

The Redemption of David Corson

By CHARLES FREDERIC GOSS

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CHAPTER XIII.

After wandering aimlessly about the city for a while the half-crazed gambler turned his footsteps toward home. He entered, both hoping and fearing that Pepeeta would be asleep. He had a vague presentiment that he was on the verge of some great event. The guilty secret so long hidden in the depths of his soul seemed to have festered its way dangerously near to the surface, and he felt that if anything more should happen to irritate him he might do something desperate.

So quiet had been his movements that he stood at Pepeeta's door before she knew that he had entered the house, and when he saw her kneeling by her bedside he stamped his foot in rage. The worshiper, startled by the interruption, although she was momentarily expecting it, hastily arose.

She smiled him a welcome which revealed her love, but did not conceal her sadness nor her suffering, and, approaching him, extended her hands for an embrace. He pushed her aside and flung himself heavily into a chair.

"You are tired," she said soothingly, and stroked his hair.

He did not answer, and her caress both tranquilized and frenzied him. She placed before him the little lunch which she always prepared with her own hands and kept in readiness for his return.

"Take it away. How often have I told you never to let me find you on your knees when I come home?" he asked, brutally.

"Oh! my beloved," she exclaimed, "you will at least permit me to kneel to you! See! I am here in an attitude of supplication! Listen to me!"

Answer me! What is the matter? Do you not love me any more? Tell me! Will you never love me again?"

With a violent and convulsive effort he pushed her away and exclaimed fiercely, "Leave me! Do not touch me! I hate you!"

"Hate me?" she cried, "hate me? Oh, David! You cannot mean it. You cannot mean that you hate me?"

"But I do!" he exclaimed, bitterly. "I hate you. You have ruined me, and now you confess it. From the time that I first saw you I have never had a moment's peace. Why did you ever cross my path? Could you not have left me alone in my happiness and innocence? Look at me now. See what you have brought me to. I am ruined! But I am not alone. You have pulled yourself down with me. What will you say when I tell you that you are involved in a crime that must drag us both down?"

"A crime?" she cried, clasping her hands in terror.

"Yes, a crime. You need not look so innocent. You are as guilty as I, or at least you are as deeply involved. We are bound together in misery. We are doomed. Doomed! What do you mean? Tell me, I implore you—do not speak in riddles!"

"Tell you? Do you wish to know? Are you in earnest? Then I will! You are not my wife! There! It is out at last!"

Pepeeta sprang to her feet and stood staring at him in horror.

"I deceived you. You were married to your best of a husband lawfully enough; but as you would not leave him willingly, I determined that you should leave him any way. And so I bribed the justice to deceive you."

"You bribed the justice to deceive me?"

"Yes, bribed him. Do you understand? You see now what your beauty has brought you to?"

She stood before him white and silent. He had risen, and they were confronting each other with their sins and sorrows between them.

"This, then," she said, "is the clue to all this mystery. The tangled thread has begun to unravel. Many times this suspicion has forced itself upon my mind; but it was too terrible to believe! And yet I, who could not endure the suspicion, must now support the reality?"

"Well," he said, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Do?" she said, "do? Must I do something? Yes, you are right. We cannot go on as we are. Something must be done. But what? Is it possible that I must return to my husband? How can I do that—I who cannot think of him without loathing! What is the matter? Why do you tremble so? Is it then as terrible to you as to me? I see from your emotion that I am right. And yet I cannot see what good it will do! How can it undo the wrong? It will be a certain sort of reparation, but it cannot bring him happiness, for I cannot give him back my heart. Oh! David, why have you done this? And yet I see my duty! If he is my husband, I must go back to him. A wife's place is by her husband's side. I do not see how I can do it, but I must. How hard it is! I cannot realize it. The very thought of seeing him again makes me shudder! And yet I must go!"

"It is impossible," gasped the trembling creature to whom she looked for confirmation.

"Why impossible?"

"Because, because—he is—dead," he whispered, through his dry lips.

"Dead? Did you say dead?" Pepeeta cried. "When did he die? How did he die?"

