The Redemption of David Corson

By CHARLES FREDERIC GOSS

CHAPTER II.

At the moment when Stephen was sounding the horn to summon the young mystic to his supper, a promiscuous crowd of loafers with chairs tilted against the wall of the village tavern received a shock. They heard the tinkle of bells in the distance, and looking in the direction of this unusual sound, saw a team of splendid coal-black horses dash round a corner and whirl a strange vehicle to the door of the inn.

There were two extraordinary figures on the front seat of the wagon. The driver was a sturdy, thick-set man whose enormous moustache suggested a crow with outstretched wings. As if to emphasize the ferocious aspect lent him by this hairy canopy which completely concealed his mouth, Nature had duplicated it in miniature by brows meeting above his nose and spreading themselves, pluma-like, over a pair of eyes which gleamed so brightly that they could be felt, although they were so deep-set that they could scarcely be seen.

This fierce and buccaneerish person summoned the dozing hostler in a coarse, imperative voice, flung him the reins, sprang from his seat, and assisted his companion to alight. She gave him her hand with an air of utter indifference, bestowed upon him neither smile nor thanks, and dropped to the ground with a light flutter like a bird. Turning instantly toward the tavern, she ascended the steps of the porch under a fusillade of glances of astonishment and admiration. Young and beautiful, dressed in a picturesque and brilliant Spanish costume, she carried herself with the ease and dignity of a princess, and looked straight past the staring crowd. Her great, dreamy eyes did not seem to note them.

When she and her companion had entered the hall and closed the door behind them, every tilted chair came down to the floor with a bang, and many voices exclaimed in concert, "Who is she?" Curiosity was satisfied at 8 o'clock in the evening, for at that hour Doctor Paracelsus Aesculapius, as he fantastically called himself, opened the doors of his traveling apothecary shop and exposed his "universal panecea" for sale, while at the same time, "Pepeeta, the Queen of Fortune Tellers," entered her booth and spread out upon a table the paraphernalia by which she undertook to discover the secrets of the future.

When the evening's work was ended, Pepeeta at once retired; but the doctor entered the bar-room, followed by a curious and admiring crowd. He was in a happy and expansive frame of mind, for he had done a "land office" business in this frontier village which he was now for the first time visiting.

He looked over the crowd with an inclusive superiority and waved his hand with an inclusive gesture. The motley throng of loafers sidled up to the bar with a deprecatory and automatic movement. They took their glasses, clinked them, nodded to their entertainer, muttered incoherent toasts and drank his health. The delighted landlord, feeling it incumbent upon him to break the silence, offered the friendly observation: "S-s-see you s-s-tutter. S-s-stutter a little m-m-my own self."

"Shake!" responded the doctor, who was in too complacent a mood to take offense, and the worthies grasped hands.

"Don't know any w-w-way to s-s-stop it, do you?" asked the landlord.

"No, I d-d-don't; t-t-tried everything. Even my 'universal p-p-panacea' won't do it, and what that can't do can't be d-d-done. Incurable d-d-disease. Get along all right when I go slow like this; but when I open the throttle, get all b-b-balled up. Bad thing for my business. Give any man a thousand d-d-dollars that'll cure me," the quack replied, slapping his trousers pocket as if there were millions in it.

"Co-co-couldn't go q-q-quite as high as that; but wouldn't mind a hu-hu-hundred," responded the landlord, cordially.

"Tell you what it is, b-b-boys," said the quack, "if it wasn't for this impediment in my s-s-speech, I wouldn't need to work more'n about another y-y-year!"

"How's that?" asked someone in the crowd.

"C-c-cause if I could talk as well as I c-c-can think, I could make a fortune 'side of which old John Jacob Astor's would look like a p-p-penny savings b-b-bank!"

"You could?"

"If I can find a man that can do the t-talking (I mean real talk, you know; talk a crowd blind as b-b-bats), I've got something better'n a California g-g-gold mine."

"Better get Dave Corson," said the village wag from the rear of the crowd, and up went a wild shout of laughter.

"Who's D-D-Dave Corson?" asked the doctor.

"Quaker preacher. Your feller 'bout 30 years old."

"Can he t-t-talk?"

"Talk! He kin talk a mule into a trottin' hoss in less'n three minutes."

"He's my man!" exclaimed the doctor, at which the crowd laughed again.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked, turning upon them savagely, his loud voice and threatening manner frightening those who stood nearest, so that they instinctively stepped back a pace or two.

