Seventeen

A Tale of Youth and Summer Time and the Baxter Family, Especially William

By

BOOTH TARKINGTON

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Jane shook her head. "I can't. I can't go outside the house till tomorrow. It's because we walked after Willie with our stummicks out o' joint."

"Can't you come out at all?" Rannie urged. "Go ask your mother. Tell her"—

"How can I?" Jane inquired, with a little heat, "when she isn't here to ask? She's gone out to play cards, she and papa."

Rannie swung her foot. "Well," she said, "I guess I haf to find somep'n to do. G'night!"

With head bowed in thought she moved away. Jane, on her part, left the window and went to the open front door. Conscientiously, she did not cross the threshold, but restrained herself to looking out. On the steps of the porch sat William alone, his back toward the house.

"Willie," said Jane softly, and, as he made no response, she lifted her voice a little, "Will-ee!"

"Whatchwant!" he grunted, not moving.

"Willie, I told mamma I was sorry I made you feel so bad."

"All right!" he returned curtly.

"Well, when I haf to go to bed, Willie," she said, "mamma told me because I made you feel bad I haf to go upstairs by myself tonight."

She paused, seeming to hope that he would say something, but he spake not.

"Willie, I don't haf to go for awhile yet, but when I do—maybe in about a half an hour—I wish you'd come stand at the foot of the stairs till I get up there. The light's lit upstairs, but down around here it's kind of dark."

He did not answer.

"Will you, Willie?"

"Oh, all right!" he said.

This contented her, and she seated herself so quietly upon the floor just inside the door that he ceased to be aware of her, thinking she had gone away. He sat staring vacantly into the darkness, which had come on with that abruptness which begins to be noticeable in September. His elbows were on his knees, and his body was sunk far forward in an attitude of desolation.

The small noises of the town—that town so empty tonight—fell upon his ears mockingly. It seemed to him incredible that so hollow a town could go about its nightly affairs just as usual. A man and a woman going by laughed loudly at something the man had said. The sound of their laughter was horrid to William. And from a great distance—from far out in the country—there came the faint, long drawn whistle of an engine.

That was the sorrowfulest sound of all to William. His lonely mind's eye sought the vasty spaces of the east—crossed prairie and river and hill to where a long train whizzed onward through the dark, farther and farther and farther away. William uttered a sigh so hoarse, so deep from the tombs, so prolonged, that Jane, who had been relaxing herself at full length upon the floor, sat up straight with a jerk. But she was wise enough not to speak.

Now the full moon came masquerading among the branches of the shade trees. It came in the likeness of an enormous football, gloriously orange. Gorgeously it rose higher, cleared the trees and resumed its wonted impersonation of a silver disk. Here was another mockery. What was the use of a moon now?

There came from a little distance down the street the sound of a young male voice, singing. It was not a musical voice, yet sufficiently loud, and it knew only a portion of the words and air it sought to render; but, upon completing the portion it did know, it instantly began again and sang that portion over and over with brightest patience. Thus:

"My countree, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liber-tee,
My countree, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liber-tee,
My countree, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liber-tee,
My countree, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liber-tee,
My countree, 'tis"—

Jane spoke unconsciously. "It's Freddie," she said.

William leaped to his feet. This was something he could not bear. He made a bloodthirsty dash toward the gate, which the singer was passing.

"You get out o' here!" William roared.

The song stopped. Freddie Banks fled like a rag on the wind.

Now here is a strange matter.

The antique prophets prophesied successfully; they practiced with some ease that art since lost, but partly rediscovered by M. Maeterlinck, who proves to us that the future already exists, simultaneously with the present. Well, if his proofs be true, then at this very moment when William thought menacingly of Freddie Banks, the bright air of a happy June evening—an evening ordinarily reckoned ten years, nine months and twenty-one days in advance of this present sorrowful evening—the bright air of that happy June evening, so far in the future, was actually already trembling to a wedding march played upon a church organ, and this self same Freddie, with a white flower in his buttonhole and in every detail accoutred as a wedding usher, was an usher for this very William who now (as we ordinarily count time) threatened his person.