"I killed him," he shouted, springing to his feet and waving his hands wildly. "There! It has told itself. I knew it would. It has been eating its way out of my heart for months. I should have died if I had kept it secret for another moment. I feel relieved already. You do not know what it means to guard a secret night and day

for years, do you? Oh, how sweet it is to tell it at last. I killed him! I killed him! I struck him with a stone. I crushed his skull and turned him face downward in the road and left him there so that when they found him they would think that he had fallen from his horse. It was well done, for one who had had no training in crime! No one has suspected it. I am in no danger. And yet I could not keep the secret any longer. And now that I have told it, I feel so much happier. I am like myself again. I feel as if I should never be unkind or irritable any more. The load has fallen from my heart. Come, now, and kiss me."

Extending his hands, he approached her. As he did so, the look of horror with which she had regarded him intensified and she retreated before him until she reached the wall, looking like a seabird hurled against a precipice by a storm. Such dread was on her face that he dared not touch her.

"What is the matter?" he said. "Are you afraid of me?"

"Forgive me," she said, "for seeming even for a moment to despise and abhor you. It was all so sudden. I do not mean to condemn you. I do not mean to act or feel as if I were any less guilty than you are in all this wrong. But when one has to face something awful without preparation, it is very hard. No wonder that we do not know what to do. We are both guilty. David, I think that it is because I have had so large a share in all the rest that has been wrong that I cannot now feel towards you as I think I ought. It is true that you have injured me terribly and irremediably. It is true that your hands are stained with blood, and yet I love you! My heart yearns for you this moment as never before since we have known each other. But there is a voice within my soul that tells me that we must part. We could not respect and therefore we could not truly love each other. Into every moment of our lives this guilty secret would intrude. No, it is impossible. I see it clearly. Every passing moment only makes it more plain."

"We shall not part!" he cried, springing towards her and seizing her by the wrist. "We are as firmly linked by vice as by virtue. This secret will draw us together! We cannot keep away from each other. Let the dead past bury its dead! Let us be happy."

"No," she answered, calmly, "it is impossible. You need not argue. You cannot change my mind. I see it all too clearly. We must part."

"Oh! pity me," he cried, falling on his knees. "What shall I do? I cannot bear this burden alone. It will crush me. Have mercy, Pepeeta. Do not drive me away. I cannot go forth with this brand of Cain upon my forehead and realize that I shall never hear from your lips another word of love or comfort. Pity me."

"But, my beloved, I am not acting for myself. It is not my mind or heart that speaks. It is God speaking through me. I feel myself to be acting under an influence apart from myself. We have resisted these voices and this influence too long. Now we must obey them."

"But, Pepeeta," he continued, "you do not really think that you have the power to suppress the love you feel for me?"

"I shall not try," she answered.

She smiled on him with unutterable tenderness, and with her eyes still fixed upon his haggard face began to move slowly toward the door. He did not stir; he could not move, but remained upon his knees with his hands extended towards her in supplication.

Like some exalted figure in a dream he saw her vanish from his sight; his world became empty and dark; his powers of endurance had been overtaxed; he lost all consciousness, and fell forward on the floor.

CHAPTER XIV.

A month of dangerous and almost fatal sickness followed. When at last, through the care of a faithful negro "mammy," the much-enduring man crept out from the valley of the shadow of death, he learned that Pepeeta had secured a little room in a tenement house and was supporting herself with her needle. In the use of which she had become an expert in those glad hours when she made her baby's clothes, and those sad ones when she sat far into the night awaiting David's return. On the morning of the first day in which he was permitted to leave the house he made his way to Pepeeta's new quarters.

"And so this is to be her home," he said with a shudder as he looked up to the attic window. Every day this pale young man was seen, by the curious neighbors, hovering about the place. As for the object of his love and solicitude, she began at once to be a bread-winner. The delicate girl who never in her life until now had experienced a care about the necessities of existence began to struggle for bread in company with the thousands of poor and needy creatures by whom she found herself surrounded. The only hunger she experienced was that of the heart. She soon became conscious of David's presence, and derived from it a pleasure which only added to her pain. She avoided him as best she could, and her determination and her sanctity prevented him from approaching her.

He wrote her a letter in which, after passionately pleading for her love, he asked her to give him a sign of willingness to take him once more back into her life. "If I may cherish hopes of your ultimate relenting," he wrote,

"place your candle on the window sill. I will wait until midnight, and if you extinguish it then, I shall accept your decision as final, and you will be responsible for what follows. I am a desperate man, and life without you has become intolerable."

