

The Firm of Girdlestone

BY
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CHAPTER XI.

This episode had occurred about a fortnight before Ezra's return from Africa, and was duly retailed to him by his father.

"You need not be discouraged by that," he said. "I can always keep them apart, and if he is absent and you are present—especially as she has no idea of the cause of his absence—she will end by feeling slighted and preferring you."

"I cannot understand how you ever came to let the matter go so far," his son answered sullenly. "The girl belongs to us. She was given to you to look after, and a nice job you seem to have made of it."

"Never mind, my boy," replied the merchant. "I'll answer for keeping them apart if you will only push the matter on your own account."

"I've said that I would do so, and I will," Ezra returned, and events soon showed that he was as good as his word.

Before his African excursion the relations between Girdlestone and his father's ward had never been cordial. Kate's nature, however, was so sweet and forgiving that it was impossible for her to harbor any animosity, and she greeted Ezra kindly on his return from his travels. Within a few days she became conscious that a remarkable change had come over him—a change, as it seemed to her, very much for the better. In the past weeks had frequently elapsed without his addressing her, but now he went out of his way to make himself agreeable. Sometimes he would sit for a whole evening describing to her all that he had seen in Africa, and really interesting her by his account of men and things. She, poor lass, hailed this new departure with delight, and did all in her power to encourage his better nature, and to show that she appreciated the alteration in his bearing.

At the same time, she was rather grieved in her mind, for an occasional flash of coarseness or ferocity showed her that the real nature of the man was unaltered, and that he was putting an unnatural restraint upon himself.

As the days went on and no word or sign came from Tom, a great fear and perplexity arose within the girl's mind. She had heard nothing of the interview at Fenchurch street nor had she any clue at all which could explain the mystery. Could it be that Tom had informed her guardian of their engagement, and had received such a rebuff that he had abandoned her in despair? That was surely impossible; yet why was it that he had ceased to walk through the square? She knew that he was not ill, because she heard her two companions talking of him in connection with business. What could be the matter then? Her little heart was torn by a thousand conflicting doubts and fears.

In the meantime Ezra gave fresh manifestations of the improvement which travel had wrought upon him. She had remarked one day that she was fond of moss roses. On coming down to breakfast next morning she found a beautiful moss rose upon her plate, and every morning afterwards a fresh flower appeared in the same place. This pretty little piece of courtesy, which she knew could only come from Ezra, surprised and pleased her, for delicacy was the last quality which she would have given him credit for.

On another occasion she had expressed a desire to read Thackeray's works, the books in the library being for the most part somewhat ancient. On entering her room that same evening she found, to her astonishment, a handsome bound edition of the novels in question standing on the center of her table. For a moment a wild, unreasoning hope awoke in her that perhaps this was Tom's doing—that he had taken this means of showing that she was still dear to him. She soon saw, however, that the books could only have come from the same source as the flowers, and she marvelled more than ever at this fresh proof of the good will of her companion.

One day her guardian took the girl aside. "Your life must be rather dull," he said. "I have taken a box for you to-night at the opera. I do not care about such spectacles myself, but I have made arrangements for your escort. A change will do you good."

"Poor Kate was too sad at heart to be inclined for amusement. She endeavored, however, to look pleased and grateful.

"My good friend, Mrs. Wilkinson, is coming for you," the merchant said, "and Ezra is going, too. He has a great liking for music."

Kate could not help smiling at this last remark, as she thought how very successfully the young man had concealed his taste during the years that she had known him.

She was ready, however, at the appointed hour, and Mrs. Wilkinson, a prim old gentleman, who had chaperoned Kate on the rare occasions when she went out, having arrived, the three drove off together.

The opera happened to be "Faust," and the magnificent scenery and dresses astonished Kate, who had hardly ever before been within the walls of a theater. She sat as if entranced, with a bright tinge of color upon her cheeks, which, with her sparkling eyes, made her look surpassingly beautiful. So thought Ezra Girdlestone as he sat in the recesses of the box and watched the varied expressions which flitted across her mobile features. "She is well worth having, money or no," he muttered to himself, and redoubled his attentions to her during the evening.

