

For The Term of His Natural Life

By MARCUS CLARKE

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

Sylvia uttered a little cry. She had become fond of her dumb companion. "Kill Nanny! Oh, Mr. Dawes! What for?"

"I am going to make a boat for you," he said, "and I want hides and thread and tallow."

A few weeks back Maurice Frere would have laughed at such a sentence; but he had begun now to comprehend that this escaped convict was not a man to be laughed at, and though he detested him for his superiority, he could not but admit that he was superior.

"You can't get more than one hide off a goat, man?" he said, with an inquiring tone in his voice—as though it were just possible that such a marvelous being as Dawes could get a second hide by virtue of some secret process known only to himself.

"I am going to catch other goats at the pilot station."

"How are you going to get there?" "Float across. Come, there is no time for questioning. Go and cut down some saplings, and let us begin."

The lieutenant master looked at the convict prisoner with astonishment, and then gave way to the power of knowledge, and did as he was ordered. Before sundown that evening, the carcasses of poor Nanny, broken into various most unbutchery fragments, was hanging on the nearest tree; and Frere, returning with as many young saplings as he could drag together, found Rufus Dawes engaged in a curious occupation. He had killed the goat, and, having cut off its head close under the jaws, and its legs at the knee joint, had extracted the carcass through a slit, which all he had now sewed together with strings. This proceeding gave him a rough bag, and he was busily engaged in filling this bag with such coarse grass as he could collect. Frere observed, also, that the fat of the animal was carefully preserved, and the intestines had been placed in a pool of water to soak.

The convict, however, declined to give information as to what he intended to do. "It's my own notion," he said. "Let me alone. I may make a failure of it." Frere, on being pressed by Sylvia, affected to know all about the scheme. He was called to think that a convict brain should contain a mystery which he could not share.

On the next day, by Rufus Dawes' directions, Frere cut down some rushes that grew about a mile from the camping ground, and brought them in on his back. This took him nearly half a day to accomplish. Short rations were beginning to tell upon his physical powers. The convict, on the other hand, trained by a woful experience in the boats to endurance of hardship, was slowly recovering his original strength.

"What are they for?" asked Frere, as he hung the bundles down.

"To make a boat. You are very dull, Mr. Frere. I am going to swim over to the pilot station and catch some of those goats. I can get across on the stuffed skins, but I must float them back on the reeds."

Frere saw that his companion was cleansing the intestines of the goat. The outer membrane having been peeled off, Rufus Dawes was turning them inside out. This he did by turning up a short piece of it, as though it were a coat sleeve, and dipping the turned-up cuff into a pool of water. The weight of the water, pressing between the cuff and the rest of it, bore down a further portion, and so, by repeated dippings, the whole length was turned inside out. The inner membrane having been scraped away, there remained a fine transparent tube, which was tightly twisted and set to dry in the sun.

"There is the catgut for the nose," said Dawes. "I learned that trick at the settlement. Now, come here."

Frere, following, saw that a fire had been made between two stones, and that the kettle was partly sunk in the ground near it. On approaching the kettle, he found it full of smooth pebbles.

"Take out those stones," said Dawes. Frere obeyed, and saw at the bottom of the kettle a quantity of sparkling white powder, and the sides of the vessel coated with the same material.

"What's that?" he asked. "Salt."

"How did you get it?" "I filled the kettle with sea water, and then heated those pebbles red hot in the fire, dropped them into it. We could have caught the steam in a cloth and wrung out fresh water, had we wished to do so."

Frere burst out in a sudden, fretful admiration: "What a fellow you are, Dawes! What are you—I mean, what have you been?"

A triumphant light came into the other's face, and for the instant he seemed about to reply by some startling revelation. But the light faded, and he checked himself with a gesture of pain.

"I am a convict. Never mind what I have been. A sailor, shipbuilder, prodigal, vagabond—what does it matter? It won't alter my fate, will it?"

"If we get safely back," says Frere, "I'll ask for a free pardon for you. You deserve it."

"I don't want favor at your hands. Let us get to work. Bring up the rushes here, and tie them with a fishing line."

