

The Wand of Sleep

OR

The Devil-Stick

By the Author of
"The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," Etc.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

On the day after the Major's dinner party, Isabella was sitting in the veranda with a book open on her lap and Dido standing gravely near her. Mrs. Dallas in the cool depths of the drawing-room, was indulging in an after-lunch nap. The sunlight poured itself over the velvet lawn, drew forth the perfumes from the flower beds, and made the earth languorous with heat.

In the veranda all was cool and restful and pleasantly silent. Isabella, in her white dress, looked beautiful and pensive, while Dido, in reddish-brown robe, with a crimson kerchief twisted round her stately head, gazed in the semi-gloom like some gorgeous tropical bird astray in our northern climes. Both mistress and maid were silent.

It was Dido who spoke first. She noticed that the eyes of her mistress constantly strayed in the direction of "Ashantee," and with the jealousy begotten of deep affection, she guessed that the girl's thoughts were fixed upon Maurice. At once she spoke reproachfully, and in the grotesque negro dialect, which, however, coming from Dido's mouth, inspired no one with merriment.

"Aha, missy," said she, in deep guttural tones, "you tink ob dat yaller-hair man!"

"Maurice! Yes, I'm thinking about him; and you know why?"

Dido's fierce black eyes flashed out a gleam of rage, and she cursed Maurice audibly in some barbaric tongue which Isabella seemed to understand. At all events she interrupted the woman's speech with an imperious gesture.

"No more of that, Dido. You know that I love Maurice; I wish to marry him. Why are you so bitter against him?"

"He take you from me."

"Well, if I marry anyone the same thing will happen," responded Isabella, lightly; "and surely, Dido, you do not want me to remain a spinster all my life."

"No, missy, no! You marry, an' ole Dido am berry pleased. But dat yaller-hair man, I no like him."

"We are engaged."

"Your mudder, she say no!"

"Nonsense! She likes Maurice herself," replied Isabella, uneasily. "Maurice wants our engagement kept quiet for the present, but when I do tell Major Jen and my mother, I am sure neither of them will object."

"H'm, we see, missy, we see," said Dido, darkly. "But why you marry dis man I no like?"

"Because I marry to please myself, not you," said Isabella, sharply. "Oh, I know your thoughts, Dido; you would like me to marry David Sarby. The ideal as if he can compare with Maurice!"

"Wrong, missy. I no wish dat man."

"Then Dr. Etwald—that horrid, gloomy creature!"

"Mim great man!" said Dido, solemnly. "Him berry—berry great!"

"I don't think so," retorted Isabella, rising. "Of course, I know that he is clever, but as to being great, he isn't known beyond this place." She walked to the end of the veranda, and stood for a moment in the glare of the sunshine. Suddenly an idea seemed to strike her, and she turned towards the negro.

"Dido, you wouldn't like to see me the wife of Dr. Etwald?"

"Yes, missy. Him berry big great man! He lub you. He told ole Dido so!"

"He seems to have been very confidential," said Isabella, scornfully, "and from what I have seen, Dido, he has some influence over you."

"No," said the negro. "But while her tongue uttered the denial, her eyes rolled unceasingly round the lawn, as though dreading some invisible presence. "No, missy. Dido a great one, you know. She no 'fraid ob dat doctor; but him big man, missy; you marry him!"

"I love Maurice!"

"You neber marry him, missy. Neber, neber! I make de spell, I know. De spell say dat doctor he marry you!"

"Well, Dido, we will see. And now—"

She never finished what she was about to say, for at that moment Dido stretched out one arm. Across the lawn there crept a wizen, grey-haired little man, with a cringing manner. He was white, but darkish in the skin, and there was something negroish about his face. This dwarfish little creature was a tramp, who had become a pensioner of Isabella's. He had attached himself to her like some faithful dog, and rarely failed to present himself at least once a day.

What his real name was nobody knew, but he said that he was called Battersa. He was cringing, dirty, and altogether an unpleasant object to look upon; but Isabella was sorry for the creature, and aided him with food and a trifle of money. It may be here mentioned that Battersa, although he knew nothing of Ohi, was terribly afraid of Dido. Perhaps some instinct in the negro blood—for he undoubtedly had something African in his veins—made him fear this unknown priestess of fetish-worship.

"Well, Battersa," said Isabella, kindly, "how are you to-day?"

"Very well, lady, very well, indeed. I met Mr. Aylmer, and he gave me a dollar."

"That was generous of him! But, why?"

"Because I said that a certain lady was—"

"Now, now," laughed Isabella, "no more of that nonsense, Battersa." She

turned and ran along the veranda into the house. The tramp and the negro were alone.

"What de doctor say?" said Dido, in a low-voiced whisper.

"Two words. The devil-stick." The negro started, and threw up her hands in surprise.

CHAPTER IV.

Evidently there was an understanding between these two strange creatures, and thereby an occult connection with the ideas and doings of Dr. Etwald. What the trio were plotting against Isabella and her lover remains to be seen; but it can be guessed easily that the message of the devil-stick carried by Battersa to Dido was of some significance.

Battersa himself knew nothing of its esoteric meaning, but to the negro the mention of the emblem conveyed a distinct understanding. She let her arms fall listlessly by her side, and with an unseeing gaze she stared at the green trees bathed in hot sunshine. After a moment or so, she muttered to herself in negro jargon, and clenched her hands.

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Give the fowls plenty of encouragement to scratch for their grain food by keeping a portion of each pen deeply bedded with leaves or straw. There is nothing like it for promoting thrift and contentment among a flock of fowls in the winter, and it is also a great aid toward getting fertile, hatchable eggs.

Small Farms.