Having thrust the letter under the door, David fled hastily down the stairway and into the street, where he began to pace back and forth like a sentry on his beat. Never did a condemned felon in a cell watch for the coming of a messenger of pardon with more wildly beating heart than his as he gazed at that window up in the wall of the gloomy tenement house. Never did a mariner on a storm-tossed vessel keep his eye more resolutely fixed on beams from a distant light-house.

Finally, and after what seem uncounted ages, the great cock struck the hour of midnight. One, two, three—he stood like a man rooted to the ground—four, five, six—his heart beat louder than the bell—seven, eight, nine—the blood seemed bursting through his temples—ten, eleven, twelve—the light went out! The universe seemed to have been instantaneously swallowed up in darkness. He could not see the figure that crept to the window and gazed down upon him from behind the drapery of the curtains. He did not know that Pepeeta had fallen—her knees in an agony deeper than his own, and was gazing down at him through streaming tears. In those few succeeding moments the sense of his personal loss was displaced by a sudden and overpowering sense of his personal guilt. The full consciousness of his sin burst upon him. He saw the selfishness of his love and his wickedness in a light brighter than day.

"What next?" he said aloud, as if speaking to some one else. Receiving no answer, he turned instinctively toward his gambling house, and went stumbling along through the deserted streets. What is a man, after all, but a stumbling machine? Progress is made by falling forward over obstacles! The poor stumbler tottered across his own threshold into that brilliant room where he had always received an enthusiastic welcome, but which he had not visited since his sickness. If ever a man needed kindness and encouragement it was he; but his sensitive spirit instantly discovered that all was changed.

His superstitious companions had not forgotten the broken glass, and had heard of his subsequent calamities. With them the lucky alone were the adorable! The gods of the temples of fortunes are easily and quickly dethroned, and the worshippers had already prostrated themselves before other shrines.

The coldness of his greeting sent a chill to his already benumbed heart and increased his desperation. He was nervous, excited, depressed, and feeling the need of something to distract his thought from his troubles, he sat down and began to play; but from the first deal he lost—lost steadily and heavily. Within a few short hours he had staked his entire fortune and lost it. It had gone as easily and as quickly as it had come.

"I guess that is about all," he said, pushing himself wearily back from the table at which he had just parted with the title to his desolated home.

The sun was just rising. The first faint stir of life was perceptible in the city streets; the green-grocers were coming in with their fresh vegetables; the office boys were opening the doors and putting away the shutters; there was a bright, morning look on the faces which peered into the haggard countenance of the gambler as he crept aimlessly along, but the fresh, sweet light gave him neither brightness nor joy. His heart was cold and dead; he had not even formed a purpose.

And so he drifted aimlessly until the current that was setting toward the levee caught him and bore him on with it. The sight of a vessel just putting out to sea communicated to his spirit its first definite impulse and he ascended the gang-plank without even inquiring its destination.

In a few moments the boat swung loose and turned its prow down the river. The bustle of the embarkation distracted him. He watched the hurrying sailors, gazed at the piles of merchandise, walked up and down the deck, listened to the fresh breeze that began to play upon the great, sonorous harp of the shrouds and the masts, and when at last the vessel glided out into the waters of the gulf he lay down in a hammock and fell into a long and dreamless sleep.

Mandarin.

Mandarin is not, as is generally supposed, a Chinese word, but one given by the Portuguese colonists at Macao to the officials of the Flowery Kingdom. It is from the verb "mandar" (to command). There are nine ranks of the mandarins, distinguished by the buttons in their caps—first, ruby; second, coral; third, sapphire; fourth, an opaque blue stone; fifth, crystal; sixth, an opaque white shell; seventh, wrought gold; eighth, plain gold; ninth, silver.

Bees.

Bees were unknown to the Indians, but they were brought over from England only a few years after the landing of the Pilgrim fathers. It was more than two centuries after the first white invasion of New England, however, before modern beekeeping began. The industry of the present day dates from the invention of the movable frame hive by Langstreth in 1852.

Storks of Egypt.

Were it not for the multitude of storks that throng Egypt every winter there would be no living in some parts of the country, for after every inundation frogs appear in devastating swarms.

Took Him at His Word.

Blobbs—What's the matter with Henpecke? He seems quite depressed. Blobbs—Oh, I made the mistake of telling him to make himself feel quite at home.—Philadelphia Record.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

The soil of Siberia is in many regions as rich and fertile as that of Canada.