At this instant Sylvia came up. "Good afternoon, Mr. Dawes. Hard at work? Oh! what's this in the kettle?"

The voice of the child acted like a charm upon Rufus Dawes. He smiled quite cheerfully.

"Salt, miss. I am going to catch the goats with that."

"Catch the goats! How? Put it on their tails?" she cried merrily.

"Goats are fond of salt, and when I get over to the pilot station, I shall set traps for them baited with this salt. When they come to lick it, I shall have a noose of catgut ready to catch them; do you understand?"

"But how will you get across?"

"You will see to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVI.

Frere, coming to the pier next morning, saw Dawes strip himself, and piling his clothes upon the stuffed goatskin, stretched himself upon the reed bundles, and, paddling with his hands, pushed off from the shore. The clothes floated high and dry, but the reeds, depressed by the weight of the body, sunk so that the head of the convict alone appeared above water. In this fashion he gained the middle of the current, and the outgoing tide swept him down toward the mouth of the harbor.

Rufus Dawes, drifting with the current, had allowed himself to coast along the eastern side of the harbor until the pilot station appeared in view on the opposite shore. By this time it was nearly 7 o'clock. He landed at a sandy cove, and, drawing up his raft, proceeded to unpack from among his garments a piece of damper. Having eaten sparingly, and dried himself in the sun, he replaced the remains of his breakfast, and pushed his floats again into the water.

Arrived at his destination about midday, he set to work to lay his snares. The goats, with whose sides he hoped to cover the carcass, were sufficiently numerous and tame to encourage him to use every exertion. He carefully examined the tracks of the animals, and found that they converged to one point—the track to the nearest water. With much labor he cut down bushes, so as to mask the approach to the water hole on all sides, save where these tracks immediately conjoined. Close to the water, and at unequal distances along the various tracks, he scattered the salt he had obtained by his rude distillation of sea water. Between this scattered salt and the points where he judged the animals would be likely to approach, he set his traps, and retired to watch the effect of his labors.

About two hours after he had gone, the goats came to drink. There were five goats and two kids, and they trotted calmly along the path to the water. The watcher soon saw that his precautions had been in a manner wasted. The leading goat marched gravely into the springs, which, catching him round the neck, released the best rod, and sprung him off his legs into the air. He uttered a comical bleat, and then hung kicking. The other goats bounded off at this sudden elevation of their leader, and three more were entrapped at a little distance. Rufus Dawes now thought it time to secure his prize, though three of the springs were as yet unprung. He ran down to the old goat, knife in hand, but before he could reach him the barely dried catgut gave way, and the old fellow, shaking his head with grotesque dismay, made off at full speed. The others, however, were secured and killed. The loss of the springs was not a serious one, for three traps remained unprung, and before sundown Rufus Dawes had caught four more goats. Removing with care the catgut that had done such good service, he dragged the carcasses to the shore, and proceeded to pack them upon his floats. He discovered, however, that the weight was too great, and that the water, entering through the loops of the stitching in the side, had so soaked the rush grass as to render the floats no longer buoyant. He was compelled, therefore, to spend two hours in restuffing the skin with such material as he could find. Some light and flock-like seaweed, which the action of the water had swayed after the fashion of haybands along the shore, formed an excellent substitute for grass, and having bound his bundle of rushes lengthwise, with the goatskin as a centerpiece, he succeeded in forming a sort of rude canoe, upon which the carcasses floated securely.

The tide was now running in, and he knew it was imperative that he should regain the further shore while the current was in his favor. He touched the chilled water and drew back. For an instant he determined to wait until the beams of the morning should illumine that beautiful but treacherous sea, and then the thought of the helpless child, who was, without doubt, waiting and watching for him on the shore, gave new strength to his wearied frame; and fixing his eyes on the glow that, hovering above the dark tree-line, marked her presence, he pushed the raft before him into the sea.

Paddling and pushing, he gradually edged it toward the shoreline; and at last, just when his stiffened limbs refused to obey the impulse of his will, and he began to drift onward with the onward tide, he felt his feet strike firm ground. Dragging the carcasses above high-water mark, he rounded the little promontory and made for the fire. He gained the fire before his footsteps, and spread his hands to the blaze in silence.