But for more miracles:

As William turned again to resume his meditations upon the steps his incredulous eyes fell upon a performance amazingly beyond fantasy and without parallel as a means to make scorn of him. Not ten feet from the porch, and in the white moonlight that made brilliant the path to the gate, Miss Mary Randolph Kirsted was walking. She was walking with insulting pomposity in her most pronounced semicircular manner.

"You get out o' here!" she said in a voice as deep and hoarse as she could make it. "You get out o' here!"

Her intention was as plain as the moon. She was presenting in her own person a sketch of William, by this means expressing her opinion of him and avenging Jane.

"You get out o' here!" she croaked.

The shocking audacity took William's breath. He gasped.

"Why, you—you"— he cried. "You—you sooty faced little girl!"

In this fashion he directly addressed Miss Mary Randolph Kirsted for the first time in his life.

And that was the strangest thing of this strange evening, strangest because, as with life itself, there was nothing remarkable upon the surface of it. But if M. Maeterlinck has the right of the matter and if the bright air of that June evening, almost eleven years in the so called future, was indeed already trembling to "Lohengrin," then William stood with Johnnie Watson against a great bank of flowers at the door of a church aisle, that aisle was roped with white satin ribbons, and William and Johnnie were waiting for something important to happen. And then, to the strains of "Here Comes the Bride," it did—a stately, solemn, roseate, gentle young thing with bright eyes seeking through a veil for William's eyes.

Yes, if great M. Maeterlinck is right, it seems that William ought to have caught at least some eerie echo of that wedding march, however faint—some bars or strains adrift before their time upon the moonlight of this September night in his eighteenth year.

For there, beyond the possibility of any fate to intervene or of any later vague, fragmentary memory of even Miss Pratt to impair, there in that moonlight was his future before him.

He started forward furiously. "You—you—you little"—

But he paused, not wasting his breath upon the empty air.

His bride to be was gone.

THE END.

The Accident Map.

On the walls of a room at police headquarters in New York city are large maps of the five boroughs. These maps are covered with many large and small pins of various colors. Each color denotes a particular kind of accident. The large headed pins represent fatal accidents and the small ones minor accidents. For example, a large white headed pin represents a fatal automobile accident, while a small one of the same color represents a similar but not serious accident. In the same manner a large green headed pin indicates a fatal trolley car accident. The map of Manhattan shows that a long stretch of Fifth avenue has an almost continuous line of accidents. The Thirteenth precinct shows a greater number of accidents than any other. This precinct contains Delancey street, with the approach to the Williamsburg bridge and many narrow east side streets.—Safety Engineering.

Seven Wise Men of Greece.

The seven wise men of Greece were Thales of Miletus, Periander of Corinth, Cleobulus of Lyndus, Chilo of Lacedaemon, Solon of Athens, Bias of Priene and Pittacus of Mitylene. Some fishermen of Miletus sold a draft of fishes to a bystander. When the net was drawn in it contained a golden tripod, and the purchaser claimed it was his, while the fishermen contended that they sold only the fish that might be in the net. The dispute was referred to the oracle of the Delphi, who awarded the tripod to the wisest man in Greece. Thereupon it was taken to Thales, who declined it and suggested that it be given to Bias. He in turn refused to accept it, and thus it was successively declined by all the seven, and they were thereafter known as the seven wise men of Greece.

Unversatile Nature.

Marie, the eight-year-old hopeful of a certain household of this city, was seated at the breakfast table one morning. As usual, eggs were served.

Now, either Marie was not hungry or she had grown tired of the inevitable bill of fare, for very earnestly she lifted her eyes to heaven and exclaimed:

"I wish to goodness hens would lay something besides eggs!"—Philadelphia Ledger.

Blessed Ignorance.

Grubbs—Do you think that Binks knows what he is talking about? Stubbs—I suppose so, but I'd like to bet something that after he concludes one of his harangues he doesn't know what his listeners are talking about.—Richmond Times-Dispatch.

The manufacture and consumption of pastry regarded as a luxury in France has been entirely suppressed except on Sundays and holidays.

GOOD SEEDBED FOR ALFALFA

Preparations Should Begin Year Before Planting—Keep Soil Well Cultivated.

(By M. A. BEESON, Oklahoma Experimental Station.)

In preparing the seed bed for alfalfa you should begin a year or two before you wish to seed by planting a cultivated crop, keeping the ground well cultivated and free from weeds. Corn is a good crop to precede alfalfa.

