

The Firm of Girdlestone

BY A. CONAN DOYLE

CHAPTER XV.

When supper was over the crone, who was addressed by Girdlestone as Jorrocks, led the way upstairs and showed Kate to her room. If the furniture of the dining room had been Spartan in its simplicity, this was even more so, for there was nothing in it save a small iron bedstead, much rusted from want of use, and a high wooden box on which stood the simplest toilet requisites. In spite of the poverty of the apartment Kate had never been more glad to enter her luxurious chamber at home. The little carpeted room was a haven of rest where she would be left, for one night at least, to her own thoughts. As she lay in bed, however, she could hear far away the subdued murmur of Girdlestone's voice and the shrill tones of the old woman. They were in deep and animated converse. Though they were too far distant for her to distinguish a word, something told her that their talk was about herself, and the same instinct assured her that it bodied her little god.

When Kate awoke in the morning it was some little time before she could realize where she was, or recall the events which had made such a sudden change in her life. The small window of her apartment was covered by a dirty muslin blind. She rose, and, drawing it aside, looked eagerly out. From what she had seen the night before she had hoped that this prison to which she had been conveyed might make amends for its loveliness by some degree of natural beauty. The scene which now met her eyes soon dispelled any expectations of the sort. The avenue with its trees lay on the other side of the house. From her window nothing was visible but a dreary expanse of bogland and mudbanks, stretching down to the sea. At high tide this enormous waste of dreariness and filth was covered by the water, but at present it lay before her in all its naked hideousness, the very type of dullness and desolation. Here and there a few scattered reeds, or an unhealthy greenish scum upon the mud, gave a touch of color to the scene, but for the most part the great plain was all of the same sordid mud tint, with its monotonous brown only by the white flecks where the swarms of gulls and sticklebacks had settled in the hope of picking up whatever had been left by the receding tide. Away across the broad surface a line of sparkling foam marked the fringe of the ocean, which stretched away to the horizon.

A mile or two to the eastward of the crone saw some sign of houses, and a blue smoke which flickered up into the air. This she guessed to be the fishing village of Lea Claxton, which the driver had mentioned the night before. She felt as she gazed at the little hamlet, and the masts of the boats in front of it, that she was not alone in the world, and that even in this strange and desolate place there were honest hearts to whom as a last resource she could appeal.

She was still standing at the window when there came a knocking at the door, and she heard the voice of the old woman asking if she were awake. "Breakfast is ready," she said, "and the master is wondering why you beent down."

"On this summons Kate hastened her toilet and made her way down the old winding stair to the room in which they had supped the night before. Surely Girdlestone must have had a heart of flint not to be melted by the sight of that fair, fresh face. His features set as hard as adamant as she entered the room, and he looked at her with eyes which were puckered and angry.

"You are late," he said coldly. "You must remember that you are not in Eccleston square. You are here to be disciplined, and disciplined you shall be."

"I am sorry," she answered. "I think I must have been tired by our journey."

The vast room looked even more comfortable and bleak than on the preceding evening. On the table was a plate of ham and eggs. John Girdlestone served out a portion, and pushed it in her direction. She sat down on one of the rough wooden chairs and ate listlessly, wondering how all this was going to end.

After breakfast Girdlestone ordered the old woman out of the room, and, standing in front of the fire with his long legs apart and his hands behind his back, he told her in harsh concise language what his intentions were.

"I had long determined," he said, "that if you ran counter to my wishes, and persisted in your infatuated affection for that scapegrace, I should remove you to some secluded spot where you might reconsider your conduct and form better resolutions for the future. This country house answered the purpose admirably, and as an old servant of mine, Mrs. Jorrocks, chanced to reside in the neighborhood, I had warned her that at any time I might come down and should expect to find things ready. Your rash and heartless conduct has, however, precipitated matters, and we have arrived before her preparations were complete. Our future arrangements will therefore be less primitive than they are at present. Here you shall remain, young lady, until you show signs of repentance, and of a willingness to undo the harm you have done."

"If you mean until I consent to marry your son, then I shall live and die here," the girl said bravely.

"That rests with yourself. As I said before, you are under discipline here, and you may not find existence such a bed of roses as it was in Eccleston square."

"Can I have my maid?" Kate asked. "I can hardly stay here with no-one but the old woman in the house."