An incident occurred between the acts that night which would have pleased the old merchant had he witnessed it. Kate had been looking down from the box, which was upon the third tier, at the sea of heads beneath them. Suddenly she

gave a start, and her face grew a trifle paler.

"Isn't that Mr. Dimsdale down there?" she asked of her companion.

"Where?" asked Ezra, craning his neck.

"Oh, yes, there he is in the second row of the stalls."

"Do you know who the young lady is that he is talking to?" Kate asked.

"I don't know," said Ezra. "I have seen him about with her a good deal lately." The latter was a deliberate falsehood, but Ezra saw his chance of prejudicing his rival and took prompt advantage of it. "She is very good looking," he added presently, keeping his eyes upon his companion.

"Oh, indeed," said Kate, and turned with some commonplace remark to Mrs. Wilkinson. Her heart was sore nevertheless, and she derived little pleasure from the remainder of the performance. As to Ezra, in spite of his great love for music, he dozed peacefully in a corner of the box during the whole of the last act. None of them were sorry when Faust was duly consigned to the nether regions and Marguerite was apotheosized upon a couple of wooden clouds. Ezra narrated the incident of the recognition in the stalls to his father on his return, and the old gentleman rubbed his hands over it.

"Most fortunate!" he exclaimed gleefully. "By working on that idea we might produce great effects. Who was the girl, do you know?"

"Some poor relation, I believe, whom he took out at times."

"We will find out her name and all about her. Capital! capital!" cried John Girdlestone, and the two worthies departed to their rooms much pleased at this new card which chance had put into their hands.

During the weary weeks while Tom Dimsdale, in accordance with his promise, avoided Eccleston square and everything which could remind Kate of his existence, Ezra continued to leave no stone unturned in his endeavors to steal his way into her affections. Poor Tom's sole comfort was the recollection of that last passionate letter which he had written in the Blackwall public house, and which had, as he imagined, enlightened her as to the reasons of his absence, and had prevented her from feeling any uneasiness or surprise. Had he known the fate that had befallen that epistle he would hardly have been able to continue his office duties so patiently, or to wait with so much resignation for Mr. Girdlestone's sanction to his engagement.

As the days passed and still brought no news, Kate's face grew paler and her heart more weary and desponding. That the young man was well was beyond dispute, since she had seen him with her own eyes at the opera. What explanation could there be, then, for his conduct? Was it possible that he had told Mr. Girdlestone of their engagement, and that her guardian had found some means of dissuading him from continuing his suit—found some appeal to his interest, perhaps, which was too strong for his love? All that she knew of Tom's nature contradicted such a supposition. Again, if Girdlestone had learned anything of their engagement, surely he would have reproached her with it. His manner of late had been kinder rather than harsher. On the other hand, could it have chanced that Tom had met this lady of the opera, and that her charms had proved too much for his constancy? When she thought of the honest grey eyes which had looked down into hers at that last meeting in the garden she found it hard to imagine the possibility of such things, and yet there was a fact which had to be explained. The more she thought of it the more incomprehensible it grew, but still the pale face grew paler and the sad heart more heavy.

Soon, however, her doubts and fears began to resolve themselves into something more substantial than vague conjecture. The conversation of the Girdlestons; need to turn upon their business colleague, and always in the same strain. There were stray remarks about his doings; hints from the father and laughter from the son. "Not much work to be got out of him now," the old man would say. "When a man's in love he's not over fond of a ledger."

"A nice looking girl, too," said Ezra in answer to some such remark. "I thought something would come of it. We saw them together at the opera, didn't we, Kate?"

So they would gossip together, and every word a stab to the poor girl. She strove to conceal her feelings, and, indeed, her anger and her pride were stronger even than her grief, for she felt that she had been cruelly used. One day she found Girdlestone alone and unboomed herself to him.

"Is it really true," she asked with a quick pant and a catch of her breath, "that Mr. Dimsdale is engaged to be married?"

"I believe so, my dear," her guardian answered. "It is commonly reported so. When a young lady and gentleman correspond it is usually a sign of something of the sort."

"Oh, they correspond?"