Frere, starting, cried, "It is you! Have you succeeded?"

"There are six carcasses down by the rocks. You can have meat for breakfast to-morrow."

The child, at the sound of the voice, came running down from the hut. "Oh, Mr. Dawes! I am so glad! We were beginning to despair—mamma and I."

Dawes snatched her from the ground,

and, bursting into a joyous laugh, swung her into the air. "Tell me," he cried, holding up the child with two dripping arms above him, "what you will do for me if I bring you and mamma safe home again?"

"Give you a free pardon," said Sylvia; "and papa shall make you his servant!" Frere burst out laughing at this reply; and Dawes, with a choking sensation in his throat, put the child upon the ground, and walked away.

In the morning, however, Rufus Dawes was first at work, and made no allusion to the scene of the previous evening. By dint of hard work they got the four goats skinned, and the entrails cleaned ready for twisting, by breakfast time; and having broiled some of the flesh, made a hearty meal. Mrs. Vickers being no better, Dawes went to see her, and seemed to have made friends again with Sylvia, for he came out of the hut with the child's hand in his. Frere, who was cutting the meat in long strips to dry in the sun, saw this, and it added fresh fuel to the fire of his unreasonable envy and jealousy.

Rufus Dawes took two of the straightest and most taper of some celery-top pines which Frere had cut on the previous day, and lashed them tightly together, with the butts outward. He thus produced a spliced stick about twelve feet long. About two feet from either end he notched the young tree until he could bend the extremities upward; and having so bent them, he secured the bent portions in their places by means of lashing of rawhide. The spliced trees now presented the rude outline of the section of a boat, having the stem, keel and stern all in one piece. This having been placed lengthwise between the stakes, four other poles, notched in two places, were lashed from stake to stake, running crosswise to the keel, and forming the knees. Four saplings were now bent from end to end of the upturned portions of the keel that represented stem and stern. Two of these four were placed above, as gunwales; two below, as bottom rails. At each intersection the stakes were lashed firmly with fishing line. The whole framework being complete, the stakes were drawn out, and there lay upon the ground the skeleton of a boat eight feet long by three broad.

Frere, whose hands were blistered and sore, would fain have rested; but the convict would not hear of it. "Let us finish," he said, regardless of his own fatigue; "the skins will be dry if we stop."

"I can work no more," said Frere, sulkily; "I can't stand. You've got muscles of iron. I suppose, I haven't?"

"They made me work when I couldn't stand, Maurice Frere. It is wonderful what spirit the cat gives a man. There's nothing like work to get rid of aching muscles—so they used to tell me."

"Well, what's to be done now?"

"Cover the boat. There, you can set the fat to melt, and sew these hides together, two and two, do you see? and then sew the pair at the necks. There is plenty of catgut yonder."

"Don't talk to me as if I were a dog!" says Frere, suddenly. "Be civil, can't you?"

But the other, busily trimming and cutting at the projecting pieces of sapling, made no reply. It is possible that he thought the fatigued lieutenant beneath his notice. About an hour before sundown the hides were ready, and Rufus Dawes, having in the meantime interlarded the ribs of the skeleton with wattles, stretched the skins over it, with the hairy side inward. Along the edges of this covering he bored holes at intervals, and passing through these holes thongs of twisted skin, he drew the whole to the top of the boat. One last precaution remained. Dipping the pannikin into the melted tallow, he plentifully anointed the seams of the sewed skins. The boat thus turned tony-turry, looked like a huge walnut shell covered with red and reeking hide, or the skull of some Titan who had been scented. "There!" cried Rufus Dawes, triumphant. "Twelve hours in the sun to tighten the hides, and she'll swim like a tick."