"Rebecca is coming down. I had a telegram from Ezra to that effect, and he will

himself join us for a day or two in each week."

"Ezra here!" Kate cried in horror. Her chief consolation through all her troubles had been that there seemed to be some chance of getting rid of her terrible suitor.

"And why not?" the old man asked angrily. "Are you so bitter against the lad as to grudge him the society of his own father?"

Kate was saved from further reproaches by the entrance of the old woman to clean the table. The last item of intelligence, however, had given her a terrible shock, and at the same time had filled her with astonishment. What could the fast-living, comfort-seeking man about town want in this dreary abode? She knew Ezra well, and was sure that he was not a man to alter his ways of life or suffer discomfort of any kind without some very definite object. It seemed to her that this was a new mesh in the net which was being drawn round her.

When her guardian had left the room Kate asked Mrs. Jorrocks for a sheet of paper. The crone shook her head and wagged her pendulous lip in derision.

"Mister Girdlestone thought as you would be after that, she said. "There ain't no paper here, nor pens, neither, nor ink, neither."

"What, none? Dear Mrs. Jorrocks, do have pity on me, and get me a sheet, however old and soiled. See, here is some silver! You are very welcome to it if you will give me the materials for writing one letter."

Mrs. Jorrocks looked longingly with her beamed eyes at the few shillings which the girl held out to her, but she shook her head. "I durstn't do it," she said. "It's as much as my place is worth."

"Then I shall walk down to Bedworth myself," said Kate angrily. "I have no doubt that the people in the postoffice will let me sit there and write it."

The old hag laughed hoarsely to herself until the scraggy sinews of her withered neck stood out like whipcord. She was still chuckling and coughing when the merchant came back into the room.

"What then?" he asked sternly, looking from one to the other. He was himself constitutionally averse to merriment, and he was irritated by it in others. "Why are you laughing, Mrs. Jorrocks?" "Why are you laughing at her?" the woman wheezed, pointing with tremulous fingers. "She was askin' me for paper, and sayin' as she would go and write a letter at the Bedworth postoffice."

"You must understand once for all," Girdlestone roared, turning savagely upon the girl, "that you are cut off entirely from the outer world. I shall give you no loophole which you may utilize to continue your intimacy with undesirable people. I have given orders that you should not be provided with either paper or ink."

Poor Kate's last hope seemed to be fading away. Her heart sank within her, but she kept a brave face, for she did not wish him to see how his words had stricken her. She had a desperate plan in her head, which would be more likely to be successful could she but put him off his guard.

She spent the morning in her own little room. About one o'clock she heard the clatter of hoofs and the sound of wheels on the drive. Going down she found that it was a cart which had come from Bedworth with furniture. There were carpets, a chest of drawers, tables, and several other articles, which the driver proceeded to carry upstairs, helped by John Girdlestone. The old woman was in the upper room. It seemed to Kate that she might never again have such an opportunity of carrying out the resolve which she had formed. She put on her bonnet and began to stroll listlessly about in front of the door, picking a few straggling leaves from the neglected lawn. Gradually she sauntered away in this manner to the head of the avenue, and then taking one swift, timid glance around, she slipped in among the trees, and made the best of her way, half-walking, half-running, down the dark winding drive.

Oh, the joy of the moment when the great white house which had already become so hateful to her was obscured among the trees behind her! She had some idea of the road which she had traversed the night before. Behind her were all her troubles. In front the avenue gate, Bedworth and freedom. She would send both a telegram and a letter to Dr. Dimsdale, and explain to him her exact situation. If the kind-hearted and energetic physician once knew of it, he would take care that no harm befell her. She could return then, and face with a light heart the worst which her guardian could do to her. Here was the avenue entrance now, the high lichen-raten stone pillars, with the battered device upon the top. The iron gate between was open. With a glad cry she quickened her pace, and in another moment would have been in the high road, when—

"Now then, where are you a-comin' to?" cried a gruff voice from among the bushes which flanked the gate.

The girl stopped all in a tremble. In the shadow of the trees there was a camp stool, and on the camp stool sat a savage looking man, dressed in a dark corduroy suit, with a blackened clay pipe stuck in the corner of his mouth. His weather-beaten mahogany face was plentifully covered with smallpox marks, and one of his eyes was sightless and white from the effects of the same disease. He rose now, and interposed himself between her and the gate.