"Yes, they certainly correspond. Her letters are sent to him at the office. I don't know that I altogether like that arrangement. It looks as if he were deceiving his parents." All this was an unmitigated lie, but Girdlestone had gone too far now to stick at trifles.

"Who is the lady?" asked Kate, with a calm set face, but a quivering lip.

"A cousin of his. Miss Ossary is her name, I believe. I am not sorry, for it may be a sign that he has sown all his wild oats. Do you know at one time, Kate, I feared that he might take a fancy to you. He has a specious way with him, and I felt my responsibility in the matter."

"You need not be afraid on that score," Kate said bitterly. "I think I can gauge Mr. Dimsdale's specious manner at its proper value." With this valiant speech she marched off, head in air, to her room, and there wept as though her very heart would break.

CHAPTER XII.

Tom Dimsdale's duties were far from light. Not only was he expected to supervise the clerk's accounts and to treat with the wholesale dealers, but he was also supposed to spend a great part of his time in the docks, overlooking the loading of the outgoing ships and checking the cargo of the incoming ones. This latter portion of his work was welcome as taking him some hours a day from the close counting house, and allowing him to get a sniff of the sea air. There was a pleasing life and

bustle, too, in the broad, brown river, with its never-ending panoramas of vessels of every size and shape which ebbed and flowed in the great artery of national life.

All day Tom stood at the hatchway of the Black Eagle, checking the cargo as it was hoisted out of her, while McPherson and his motley assistants, dock laborers, seamen and Black Kroomen from the coast, worked and toiled in the depths below. The engine rattled and snorted, and the great chain clanked as it was lowered into the hold. At one o'clock there was a break of an hour for dinner, and then the work went on until six, when all hands struck and went off to their homes or to the public house, according to inclination. Tom and the mate, both fairly tired by their day's work, prepared to accept the captain's invitation, and to beat him up in his quarters. The mate dived down into his cabin, and soon reappeared with his face shining and his long hair combed into some sort of order.

"I've been performing my ablutions," he said, rolling out the last word with great emphasis and pomposity, for, like many Scotchmen, he had the greatest possible reverence for a sonorous polysyllable. "The captain," he continued, "has been far from salubrious this voyage. He's aye complainin' of his bodily infirmities."

"The two had threaded their way through the intricate lanes which lead up from the water side to the outskirts of Stepney. It was quite dark by the time that they reached a long thoroughfare, lined by numerous shops, with great gas flares outside them. Many of these belonged to dealers in marine stores, and the numerous suits of oilskin, hung up for exhibition, swung to and fro in the uncertain light, like rows of attenuated pirates. At every corner was a great public house with glittering windows, and a crowd of slatternly women and jersey-clad men elbowing each other at the door. The largest and most imposing of these the mate and Dimsdale now pulled up.

"Captain Miggs in?" asked McPherson of a rubeicund, white-aproned personage.

"Yes, sir. He's in his room, sir, and expectin' you. There's a gent with him, sir, but he told me to send you up. This way, sir," and they were soon ushered into the captain's room.

That worthy was leaning back in a rocking chair with his feet perched upon the mantelpiece. Opposite him, in a similar chair, was no less an individual than our old acquaintance, Von Baumser. As a mercantile clerk in the London office of a Hamburg firm the German was thrown into contact with the shippers of the African fleet, and had contracted a special alliance with Miggs.

"Come in, my hearties, come in!" he cried, huskily. "Take a seat, Mr. Dimsdale. And you, Sandy, can't you bring yourself to your berth without being asked? You should know your moorings by this time. This is my friend, Mr. Von Baumser from Eckermann's office."

"And this, I think, is Mr. Dimsdale," said the German, shaking hands with Tom. "I have heard my very good friend, Major Clutterbuck, speak of your name, sir."

"Ah, the old major," Tom answered. "Of course, I remember him well."

"He is not so very old, either," said Von Baumser, in a somewhat surly voice. "He has been took by a very charming and entirely pleasant woman, and they are about to be married before three months, the one to the other. Let me tell you, sir, I who have lived with him so long, that I have met no man for whom I have greater respect than for the major."

"A couple of days ago we hardly hoped ever to be yarning here," said Miggs. "A misty sea on Mr. Dimsdale, sir, and the old ship so full of water that she could not rise to it. They were makin' a clean breach over us, and we lost nigh everything we could lose."