Nineteen States have naval militia. England sends many of her orphan and deserted children to Canada.

Within five years Uruguay will have 140,000 olive trees, capable of producing two million pounds of olives and fifty thousand gallons of oil.

District after district in China is raising money toward the endowment fund of Hong-Kong University. Canton district has given \$43,750.

The new bridge over the Ganges River at Sara, India, for the Eastern Bengal Railway, is to cost \$6,500,000. It will replace the ferry now in use. It will be over a mile long.

In eighteen months there will be direct railway communication between Buenos Aires and Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay. The railway has already reached the Bolivian frontier.

By a traveler in Italy the Rubicon, the famous river crossed by Julius Caesar, is described as "the merest trickle of a stream, in which it would be quite impossible for a man to drown himself."

Great Britain sent Canada 100,129 immigrants in the twelve months ended July, 1900, a decrease of 25,809 from 1908 and of 73,869 from 1907. It is the lowest record since 1904. About three-fourths were English and Scotch. Only 3,799 were Irish.

Two children, age about six and eight, wandered into the receiving ward at a London hospital. The elder handed the doctor in charge the following note from his mother: "They have awful cauf. I think it is whooping cauf. You wait a minit and hear them cauf." She was right.

In Alexandre Bisson's new play, which will be performed at Paris for the first time next week, an additional scene has been created in order to introduce two police dogs. They chase the villain up and down, across and under the stage, and finally capture the bad man. The dogs enter so heartily into what they seem to consider a great lark that the unfortunate villain has expressed the hope that the play may be short-lived.

The reappearance of Halley's comet has revised the old almanac that Pope Calixtus III. launched a bull against the comet in his day. Historical facts in this case show that he ordered public prayers that, if evils were impending, God would turn all upon the Turks, then fighting the Christian armies. No bull of exorcism is mentioned against either the comet or the Turks in authentic documents of the period.—Catholic Truth.

It is expected that aluminum coins of low value will be in circulation in France by the end of this year. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that the adoption of M. Naquet's proposition for an aluminum coinage in 1871 would have resulted in a heavy loss to the French treasury. Although experts declared it to be impossible that the value of the metal should decrease, it has now fallen to nearly half the price ruling at that time.

Maisie, a poor young woman of London, was being entertained by a "patroness." During tea the girl led the conversation into personal channels. "Is your husband in work?" she asked her hostess. "Yes"—and raised her eyebrows. "How many children have you?" "Two"—and an astonished smile. "Does your husband drink?" "Why, my dear, what put all this into your head?" "Mother said I was to talk like a lady, and that's how they talk to her."

Convicts who are sent to the French penal colony in French Guiana are punished in exactly inverse ratio to their crimes. The murderers and the most dangerous convicts are sent to the Island of Salvation, where they lead lazy and healthy lives, but the men convicted of lesser offenses work and die in a terrible climate on the coast. In the settlement of St. Jean de Maroni the mortality is from 40 to 50 per cent. The average life of a convict is two years.

Princess Patricia of Connaught, who has been exhibiting some of her artistic work at the East Berks art exhibition, is one of the most versatile of Europe's royal ladies, and, besides being a painter of great merit, is a noted sportswoman, being almost equally proficient in tennis, hockey, golf and horseriding. One of her favorite hobbies is the collection of uncut gems, of which she has a magnificent assortment. The princess is very democratic in her ideas, and she once remarked to a friend: "Mamma says that we can forget about the royalty if we only remember that we are ladies."—M. A. P.

The English courts are taking strong action to catch and send up rascally bird dealers who for years have been systematically blinding song birds which they put on the market under the popular impression that blind birds sing best. The fearfully painful methods of blinding these beautiful little innocent tufts of color and song is to stick a needle in behind the eyeball and tear the nerve of sight in two with the point of a needle. Such birds look and behave like other birds, and can find their water and seed in their cages after recovery from pain. It seems this brutal world ever needs returning reincarnations of the spirit of Victor Hugo to remind it of its coldness, cruelty and brutality.—New York Press.