"My good man," she said in a trembling voice, for his appearance was far from reassuring. "I wish to go past and to get to Bedworth. Here is a shilling, and I beg that you will not detain me."

Her companion stretched on a very dirty hand, took the coin, spun it up in the air, caught it, bit it, and finally plunged it into the depths of his trouser pockets. "No road this way, missy," he said. "I've given my word to the governor, and I can't go back from it."

"You have no right to detain me," Kate cried angrily. "I have good friends in London who will make you suffer for this."

She was only a dozen yards from the lane which led to freedom, so she made a quick little feminine rush in the hope of avoiding this dreadful sentinel which barred her passage. He caught her round the waist, however, and hurled her back with such violence that she staggered across the path and would have fallen had she not struck violently against a tree.

Kate turned and retraced her steps slowly and sadly up the avenue. As she glanced back she saw a gaunt, hard-

featured woman trudging up the lane with a tin can in her hand. Lonely and forlorn, but not yet quite destitute of hope, she turned to the right among the trees, and pushed her way through bushes and hemlock to the boundary of the Priory grounds. It was a lofty wall, at least nine feet in height, with a coping that bristled with jagged pieces of glass. Kate walked along the base of it, her fair skin all torn and bleeding with scratches from the briars, until she satisfied herself that there was no break in it. There was one small wooden door on the side which was skirted by the railway line, but it was locked and impassable. The only opening through which a human being could pass was that which was guarded in the manner she had seen. The sickening conviction took possession of her mind that without wings it was an utter impossibility either to get away or to give the least information to any one in the world as to where she was or what might befall her.

When she came back to the house, tired and disheveled after her journey of exploration, Girdlestone was standing by the door to receive her with a sardonic smile upon his thin lips. "How do you like the grounds, then?" he asked, with the nearest approach to hilarity which she had ever heard from him. "And the ornamental fencing? and the lodge keeper? How did you like them all?" Kate tried for a moment to make some brave retort, but it was a useless attempt. Her lips trembled, her eyes filled, and with a cry of grief and despair which might have moved a wild beast, she fled to her room, and, throwing herself upon her bed, burst into such scalding tears as few women are ever called upon to shed.

CHAPTER XVI.

It would be impossible to describe the suspense in which Tom Dimsdale lived during these weeks. In vain he tried in every manner to find some way of tracing the fugitives. He wandered aimlessly about London from one inquiry office to another, telling his story and appealing for assistance. He advertised in papers and cross-questioned every one who might know anything of the matter. There were none, however, who could help him, or throw any light upon the mystery. No one at the office knew anything of the movements of the senior partner. To all inquiries Ezra replied that he had been ordered by the doctors to seek complete repose in the country.

His father became seriously anxious about the young fellow's health. He ate nothing, and his sleep was much broken. Both the old people tried to inculcate patience and moderation.

"That fellow, Ezra Girdlestone, knows where they are," Tom would cry, striding wildly up and down the room with unkempt hair and clenched hands. "I will have his secret, if I have to tear it out of him."

"Steady, lad, steady!" the doctor replied to one of these outbursts. "There is nothing to be gained by violence. They are on the right side of the law at present, and you will be on the wrong if you do anything rash. The girl could have written if she were uncomfortable."

"Ah, so she could. She must have forgotten us. How could she, after all that has passed?"

"Let us hope for the best, let us hope for the best," the doctor would say soothingly. Yet it must be confessed that he was considerably staggered by the turn which things had taken. He had seen so much of the world in his professional career that he had become a very reliable judge of character. All his instincts told him that Kate Hartson was a true-hearted and well-principled girl. It was not in her nature to leave London and never to send a single line to her friends to tell them where or why she had gone. There must, he was sure, be some good reason for her silence, and this reason resolved itself into one of two things—either she was ill and unable to hold a pen, or she had lost her freedom and was restrained from writing to them. The last supposition seemed to the doctor to be the more serious of the two.

Had he known the instability of the Girdlestone firm, and the necessity they were under of getting ready money, he would at once have held the key to the enigma. He had no idea of that, but in spite of his ignorance he was deeply distrustful of both father and son. He knew and had often deplored the clause in John Hartson's will by which the ward's money reverted to the guardian. Forty thousand pounds was a bait which might tempt even a wealthy man into crooked paths.

