forty-eight hours, and he transhipped the sack of mail to that steamer, but the Milwaukee was steaming full speed back to San Francisco when the sack reached Amapala. The postmaster there forwarded it to San Francisco. Again the sack missed connection, as the Milwaukee had sailed for Bremerton, Wash. Arriving there, the cruiser was put in reserve, and the bag of mail again forwarded from San Francisco—this time by rail—finally reached the boat and was delivered to the men.

CLOTHES AND THE STAGE.

What an Actress Learns About the Art of Individuality in Dress.

The actress soon learns to approach the subject of dress in a way that rarely occurs to the average woman upon whom its necessity is not enforced—though that necessity exists in ordinary life quite as much as on the stage, and overlooking it is the secret of much of the bad dressing we see, says Julia Marlowe in Women's Home Companion. The actress is bound to wear clothes that will keep her in the picture, and such favorable attention as she attracts by her clothes is due to the design, material or style of the gown itself only so far as these all melt into the scene in which they are worn.

How much the average woman could learn in this one particular from the hard school of stage experience! How few women know how to choose even a house gown that is in harmony with the surroundings of their own homes. Of course, dressing for the street is more difficult, but even there ordinary forethought would prevent many of the selections in dress which American women allow themselves. Dressing for the social function is the most difficult of all, on this very account, for there each woman is at the mercy of other women present, most of whom have dressed with no thought of the environment, while on the stage the actress knows that every other costume, like her own, has been calculated for the picture.

And this principle allows plenty of latitude for individual taste and judgment in dress. Even we stage women develop ideas of our own and have our favorite kinds of costumes. I don't know of a part in which I take more comfort than Parthenia in "Ingomar," and I believe in the artistic lines and graceful freedom possible in the loose, flowing style of dress in vogue before the days of stays and princess gowns.

One Thing He Could Not Have.

Although there was no sort of toy which could be bought and for which Harold had expressed a desire that was not in his possession, he still had his unsatisfied longings. "I know what I wish I was, mother," he said one day, when his own big brother had gone away and the little boy across the street was ill.

"Yes, dear," said his mother. "Perhaps you can be it, Harold; mother will help you. Is it to play soldier?"

"No, indeed!" said Harold, scornfully. "I just wish I was two little dogs, so I could play together."

These Dreamy Fellows.

"Rose-leaf fingers and golden hair," sighed the poet, as he thought of his best girl.

If he'd only seen the bills from her manicure and hair specialist!—The Bohemian.

You probably expect more of a friend than you are willing to give.