"I suppose you'll have her thoroughly repaired now?" Tom remarked.

Both the skipper and the mate laughed heartily at the observation. "That wouldn't do, Sandy, would it?" said Miggs, shaking his head. "We couldn't afford to have our salary cut down like that."

(To be continued.)

The Secret.

We are astonished at the familiarity of our friend with the different makes of automobiles. As we walk down the boulevard he notes each machine that whirrs by us and without the slightest hesitation gives the name of its make.

"Here comes a Stee-ro-car," he says. "The next is a Pothard-Plump, that one turning the corner is a Paddalwhack, the one coming now is a Pokernotive," and so on. In no single instance does he fail to name the machine.

While we know him for a man of keen observation and quickness of intellect, we are astonished at his catholic knowledge of automobiles.

We beg him to tell us how he gained so much information.

"He demurs for a time, but upon becoming insistent he laughs at us and confesses:

"Old man, I don't know one from the other. You were so blamed anxious to know what kind they were that I just named them offhand for you, as they happened along. And you would have been just as well satisfied, if you hadn't forced me to give my scheme away."—Success Magazine.

He Was It.

"Really, don't y'know," said Cholly Branelles, "she's such an odd girl. When I was introduced to her she burst out laughing."

"Yes," said Miss Peppy, "she's hysterical."

"Aw, weally?"

"Yes; she frequently laughs at nothing."—Philadelphia Press.

A Real Blessing.

"Blessings," remarked Mrs. Peck, "usually come to us in disguise."

"That being the case, my dear," replied her husband, "it's up to you to remove your mask."

Providing for the Future.

Mike—"O'm goin' t' get me loif insured, Pat."

Pat—"Fwaa't that for?"

Mike—"So O'll have somethin' t' live on affther O'm dead, b' gorry!"



Electric Farming.

Although agricultural machinery originated in the United States and the American farmer used patent mowers, reapers and threshing machines long before their European contemporaries in the same field of labor had put aside scythe, rake and flail, the possibility of introducing electric power in farm work was first recognized in the Old World.

This has probably been due to the fact that the farmers of America, thrifty and far-seeing, recognizing the economy and reliability of the small oil engine, failed to perceive how any saving could be effected by generating electric current and distributing it to its motors in outlying positions.

When, however, the chains from some large electric power company pass within reach of a farm or estate the conditions are much more favorable, and this state of things must already exist in a measure which will be largely extended in the future. Current German newspapers contain an interesting account of the application of electricity to a group of farms in Saxony. The electric current is brought from an adjacent town by overhead wires carried on wooden poles. Two receiving stations are arranged, from which the electricity is distributed to the farm buildings and to convenient positions in the fields for the purpose of driving threshing and other machinery.

Sixteen fixed electric motors are installed for chaff and root cutting, oat crushing, pumping and for operating machinery used in the manufacture of potato spirit. In addition to this power equipment, six portable motors are provided, which may be used for driving pumps, circular saws, threshing machinery, and so forth, at any point where their services are required. The houses and buildings on the farms are all lit by electricity, 9 arc lamps and about 1,000 glow lamps being used for the purpose.

It must be pointed out, however, that this example could only be followed in the United States on a very large estate or a group of adjacent farms, and it is doubtful whether such a scheme could be made a commercial success for the operation of farming machinery pure and simple. It would appear that wood sawing, pumping and other operations requiring power must be included if the results are to compare favorably with those at present obtained by the use of oil or steam engines. But the Saxon experiment is full of interest, and displays a curiously progressive spirit in a country where farm fences are almost unknown, and shepherds and cowherds are still living amid picturesque realities.

Comparative Food Values.

An English journal, The Lancet, in discussing the comparative food value of roast beef and turkey, says that it may be said that, weight for weight, the flesh of the turkey is more nourishing than that of beef; but the latter is, generally speaking, cheaper than the former. The moisture in beef, however, exceeds the amount present in the flesh of the turkey, and the latter contains a better percentage of proteid or flesh-forming substance. In either case the percentage of moisture is seldom less than 70 per cent.