The next day was spent in minor preparations. The jerked goat-meat was packed securely into as small a compass as possible. Water bags were improvised out of portions of the intestines of the boats. Rufus Dawes, having filled these with water, ran a wooden skewer through their mouths, and twisted it tight, tourniquet fashion. He also stripped cylindrical pieces of bark, and having sewed each cylinder at the side, fitted to it a bottom of the same material, and calked the seams with gum and pine resin. Thus four tolerable buckets were obtained. One goat skin yet remained, and out of this it was determined to make a sail. "The current was strong," said Rufus Dawes, "and we shall not be able to row far with such cars as we have got. If we get a breeze it may save our lives." It was impossible to "step" a mast in the frail basket structure, but this difficulty was overcome by a simple contrivance. From thwart to thwart two poles were bored, and the mast, lashed between these poles with thongs of rawhide, was secured by shrouds of twisted fishing line running fore and aft. Sheets of bark were placed at the bottom of the craft, and made a safe flooring. It was late in the afternoon of the fourth day that these preparations were completed, and it was decided that on the morrow they should adventure the journey. "We will coast down to the bar," said Rufus Dawes, "and wait for the slack of the tide. I can do no more now."

(To be continued.)

Measured by Time. "Do you consider frenzied finance a question of the hour?"

"The hour!" echoed the magazine publisher scornfully. "It is the question of several years at least."—Washington Star.

Electricity travels about 90,000 miles a second, faster than light.



Working Poultry and Strawberries.

When one speaks of poultry in connection with any low-growing plant most people can see only the scratching birds and the rutted plants, but the combination has been and is being profitably carried out. If one selects one of the larger breeds of hens for this combination the scratching part of the proposition will be reduced to a minimum, and if the fowls are not required to obtain their entire living from the patch of strawberry plants, they will do comparatively little damage. It is, of course, understood that the fowls are not allowed on the patch until after the fruit has been gathered, but from that time until they go into winter quarters they will be exceedingly useful, for they will take good care of all the insects, do little damage in the way of scratching which can be readily repaired by going over the plot each day, and their droppings will add materially to the richness of the soil. If the plantation covers a considerable area it will be a good plan to have several small colony houses on the plot so that the hens may have their own quarters and thus work over a smaller area. The profit from this combination is good, and neither will interfere with the other, especially if the fowls are raised for egg production. Try it on a small scale and increase as experience proves it pays.

Bespoke Gooseberries.

The main value of this recent introduction from the other side seems to lie in the fact that the variety is very firm, productive and ships well.



THE KEEPSAKE GOOSEBERRIES.

but whether it can be profitably grown over any considerable territory can only be discovered by experimenting with it. So far, in limited tests, it seems to be better than any other of the English varieties, but its quality is not nearly as good as the old favorite with American growers, the Downing. It shows less tendency to mildew than other European varieties, although it is doubtless susceptible to that disease. It is not advised to plant this variety largely without first testing it through several seasons.

New Seed Wheat Treatment.

J. H. Wright, a farmer residing near Hennessey, O. T., has made a valuable discovery that will be of general interest to wheat growers everywhere.

He soaks his seed wheat in coal oil, using about one-half gallon to every twenty bushels of wheat, covering it over with a blanket and letting it soak overnight. He found it equally effective with corn, using one-half teacup to a washtub of corn. He finds that it not only preserves the cereal from rotting, but preserves it from insects. Mr. Wright has practiced this for more than three years, and his yield has been a great deal more than that of those who had better soil for planting.

Much Needed Sweet Potato.

A sweet potato that will keep as well as the white potato is what Professor E. J. Wickson, of the department of agriculture of the University of California, thinks he has discovered. It was picked up in the Ladron Islands by a skipper, who took aboard a lot of excellent flavored sweet potatoes last April, and, finding them still in good condition upon his recent arrival in San Francisco, gave specimens of them to Professor Wickson. They will be propagated in the hope of working in the commercial world of potatoes a revolution that will be worth many millions of dollars to California and a boon to mankind.

Cut-Worms on Wheat.

Reports from Canadian and Kingfisher counties state that wheat is being seriously damaged by cut-worms. The entomologist of the Oklahoma experiment station has visited fields where the worms are at work, and recommends spraying a strip of the wheat just ahead of the worms with paris green at the rate of one pound to 100 gallons of water. The spraying should be done while the worms are feeding on the wheat, and, of course, no stock should be allowed to pasture on the sprayed wheat.