(To be continued.)

Polishing Glassware.

You have heard of many valuable ways to clean glassware and give to the pieces a desirable brilliancy, yet here is a method which is a "secret" and certain to give the best results. Wash the glass pieces and drain until dry, then coat each piece with a mixture of half water and ammonia. When dry brush the pieces with a soft bristle brush. Be sure and use only the bristle brush or the polish will not appear. This is excellent for glassware of any kind and makes old pieces look like new.

Tongue-Tied Talkers.

How many educated people there are who have no more than a peasant's vocabulary. They do not use the words that a peasant uses, but they do not improve upon them. They still go on saying, "How amusing!" "How lovely!" "How nice!" to the end of the chapter. Nobody can be interesting who is always working a limited vocabulary.—British Weekly.

Innocent Tommy.

"Here is some complexion powder, auntie," said little Tommy Toddles. "I bought this little box for mamma and the great big box for you."

"But why did you think I needed such a large box?" asked the visiting aunt in surprise.

"Oh, because I heard papa say you were two-faced."

Loge.

"Did you take your girl's mother to the game with you?"

"No; we left her at home. What is home without a mother?"—Yale Record.

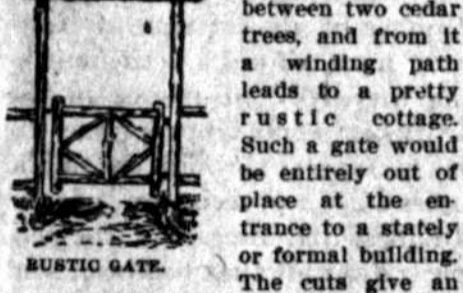


Making Butter on the Farm.

There are two prime essentials in making butter on the farm a profitable business. In the first place, one must have plenty of pure, cold water, and then a good enough grade must be turned out to make and hold customers. The trouble with nine out of every ten farm homes is they are not equipped to take care of milk and cream. When one goes into this work to make money, better put up a milk room, where pure water may be had from pumping or from a spring. Concrete floor and walls may now be built as cheaply as with lumber, and it is a great deal better than lumber. Don't stop here. A barrel churn and a butter maker will be necessary in turning out a uniform product. It looks easy—simply separating the cream, churning till the butter comes, and salting, and the trick is done. That is where so many fail. The cream must be churned at the right temperature; it must be neither too sweet nor too sour. Working and salting butter to secure uniform color and flavor is a very nice art. Don't try to learn to do it infallibly in two or three weeks, but by all means don't practice on your customers. That means loss. It is better to wait two or three months before you seek customers. And, before you ship, find out how your commission man or private customers prefer to have their butter put up. Sometimes the package means a difference of two or three cents a pound.

An Attractive Gateway.

This rustic gateway, which was built at a small cost, may be worth imitating, modified, of course, to fit the surroundings. This one is between two cedar trees, and from it a winding path leads to a pretty rustic cottage. Such a gate would be entirely out of place at the entrance to a stately or formal building. The cuts give an idea as to how the gate is made. The two uprights and the cross-piece on the top are of locust. All the rest is of cedar. Parts of the smaller branches have been left on the pieces that go to fill up the gate. A gateway like this would not prove effective against pigs or chickens, but would turn larger animals. It is not only cheap and durable, but decidedly attractive, because



so perfectly in harmony with its surroundings.—E. E. Miller, in Farm and Home.



Color of Eggs an Asset.

One of the most potent factors, perhaps, that should be considered when selecting a breed for producing eggs for market is the demand of the market at which the eggs are to be disposed of, says The Outing Magazine. Some markets, notably New York City and cities immediately adjacent, prefer white-shelled eggs, and the best trade in these markets will accept none other. Boston prefers brown eggs, and pays a substantial premium for them; and, taking the country over, the preference is for brown eggs by a large majority. However, in many markets no preference at all is expressed; in fact, those just mentioned are practically the only markets in which the color of the egg receives attention to the extent of influencing prices. Where there is a preference, and whichever the preference is, one should keep a variety of fowls that lay eggs of the preferred color.

Measuring Land by Weight.