In lean beef the amount of fat is much the same as in a not too well-fed turkey, but it must be pointed out that the flesh of poultry differs from that of beef and mutton in not having its muscular fibers permeated by fat, and, moreover, the fibers in the flesh of the fowl are short and rarely yield to the disintegrating action of the digestive processes. A large amount of fat in either case is apt to interfere with the digestibility of the meat. The fat of beef is more digestible than the fat of the turkey. The fat of birds, in fact, is harder, and owing to its tendency to become rancid, is unsuitable for the dyspeptic patient.

The Lancet believes that the most important difference from a dietetic point of view between beef and turkey is that, whereas beef contains a high percentage of extractive matters, turkey contains hardly any at all. The extractive matters in beef account largely for its peculiar and marked flavor, and owing to their absence in poultry generally, and in the pheasant and partridge, the flavor of these meats is delicate. But there is no doubt that the extractives of beef, as well as mutton, are valuable, for not only are they flavoring agents, but they also act as perhaps the most powerful stimulant to gastric digestion.

Learned by Hard Knocks.

So long as the home market is not fully supplied there is no gain in shipping away.

As a rule the offspring of immature and pampered animals are predisposed to disease.

A proper rotation and wise tillage will do much to keep the soil supplied with available fertility.

Better methods, better stock and better tools have doubled the productions of more than one farm.

Oats contain largely the mineral properties requisite to form and grow bone and the protein that makes muscle and other tissues.

Quality of Grass Seed.

The Maine law regulating the sale of agricultural seeds requires that grass seed shall be sold under a guarantee as to purity. Bulletin 188 of the Maine agricultural experiment station, which, doubtless, many of your readers have received, gives analysis of the seeds which were collected by the inspector and those sent to the experiment station by correspondence in 1906. The dealers are very generally conforming to the law and the purity of most seeds is now guaranteed. The question naturally arises in the mind of a farmer, should a seed be strictly pure, and, if not, how nearly pure should it be?

The purity of seeds varies greatly with their kind. It is possible to grow timothy seed so clean that it shall carry practically no foreign weed seeds. It is not as easy to grow any of the other grasses or clovers so clean. There is no need for the sower to ever buy timothy seed that is much less than 99.5 per cent pure. Samples have been examined by the station the present year which contained not a single foreign harmful seed.

The best red clover seed will frequently carry as much as 1 per cent of foreign matter, although these impurities are usually comparatively harmless. It is, however, poor policy for the sower to buy a red-clover seed that is less than 98 per cent pure. The best grades of alsike clover will run about 98.5 per cent pure on the average. It is doubtful if the purchaser should buy an alsike whose purity is less than 97.5 per cent.

Redtop is the most difficult seed of all. It will, of course, contain more or less chaff. It is difficult to grow redtop free from timothy, and the seed cleaners find it difficult to separate timothy seed from redtop after it has once been introduced. Samples of redtop carrying as high as 12 or even 15 per cent of timothy are not unusual. If one could be sure that the impurities were harmless like chaff and timothy it might be safe to buy a redtop even as low as 85 per cent pure. Unless one is assured of the character of the impurities, it is unwise to buy a redtop less than 95 per cent pure.

Double-Edged Saw.

To make one saw take the place of two, and at the same time preserve its durability, is the recent invention of an Indiana man.

Every carpenter includes two saws in his kit—one for cross-cut and one for cutting with the grain. He can now dispense with one saw, as it is possible to put the two blades having different teeth on

the one saw, as shown in the illustration.

The smooth top edge always seen on saws is changed to a cutting edge, similar to the regular cutting edge, the saw thus having teeth on the two longitudinal opposite edges. The handle is hinged to the blade instead of being rigid and can be reversed as it becomes necessary to use either blade. This saw is also an economical saw, as it saves the expense of purchasing two saws.

Grass Better than Drugs.

A famous veterinary surgeon declares that grass beats all drugs in creation as a cure for sick horses and mules. Horses should have a few quarts of cut grass daily, from spring until fall. The prevalent notion that it is harmful is without foundation. Grass is to horses what fresh vegetables and fruit are to the human family.

News and Farm Notes.