The critical period of alfalfa is the first six weeks of the life of the plant. The ground should be plowed early and deep. It should be free from weeds and as free as possible from weed seed. It should be well tilled, but firm up to the surface when seeded. Fall seeding in September without a nurse crop is considered the surest method to follow. However, if there is not a favorable season and sufficient moisture in the fall, you may sow at corn or cotton planting time in the spring. From 12 to 15 pounds of seed per acre is ample if the seed is clean and strong.

When it is sown with a grain drill attachment, on well-prepared seed bed, and when sown carefully and not too deep, from 10 to 12 pounds of seed is quite sufficient. The seed is small and does not need to be sown too deep—just so you get it into the moist dirt.

WHERE MANURE YIELDS MOST

Greatest Profits May Be Expected Where Fertilizer Is Placed on Poorest Soils.

Greatest profits may be expected from a ton of manure when it is used on the poorest soil on the farm.

The value of a ton of manure when used on soils of different fertility is illustrated by two series of plots at the Ohio experiment station. Corn without any fertilizer or manure has yielded 48.07 bushels per acre for 12 years in a rotation of corn, oats and clover. In another series not more than 40 rods away, the yield of corn for 12 years has averaged only 35.17 bushels, the other crops of the rotation being wheat and clover. Originally the land was the same, but its treatment previous to the time these experiments began made this difference in fertility.

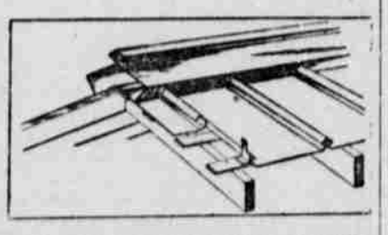
Eight tons of barnyard manure with 320 pounds of raw phosphate rock per acre has produced an increase in corn yield of 30.98 bushels on the poorer soil. On the rich land the same application with 1,000 pounds of raw phosphate rock has increased the corn crop only 17.89 bushels per acre, even though three times as much of the phosphorus carrier was added. The total yield on the manure land has been nearly the same in both cases.

METAL SHEETING FOR ROOFS

Arranged to Enable Tinsmith to Rapidly Join Sheets Without the Use of Solder.

The Scientific American, in illustrating and describing a metal roof invented by J. H. Perry of Middletown, N. Y., says:

"The object of this invention is to provide a sheet metal roof arranged to enable a tinsmith or other person to rapidly join the metal sheets for forming the roof-sides and the ridge without the use of solder and, to render the joints rainproof and thereby prevent



Sectional Perspective View of Sheet Metal Roof With Parts Broken Away.

leakage, use is made of metal sheets provided at each side with an upturned butting member terminating in an inward and downwardly bent flange and a peak-shaped seam cap fitting over the flanges.

STRAW IS WASTED ON FARMS

One of Feeds Ordinarily Thrown Away or Permitted to Rot in Pile Where Threshed.

One of the feeds ordinarily thrown away is straw, which is wasted or permitted to rot in the straw pile where threshed. The average straw crop from the small grain harvest, when properly taken care of, stacked and protected until fed out, will help wonderfully in the wintering of horses, cattle and sheep. Straw should be fed in racks arranged so it can be forked down to the stock fresh every day, and the left-over and refused stuff thrown out for bedding. Feed sparingly each day, and what salt is given may be put on the straw as light brine, just enough to carry a slight salty taste; this will add to the palatable quality of the feed and induce it to be freely taken up by all fodder-eating animals.

SAVING SEED IS PROFITABLE

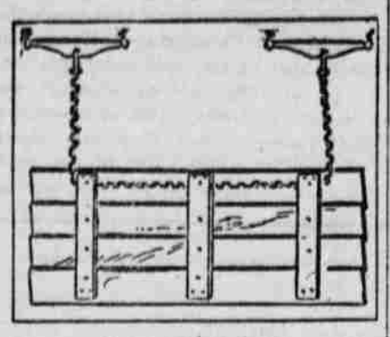
Zeal and Labor Spent in Cultivation Will Not Make Up for Lack of Foresight.

If you neglected to insure plenty of high quality seeds for next year's planting all the zeal and labor you may spend in cultivation will not make up for lack of foresight in saving the good seed.