The area of any piece of land, no matter how irregular the boundary lines, may be accurately ascertained by means of a delicate balance as follows: Make a drawing of the plat of ground on pasteboard to a given scale, say 4 square rods to 1 inch. Cut from some part of the sheet of pasteboard a piece exactly 1 inch square, which represents one acre, or 4 square rods. Also cut out the plat as drawn. Weigh the square and the plat. The number of times the weight of the square is contained in the weight of the plat indicates the area of the land. For example, if the square which represents one acre weighs 20 grains, and the plat weighs 240 grains, then the plat contains twelve acres.—Scientific American.

The Cause of Weeds.

It is for the conservation of moisture that we keep up the cultivation of the crops in the summer, but the evaporation which can be checked by this means is small when compared with the amount of water taken up from the soil by an ordinary growth of weeds. We can hardly estimate the importance of killing the weeds.

Labor of the Horse.

Some one has figured out that it costs on the average only one-half as much to feed a horse as it does to feed a man; and that the horse will do ten times the amount of work that it is possible for the man to do. If this estimate is correct, then a dollar's worth of food given the horse will produce twenty times as much results as the same amount of money will if expended in feed for a man. Therefore, when man domesticated the horse he immensely increased his own power of securing results. When much farm work is to be done there should always be enough horses to do it. Farmers try to economize on the number of horses and have to leave much work undone. In the event of hired help being scarce, it is sometimes possible to offset this lack by increasing the number of horses kept. In some parts of the West and Northwest, declares the Farmers Review, the scarcity of help has resulted in more horses being used. Five are hitched to a double plow, and one driver is thus enabled to turn two furrows at a time and practically double the work that one man has to do. This is the result of the complete utilization of horseflesh.

Guide for Drag Saws.

A very simple method by which one man can manipulate a drag saw to cut down trees has been devised by a western timber man. In using these saws two men have heretofore been necessary, one at each end of the saw. According to the new invention, there is rested against a tree a rod from which is suspended a cord. At the end of the cord is an adjustable clamp, to which one end of the saw is secured. At the other end of the saw to cut the tree, the end opposite the handle is supported by the cord in the same position as if operated by hand. With the employment of this guide the necessity of an extra man to manage one end of the saw is eliminated.

Loss of Fertility by Leaching.

Land kept constantly as a garden loses much of its fertility by leaching. A clover rotation is the best preventive of this. There should be at least two or three garden spots on each farm kept rich enough so that one year's extra manuring will bring it into the finest possible condition for garden truck. If farmers could always plant gardens on two-year clover sod they would raise better crops and with less stable manure and other fertilizers than they now require. The clover does much more than furnish green manure to ferment in the soil. Its roots reach down into the subsoil, thus not only saving and bringing to the surface plant food that would otherwise be wasted, but also by enlivening the subsoil, allowing the roots of crops to go deeper. Clover sod to begin with, if well enriched, is best for such crops as cucumbers and melons, that are always most likely to suffer from drought. It is quite impossible to make a good garden crop unless the land has previously been enriched by a series of heavy manurings. The fertility lost by leaching must be constantly renewed.

A Feed Combine.

Feeding sheep and lambs for the market is very much of a lottery at best. It is the purpose of the feeder to buy thin stock and, after feeding it from sixty to ninety days, return it to market at a profit. This is the hope that impels him to put in his time and labor, else he would not do it. There are three important factors that enter into the operation. The cost of the sheep or lambs on the market, the price of the feed that is to make them fat, and the condition of the market when they are returned for slaughter. The first element is a known quantity, but the second and third are often a chance. They have proved to be very much of a chance this season. The original cost of the feeders was the greatest on record, feed was high and market conditions have not panned out as good as generally expected.—Drovers' Journal.

Idaho Man Finds New Wheat.

A new variety of wheat has been discovered by a farmer living near Julietta, Idaho. He says he found a few kernels of the wheat growing wild in Alaska, and being struck with their plumpness, hardness and other apparent good qualities, he brought home a few kernels and planted them. From those few kernels he harvested enough the first year to plant several square rods of ground the second year, the yield from this planting being at the rate of more than 100 bushels per acre, well-filled heads; the kernels are large, plump and hard and millers say it makes good flour.

To Canvas Hams.