"No offense, Doc," said one of them; "but you couldn't get him. He's pious."

"Pious! What do I care?"

"Well, these here pious Quakers are stiff in their notions. But you kin jedge fer yourself 'bout his talkin, fer there's goin' ter be an appinted Quaker meetin' to-morrow night, and he'll speak. You kin go an' listen, if you want to."

"I'll be there, boys, and d-d-don't you forget it. I'll hook him! Never saw anything I couldn't buy if I had a little of the p-p-proper stuff about me."

"I say, Doc, that daughter of yours knows her biz when it comes to telling fortunes," ventured a young dandy, whose head had been turned by Pepeeta's beauty.

"D-d-daughter!" snapped the quack, turning sharply upon him; "she's not my daughter, she's my wife!"

In order to comprehend the relationship of this strangely mated pair, we must go back five or six years to a certain day when this same Doctor Aesculapius rode slowly down the main street of a small city in Western Pennsylvania, and then out along a rugged country highway. A couple of miles brounght him to the camp of a band of gypsies.

Around a campfire was a picturesque group of persons, all of whom, with a single exception, vanished at the approach of the stranger. The man who stood his ground was a truly sinister being. He was tall, thin and angular; his clothing was scant and ragged, his face bronzed with exposure to the sun.

"Good morning, Baltasar," said the visitor.

The gypsy acknowledged his salutation with a frown.

"I wish to sell this horse," the traveler added, without appearing to notice his cold reception.

The gypsy swept his eye over the animal and shook his head.

"If you will not buy, perhaps you will trade," the traveler said.

"Come," was the laconic response, and so saying the gypsy turned towards the forest which lay just beyond the camp. The "doctor" obeyed. A moment later he found himself in a sequestered spot where there was an improvised stable; and a dozen or more horses glancing up from their feed whinnied a welcome.

A little rivulet lay across their path, and up from the margin of it where she had been gathering water cresses there sprang a young girl, who cast a startled glance at him, then bounded swiftly toward a tent and vanished through the opening. This keen admirer of horses was equally susceptible to the charms of female beauty. So swift an apparition would have bewildered rather than illumined the mind of an ordinary man. But the quack was not an ordinary man. He was endowed with a certain rude power of divination which enabled him to see in a single instant, by swift intuition, more than the average man discovers by an hour of reasoning. By this natural clairvoyance he saw at a glance that this face of exquisite delicacy could no more have been coined in a gypsy camp than a fine cameo could be cut in an Indian wigwam. He knew that all gypsies were thieves, and that these were Spanish gypsies. What was more natural than that he should conclude with inevitable logic that this child had been stolen from people of good if not of noble blood!

"Baltasar!" he said.

The gypsy turned.

"You are a girl-thief as well as a horse-thief. You stole this girl from the family of a Spanish nobleman. I am the representative of this family and have followed your trail for years. You thought I had come to get the horse. You were mistaken; it was the girl!"

"Perdita!" exclaimed the gypsy, taken completely off his guard.

"Lost indeed," responded the quack, scarcely able to conceal his pride in his own astuteness. And then he added slowly: "She must be a burden to you, Baltasar. You evidently never have been able or never have dared to take her back and claim the ransom which you expected. I will pay you for her and take her from your hands. It is the child I want and not vengeance. What will you take for her?"

The doctor drew a leather wallet from his pocket and held it up tantalizingly. Its influence was decisive.

"Pepeeta! Pepeeta!" called the gypsy.

Out of the door of the tent she came, her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her fingers picking nervously at the tinsel strings which fastened her bodice.

"Gif me se money and take her."

The doctor counted out the gold, and then approached the child. For the first time in his life he experienced an emotion of reverence. There was something about her beauty, her helplessness and his responsibility that made a new appeal to his heart.

Yielding to the gentle pressure of his hand, she permitted herself to be led away. Not a good-bye was said. The doctor lifted the child upon the horse's back and climbed in to the saddle. The beautiful child trembled; she also wept. She was parting from those whose lives were base and cruel; but they were the only human beings that she knew. She was leaving a wagon and a tent, but it was the only home that she could remember.

To have a fellow-being completely in our power makes either utterly cruel or utterly kind, and all that was gentle in that rough nature went out in a rush of tenderness toward the little creature who thus suddenly became absolutely dependent upon his compassion. After they had ridden a little way, he began in his rough fashion to try to comfort her.