The profitable line of production is to maintain good health with early maturity.

More than half a million emigrants from Russia have passed into Siberia the past year to engage in wheat raising.

A farmer near McEwan, Tenn., is displaying an ear of corn twelve inches long, weighing three pounds and containing 1,386 grains.

A grain farm at Murray, Iowa, shipped twenty-seven carloads of timothy seed last fall, for which the farmers received from \$1.50 to \$1.75 a bushel.

A Kansas man claims to have invented a fence-weaving machine, run by a two-horse power gasoline engine, which will weave and set a mile of fence a day.

The United States produced 14,000,000 bushels of rice last year on a half million acres. The culture of rice is gradually creeping north and some very good grain is reported in Arkansas.

Holland has set engineers to work to pump the water out of the famous Zuyder Zee and turn it into dry land. When this work is accomplished there will rise where 4,000 fishermen now sink their nets farms and homes for 50,000 Hollanders.

A Washington dispatch says a genius has invented a dope which when used as paint for farm machinery will prevent rust and decay. This might be good news for those farmers who use the fence corners as storehouses for their farm machinery, but the probability is they are too lazy to apply the dope.

R. W. Crouse, a graduate of Iowa agricultural college, has been appointed State lecturer on animal husbandry for Virginia. Another Iowa boy has gone to the Massachusetts agricultural college as assistant in animal husbandry. The demand for college graduates in the high class agricultural lines at salaries ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,000 a year is larger than the supply.

THE WEEKLY HISTORIAN



1619—Two sisters burnt at Lincoln, England, for the alleged crime of witchcraft.

1624—England declared war on Spain.

1629—Third parliament of Charles I. dissolved.

1680—First Assembly of New Hampshire met at Portsmouth.

1689—Habeas corpus act suspended for the first time in England. . . . James II. landed in Ireland.

1702—The Daily Courant, the first British daily newspaper, issued in London.

1770—English soldiers plundered Boston. . . . Americans bombarded the British in Boston.

1784—Blanchard, the aeronaut, made his first ascent from Paris in a hydrogen balloon.

1785—John McLean, associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, who dissented from the majority opinion in the Dred Scot decision, born in New Jersey.

1796—William Lyon McKensie, first Mayor of Toronto and an ardent advocate of Canadian independence, born in Dundee, Scotland.

1796—Napoleon Bonaparte married to Josephine Beauharnais. . . . British Parliament passed Irish insurrection act.

1797—Albany became the capital of the State of New York.

1799—Napoleon laid unsuccessful siege to Acre.

1806—Jacob Crowninshield of Massachusetts became Secretary of the United States navy.

1811—The "Luddite riots," resulting from a depression in the hosiery trade, began in Nottinghamshire, England and continued for several years.

1815—Kingdom of the Netherlands constituted, and William of Orange proclaimed King.

1825—Pasturing cows on Boston common forbidden.

1833—President Jackson signed the tariff and force bills.

1836—Texas proclaimed her independence of Mexico.

1848—Louis Philippe escaped from France to England.

1850—Nicaragua declared war against Costa Rica.

1863—Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, married to Princess Alexandra of Denmark.

1864—Ulysses S. Grant appointed lieutenant general.

1865—Parliament at Quebec adopted the confederation scheme.

1867—Mexico evacuated by the French. . . . Attempted assassination of King Victor Emanuel at Milan. . . . President Johnson vetoed the tenure of office and military district bills, which Congress passed over his veto.

1870—First woman jury in America assembled in Wyoming.

1875—Moody and Sankey opened their great revival meetings in London.

1877—William M. Everts appointed Secretary of State.

1886—Anti-Chinese convention held in California.

1891—England and France connected by telephone.

1892—Business suspended in the north-west by a blizzard.

1898—Opening of the Great Central railway of England.

1903—Car issued a decree granting religious freedom in Russia.

1907—An explosion on the French battleship Jena killed 117 persons.

MUBBINS OF FARM NEWS.

Farming in New Mexico has been given a great impetus during the past few years by the work of the farmers' institutes and many unproductive values have been turned into rich grain and fruit fields.

Frank Donnelly of the town of Oak Grove, Barron