A Hotbed for an Amateur.

A more ambitious method than that of growing his early flowers in boxes, kept in the house, may be tried by the amateur gardener who is also an amateur carpenter. A hotbed may be built at small expense. Old window sash, or a single sash purchased cheaply, and four boards, one inch thick and one and one-half feet wide, may be put together to form the hotbed, the boards being used for the walls.

Warm stable manure should be put in the bottom, from one-half to three-fourths of a foot deep, and firmly pressed down. The bed should be well drained. Light soil, to a depth of one or two inches should be spread over the manure and after one or two days, when the temperature is cooled down to 70 or 80 degrees, the bed is ready for use.

The plants, in pots or boxes, should be put in the bed. The boxes may be prepared as for indoor use, with ordinary garden soil at the bottom, and lighter soil on top. Large holes should be left to drain the box. The fine seed should be sprinkled on the surface, and fine soil sprinkled over it, and the coarse seed sown in drills, or pressed down into the soil, and covered with a thin layer of earth. The soil should be gently sprinkled with water as soon as the seed is planted and kept moist, without becoming soggy.

The hotbed should be shaded from the hot sun, but there should be plenty of light. The cover of the bed should be kept on until the seedlings have started to make good growth. On warm spring days the plants should be given fresh air by raising the sash slightly.

Points on Pruning Shrubs.

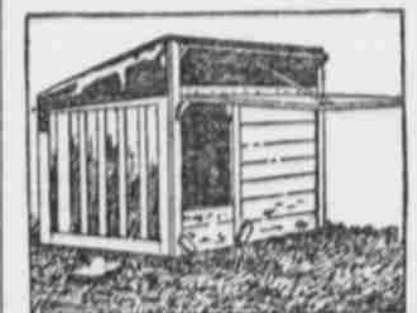
If those who have shrubbery on their grounds would but remember the simple fact of the period of bloom and that blossoms come on the new growth they would remember when to prune. The blossoms on the spring-blooming shrubs are formed on the wood that was grown after the blooming season of a year ago, hence if these shrubs are pruned in the spring we simply cut off the flower-bearing shoots and no flowers are had. The time to prune spring flowering shrubs is just after they have stopped blooming, so they may have the rest of the summer in which to grow the flower shoots for another spring. The fall-blooming shrubs should be pruned in the spring, for they will then grow the flower shoots for the coming fall period of bloom. One can see how simple it is if they will but remember.

Water and Solids in Milk.

When the cream of fat is removed every 100 pounds of skim milk contain about 90 per cent of water and 10 per cent of solids. The solids contain about 3.5 per cent of casein and 4.5 per cent of milk sugar, with small proportions of fat and albumen as the fat cannot be entirely removed. The milk sugar remains in the whey when it separates and the casein in the curds or cheesy matter, though both contain small percentages of fat, albumen, etc. The whey will promote the formation of fat, while the curds supply the elements for growth and muscle. It will be an advantage to feed the two substances together, adding bran and season lightly with salt. If the skim milk becomes very sour and begins to ferment it should not be used at all. The proper plan is to use the skim milk when fresh or but slightly sour.

A Turkey Coop.

A turkey coop which has been used with perfect satisfaction is described in American Agriculturist as having



several distinct advantages over ordinary coops. It is built out of a large packing case. At the top is a ventilator. Suspended by a cord is a drop door of close boards and beneath this is an ordinary door partly of wire netting. Each is hinged and can be opened independently. On cold nights ventilator and drop door may be closed, on ordinary nights the ventilator opened, on hot ones both. In warm weather the drop door suspended as shown in the cut forms a good shade for the birds.

Grass of the Lawn.

Where it is desired to thicken grass, or increase the variety in lawns or dooryards, much may be done by simply sowing seed. The sprouting will be favored by the shade of the grass, and the growth of the young plants by a frequent clipping, so that by late summer or before a good sod will be established. The principle is that cutting prevents shading the young grass and supplies it with sun and air, thus giving it an equal chance with the old grass, if the ground is rich enough, as it generally is in lawns and dooryards.

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