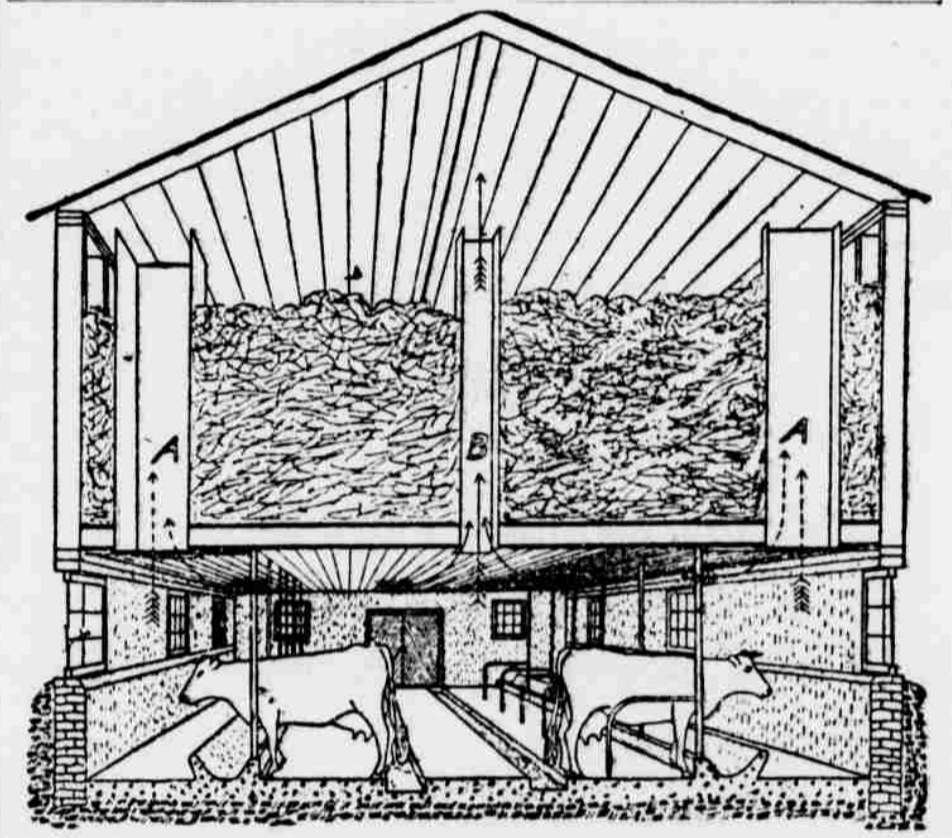


Stable Ventilation.

Some years ago Prof. F. H. King, of Wisconsin, made an experimental study of the effect of ample and deficient ventilation upon twenty milch cows. The experiment was made in a half-basement stable, represented in accompanying figure, having three outside doors, thirteen large windows and a door leading by a stairway to the floor above. The ceiling was nine feet above the floor and the stable contained 960 cubic feet of space per cow. Leading upward from the ceiling were two hay chutes two by three feet in cross sections, twenty feet high, which could be opened or closed at will, and a ventilating shaft terminating near the ridge of the roof inside.

During the trial the cows were kept continuously in the stable with the hay chutes closed during two days and then with them open two days, the trials being repeated four times. Following these four trials the hay chutes were left closed during three consecutive days for poor ventilation and left open the following three, making fourteen days in all.

It was found that measurably the same amount of feed was eaten under both conditions of ventilation. But during the days of insufficient ventilation the cows drank, on the average, 11.4 pounds more water each day and yet lost in weight an average of 10.7 pounds at the end of each



period, regaining this again when good ventilation was restored, and this, too, when they were drinking less water. During the good ventilation days, too, for each and every period, the cows gave more milk, the average being 55 pounds per head per day.

At the end of the fourteen days the cows were turned into the yard and exhibited an intense desire to lick their sides and limbs, doing so in many cases till the hair was stained with blood. Examination showed that during the interval a rash had developed which could be felt by the hand. In the form of hard raised points, and the rasping of these off caused the bleeding.

Sell Less Wheat Abroad.

The calendar year 1900 will show a smaller exportation of wheat than any year in the last decade, and an increased home consumption, both in amount and per capita average, says a report of the Bureau of Statistics on wheat production, exportation and consumption of the United States.

The continued decline in exports of breadstuffs lends interest to the statement. The exportation of wheat for the nine months ending with September amounted to only 27,768,901 bushels, against 68,178,935 bushels in the same month of 1908; flour exports were 5,288,283 barrels, against 9,428,347. This reduction in exports of wheat seems to be due to increased consumption at home rather than at any decline in production. The average annual production for the last five years has exceeded any earlier five-year period.