The farm unit is gradually becoming smaller with the advance in the price of land. A well known real estate agent in a certain locality told us recently that he had ten times as many calls for 40 acres as for 160 acre farms. The small farm is the best farm, all things considered, and people are gradually coming to realize it and to look for small farms when purchasing. The farmer of to-day is beginning to learn that it is better to tramp over less ground and grow more to the acre. The taxes and fences on a large farm sometimes amount to more than the crops. There is great economy in all lines in the cultivation and management of a small farm. When the farmer knows that he has but a few acres to plant to corn, or any other crop he will use better seed, fertilize more heavily and cultivate better. If he grows seventy to eighty bushels to the acre, say on ten acres, he is much better off than the larger farmer who cultivates twice as much and gets only thirty to forty bushels of corn to the acre.—Chicago Weekly Inter Ocean.

Killing Weeds.

A great deal is heard about chemical weed destroyers and improved methods for eradicating weeds. Some of the improved methods are worthy of the means of destroying many of the weeds. Many of them, however, are not practical and should never be considered by the farmer.

Professor Beal of the Michigan station comes forward with an entirely new means of destroying weeds which, if followed, is certainly the most practical of all other methods, except the hoe. The professor says that where soils are reasonably rich as a result of the growth of legume, there are few weeds. Lands which have been in alfalfa or clover for a number of years have few weeds. For all weedy lands the professor suggests that the farmer seed the land down for either alfalfa or clover and to make sure that the seeding is sufficient to cover the ground. Keep the ground in legume for a number of years and the weeds will nearly all be destroyed. This sounds much more sensible than chemical destroyers.

Labor-Saving Log-Roller.

On every farm where there is timber of large size there ought to be a canthook, an implement shown in the picture from Farm World, for the purpose of moving heavy logs. It will save a tremendous amount of heavy lifting and one man with a canthook can do as much or even more than two without it. The handle should be about 5 feet long and the iron hook about 12 inches. Or if very large logs are to be used, 15 inches. The hook should work loosely on a bolt through the handle and the "business end" be slightly curved inward and always kept sharp.

Selecting Laying Hens.

Not enough importance is usually attached to the selection of laying hens. They must be properly cared for, if they are to lay well during both winter and summer. Houses must be kept sanitary and the fowls free from vermin. Care must be exercised to avoid their being chased by dogs or other animals, or unnecessarily frightened. Poultry houses must be well ventilated, and one or more windows should be opened every bright day, so that the house will not become warm during the day and grow cold again at night.

Dairying and Price of Land.

Dairying in Holland is the principal occupation. The land is worth from \$500 to \$1,000 an acre, yet the people pay their rents or interest on the investment by producing butter and cheese, which they place on the European market in successful competition with that produced in America on land of less than one-fifth the value. The secret is—efficient cows, excellent care, co-operation and superiority of butter and cheese.

Let Her Scratch.

The importance of exercise for poultry might well be placed subordinate only to good housing and feeding. But a writer in an agricultural monthly pertinently remarks that "scratching

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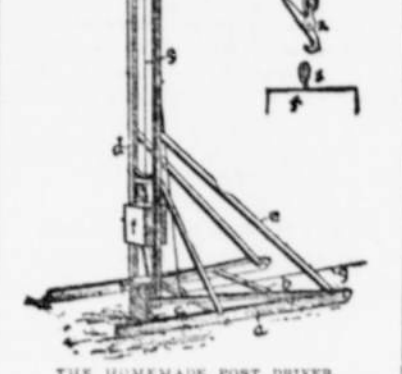
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A Post Driver.

A homemade arrangement for driving piles or posts is shown in the sketch. I consider a post driver one of the most useful implements that I have on the farm, writes J. L. Macomber in Farm and Home. This device is of very simple construction, and aside from the few pieces of iron, pulleys and the rope, any farmer can make it at home.

The runners, a, are 9 ft. long, made of good solid oak 6x4 in. thick. The



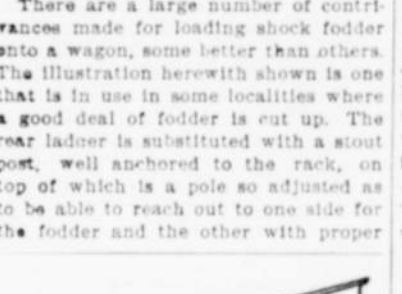
THE HOMEMADE POST DRIVER.

crosspieces, b, are of 4x4 oak, placed about 3 ft. apart. Firm braces, c, of 1x5 scantling, will strengthen the frame. The uprights, d, are 14 or 16 ft. long, as desired, of 4x4 oak. The braces, e, may be 2x4. For the weight, f, a wooden block may be used, which is either square or round. It should be about 18 inches in diameter and 2 1/2 ft. long, of solid oak or hickory. Some wood that will not split readily is best. Grooves should be made in the side of the weight to take in the full width of the uprights. It is a good plan to bore an inch hole through the rear end of each runner, through which a peg may be driven to hold the device in position while the post is being driven.

The working of this device is simple. The weight is drawn up by horses hitched to the end of a rope, and when it arrives at the top of the uprights it is released by the hook, g, striking the block, h, unhooking it from the ring, i, which is attached to the driver block. Four or five blows will usually drive a pointed post to the required depth. Two men and a team will drive one-half to three-quarters of a mile of posts in a day. The cost of such an implement is about \$5, and will pay for itself in a short time.

Swing for Loading Fodder.

There are a large number of contrivances made for loading shock fodder onto a wagon, some better than others. The illustration herewith shown is one that is in use in some localities where a good deal of fodder is cut up. The rear ladder is substituted with a stout post, well anchored to the rack, on top of which is a pole so adjusted as to be able to reach out to one side for the fodder and the other with proper



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