PLANK DRAG COMES IN HANDY

Useful in Leveling Plowed Ground and Breaking Clods—Boards Held Together by Bolts.

This plank drag comes in handy for leveling plowed ground and breaking clods. It is 8 feet long and made of five 1½-inch boards, 8 inches wide, writes Charles Schroeder in Oklahoma Farmer. The boards overlap one another a little just as shown, and they



Handy Plank Drag.

are held together by being bolted, and by nailing on the scantlings as shown in the drawing. A chain is passed around under the front end of the scantlings with the single-trees at the other end to hitch on the team.

USE SWEET CLOVER FOR PIGS

Ordinarily an Acre of Crop Will Support Twenty to Thirty Shoats—Other Uses for Weed.

An acre of sweet clover ordinarily will support 20 to 30 shoats. Many other uses for this erstwhile weed are told in Farmers' Bulletin No. 820, published by the United States department of agriculture, Washington.

Stock may refuse to eat sweet clover at first, but if they are kept on the field for a few days they will soon develop a liking for it. It will furnish as much pasture during the season as any other legume, with the possible exception of alfalfa.

Sweet clover also makes a first-class hay if it is cut before it gets too coarse, and it is a remarkable soil-builder. It is one of the best honey plants because of the large amount of nectar it produces. Beekeepers would do well to plant at least a small patch of it solely for honey purposes.

HIGHWAY ON PACIFIC COAST

Dream Is for Macadamized, Asphalt Surfaced Road From Alaska South to Panama.

Good road advocates should turn their eyes upon the Pacific coast states where their hobby is reaching a development nowhere else approximated in the United States. The dream of the Pacific coast is for a macadamized, asphalt-surfaced highway from Alaska south to the Panama canal. The realization of the project so far is the actual voting by the state of California of a bond issue of $18,000,000,000 and by the public interest aroused in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia which promises early legislation for the continuation of the California highway.

JOB FOR FIRST STORMY DAY

Reduce Loss of Young Animals by Infectious Diseases by Cleaning Stables Thoroughly.

A good job for the first rainy day.

From 6 to 10 per cent of the young animals are lost each year from such infectious diseases as calf scours, hog cholera, blackleg, contagious abortion, navel ill of sucklings, distemper and other infectious diseases.

Reduce this loss of young animals from infectious diseases by cleaning the stable thoroughly and disinfecting with whitewash to which has been added 2 per cent crude carbolic acid or 5 per cent coal-tar dip. This is easily applied to the walls, ceiling and floors with a spray pump.

LAYING CONCRETE IN WINTER

Such Indoor Work as Cellar Floors and Barn Floors May Be Successfully Performed.

Indoor concrete work such as cellar floors and barn floors under cover, may be done successfully in winter, if proper precaution is taken to keep the concrete from freezing. Fence posts and concrete blocks may be made successfully indoors during the winter, but outdoor work in concrete is not advisable after the temperature is below 45 degrees. If you have some outside concrete work to do in cold weather, you must keep the concrete from freezing by heating the ingredients, using warm water and covering so they will not freeze.

PROTEIN SUPPLY FOR FOWLS

When Closely Confined Chickens Will Need Some Kind of Meat—Grain Is Not Enough.

Fowls confined in close pens, yards or runs where they have little chance to get insects will need some kind of meat. Grain will not supply enough protein and mineral matter for best results.

To supply this demand for protein and mineral matter meat meal, meat scrap or tankage is generally fed. Laying hens especially need some of these forms of feed. Young chickens will thrive better if fed meat in some form occasionally.

Col. House is giving evidence of having associated with the French people. He has broken his customary silence long enough to assure a reporter who interviewed him that the American mission was a success.

Certain gentlemen in Congress who during the last session were extremely pugnacious in asserting their rights to oppose all war measures now are as meek as lambs. Can it be they have heard a voice from home?

An exchange says that "Bolsheviki" leaders are all right except in lacking the minor qualities of intelligence, experience, morals and patriotism." Sounds a good deal like the old cooper's definition of "nothing"—"an empty bung-hole without a barrel."

Many a man who has thrown mud at a political opponent has been surprised to find that every chunk stuck—in the form of votes for the other fellow.

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