Skim Milk for Hens.

In some tests by the Virginia experiment station skim milk has been proved a valuable food for laying hens. In a test of 122 days 22 hens were fed skim milk, laying 1,244 eggs, as against 896 laid by 22 hens fed a wet mash with water. In a test covering 37 days 30 hens laid 862 eggs on a skim milk diet, while a like number fed no skim milk laid 632 eggs. Other experiments conducted recorded similar results. The station, from these tests, estimates that when eggs are worth 20 to 25 cents per dozen skim milk has a feeding value of 1 1/4 to 2 cents a quart.

Agricultural Statistics.

At the approaching census special attention will be given to the gathering of agricultural statistics. Farmers will be asked for information which might be regarded as of a very personal nature concerning their operations, but they will be assured that the facts will be held sacred.

Rural Delivery and Roads.

The Postoffice Department at Washington has again sent out orders that rural mail delivery is to be discontinued on routes not properly maintained by mail patrons, who are supposed to keep the roads in good condition. In many parts of the country the roads are maintained and kept in fairly good condition, but thousands of miles of roadways traversed every day by the carriers are wretched, and later in the year will become next to impassable. Were it a matter of great expense or effort to keep country roads in good condition it might be something of a hardship to farmers, but the intelligent use of the split-log drag has practically solved the problem of country road making and road maintenance, and people need to get busy in employing them on the highways. In many parts of the country, especially in Iowa and Missouri, hundreds of miles of roads are kept in passable condition the year around by means of this cheap and inexpensive implement. When once a highway is placed in good condition any farmer can keep up one mile of road the year around by dragging it a few times a month after rain has fallen, a work that will take the time of a man and team less than a half a day all told.—Denver Field and Farm.

Experience with Alfalfa.

In the first place, I made two mistakes in sowing with grain and of course made two failures in getting a stand that suited me. For my third endeavor I selected a piece of ground which had been in hoed crops for a number of years and heavily manured each year, plowing it in April and keeping it cultivated till July, when I seeded it at the rate of 20 pounds per acre.

On the night following my sowing we got a very heavy shower, and I

got a magnificent stand. On part of the field I had sown wheat and red clover the fall before. So that in the fall after sowing my alfalfa the red clover was knee high and in full bloom, and as I did not wish it to go to seed I turned my cattle and sheep into it, thinking they would not trouble the alfalfa, but I found that I had made a great mistake, as they fell upon the alfalfa and eat it nearly to the ground. I gave it up, thinking it was entirely ruined, but the next spring it came up as green as a bed of lettuce, and since then, now five years ago, I have mown from two to three crops each year, of the very finest of hay, and the stand of alfalfa is now as good as ever, and all without being manured or fertilized in any way.—A. C. Gowdy, in Michigan Farmer.

Glass Walls for Fruit Trees.

An interesting experiment in fruit growing has been recently carried out by the Count de Choleseul and described in Cosmos. When a south wall is used for fruit trees the north side of the wall is practically wasted as far as fruit is concerned. Count de Choleseul has used a glass wall, and grown fruit trees on both sides. The produce on the north side is little inferior to that on the south. A photograph shows heavily fruited pear trees on both sides of the wall. The wall, 60 feet long and 6 1/2 feet high, had fifteen pear trees planted on each side. In 1907 134 pears, weighing 91 pounds, were gathered on the south side of the wall, and 109, weighing 77 pounds, on the north side. The variety grown was the Doyenne L'Hiver.

Fruit Stones for Spring Planting.

Peach, cherry and plum stones should be spread thin on high, dry ground in narrow rows, and then covered with about 6 inches of fine earth, with a little trench on each side of the row to draw off the surface water. After the ground freezes a little fine horse manure may be spread over the frozen ground, just enough to cover the ground. If too much is used it will make a harbor for mice and rats. Apple seed may be sown in the same way, but will need a heavier covering. These seed will sprout and take root as soon as the weather turns mild, when they should be taken up and planted out in rows.

A Skilled Estimate.

Richard Pybus, of the Old Lodge, Derby, Pa., at the local agricultural show in 1906, guessed the exact weight of a live bullock—854 pounds. In 1907 his estimate was only 1 pound out, and this year he was within 1 1/4 pounds of the correct weight.