When hams are smoked, roll them in stiff paper, cut your brown muslin to fit them and sew it on with a large needle and twine; then make a starch of flour and yellow ochre, and with a small whitewash brush cover them with it. Hang them up to dry.

Poultry Notes.

Clean the droppings from under the roosts frequently. Buckwheat is excellent for both young and old poultry. A laying hen should have constant access to lime or gravel. Grit is the hen's teeth. Provide her with plenty of it, so that she may digest her food.



- 1190—Mahomet II. besieged Constantinople.
- 1578—William Harvey, discoverer of the circulation of the blood, born.
- 1644—Maisonneuve defeated the Iroquois at the Place d'Armes, Montreal.
- 1795—Field Marshal Viscount Hardinge, an early governor general of India born in England.
- 1806—Joseph Bonaparte made King of the Two Sicilies.
- 1814—Napoleon Bonaparte sent in exile to island of Elba.
- 1833—Treasury buildings at Washington destroyed by fire.
- 1843—Sir Charles Metcalfe appointed governor of Canada.
- 1847—Covent Garden theater, London, opened for Italian opera.
- 1854—Commercial treaty concluded with Japan by Commodore Perry of the United States navy.
- 1855—Planet Circe discovered by M. Chacornac.
- 1856—Treaty of Paris, ending the Crimean war.
- 1858—British force under Sir Hugh Rose defeated the Indian mutineers and took the city of Jhansi.
- 1862—Gen. Albert S. Johnston of the Confederate army killed at Shiloh. Born 1803.
- 1865—Confederates evacuated Richmond. . . . Federal troops occupied Richmond, Va. . . . United States transport General Lyon burned with great loss of life.
- 1866—First national encampment of the G. A. R. met at Indianapolis. . . . Spanish fleet bombarded Valparaiso, Chile.
- 1867—United States bought Alaska from Russia for \$7,200,000.
- 1868—Uniform postage rate of 3 cents per letter adopted throughout Canada.
- 1885—Battleford, in Saskatchewan, besieged by Indians.
- 1891—Baron Fava, Italian minister to the United States, recalled.
- 1898—China leased Wei-Hai-Wei to Great Britain.
- 1902—Large section of Atlantic City destroyed by fire.
- 1905—Explosion in a cartridge factory at Bridgeport, Conn., resulted in a number of deaths. . . . Simpson tunnel formally opened.
- 1907—Fred A. Busse, Republican, elected Mayor of Chicago.

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Supt. Maxwell of the New York City Board of Education, in his annual report urges the formation of a department of school hygiene. Such a department, he thinks, should be under the direction of a medical man, who would rank as an associate superintendent, and who should have a sufficient number of physicians to examine all the children in the public schools at least once a year, and a sufficient number of nurses to visit the homes of sick children and to care for slight ailments in school. He says that New York is the noisiest city in the world and that children lack a proper amount of sleep. Owing to crowded quarters in the tenements and in some of the public schools as well many children are crippled by lowered vitality, defective sight, defective teeth and other evils, many of which could be overcome. The report says that there are 138,466 pupils in the schools over normal age; in other words, they are backward in their lessons because of physical defects.

The National Civic Federation has made arrangements to send 500 or more public school teachers next fall to England, Scotland, Ireland and the continent to inspect the system of teaching and school methods generally in foreign countries. This idea was suggested by the success of a similar expedition of English teachers to the United States in 1905-6. The teachers who make this trip will have an opportunity to examine at first hand what is being done for children abroad, both in the common schools and in the special schools. President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia university has been appointed chairman of an advisory committee to carry the plan through. In this connection it may be noted that Mr. Butler has accepted the invitation of the University of Copenhagen to deliver three lectures there next September, the subject matter of the lectures to be "Some Aspects of American Civilization." He will leave for Denmark in August, returning in time for the opening of college next fall.

Chancellor Dewitt C. Huntington of the Nebraska Wesleyan university at Lincoln has tendered his resignation, and it was accepted by the board of trustees with the understanding that Chancellor Huntington shall remain until the end of the school year.

At Chippewa Falls, Wis., Supt. Swartz ordered the members of the Greek letters fraternity Alpha Delta Omega to disband the organization or suffer expulsion from school. He declared that no secret organization of pupils would be tolerated. The members promised to heed the warning.