"Don't cry, Pepeeta! You to be thankful that you have got out of the clutches of those villains. You could not have been worse o and you may be a great deal better! They were not always kind to you, were they? I shouldn't wonder if they beat you sometimes! But you will never be beaten any more. You shall have a nice little pony, and a cart, and flowers, and pretty clothes, and everything that little girls like. I don't know what they are, but whatever they are you shall have them. So don't cry any more! What a pretty name Pepeeta is! It sounds like music when I say it. I have got the toughest name in the world myself. It's a regular jawbreaker—Doctor Paracelsus Aesculapius! What do you think of that, Pepeeta! But then you need not call me by the whole of it! You can just call me Doctor, for short. Now, look at me just once, and give me a pretty smile. Let me see those big black eyes! No? You don't want to? Well, that's all right. I won't bother you. But I want you to know that I love you, and that you are never going to have any more trouble as long as you live."

These were the kindest words the child had ever had spoken to her, or at least the kindest she could remember. They fell on her ears like music and awakened gratitude and love in her heart. She ceased to sigh, and before the ride to town was ended had begun to feel a vague sense of happiness.

The next few years were full of strange adventures for these singular companions. The quack had discovered certain clues to the past history of the child whom he had thus adopted, and was firmly persuaded th she belonged to a noble family. He had made all his plans to take her to Spain and establish her identity in the hope of securing a great reward. But just as he was about to execute this scheme, he was seized by a disease which prostrated him for many months, and threw him into a nervous condition in which he contracted the habit of stammering. On his recovery from his long sickness he found himself stripped of everything he had accumulated; but his shrewdness and indomitable will remained, and he soon began to rebuild his shattered fortune.

During all these ups and downs, Pepeeta was his inseparable and devoted companion. The admiration which her childish beauty excited in his heart had deepened into affection and finally into love. When she reached the age of 16 or 17 years, he proposed to her the idea of marriage. She knew nothing of her own heart, and little about life, but had been accustomed to yield implicit obedience to his will. She consented and the ceremony was performed by a Justice of the Peace in the city of Cincinnati, a year or so before their appearance in the Quaker village. An experience so abnormal would have perverted, if not destroyed her nature, had it not contained the germs of beauty and virtue implanted at her birth. They were still dormant, but not dead; they only awaited the sun and rain of love to quicken them into life.

The quack had coarsened with the passing years, but Pepeeta, withdrawing into the sanctuary of her soul, living a life of vague dreams and half-conscious aspirations after something, she know not what, had grown even more gentle and submissive. As she did not yet comprehend life, she did not protest against its injustice or its incongruity. The vulgar people among whom she lived, the vulgar scenes she saw, passed across the mirror of her soul without leaving permanent impression. She performed the coarse duties of her life in a perfunctory manner. It was her body and not her soul, her will and not her heart which were concerned with them. What that soul and that heart really were, remained to be seen.

(To be continued.)

A Case for Sympathy.

Two matrons of a certain western city whose respective matrimonial ventures did not in the first instance prove altogether satisfactory, met at a woman's club one day, when the first matron remarked:

"Hattie, I met your 'ex,' dear old Tom, the day before yesterday. We talked much of you."

"Is that so?" asked the other matron. "Did he seem sorry when you told him of my second marriage?"

"Indeed, he did; and said so most frankly!"

"Honest?"

"Honest! He said he was extremely sorry, though, he said, he didn't know the man personally."—Lippincott's.

Farm and Garden

Fattening Hogs.

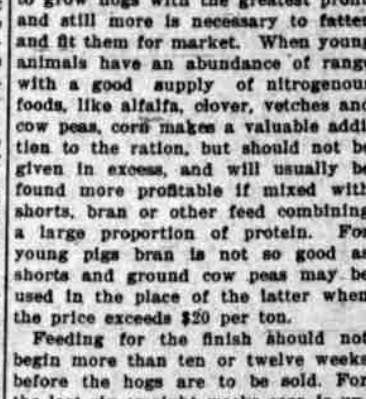
The hog is an omniverous animal, and needs "roughage" and green feed for his best health and growth. A certain amount of grain feed is needed to grow hogs with the greatest profit, and still more is necessary to fatten and fit them for market. When young animals have an abundance of range with a good supply of nitrogenous foods, like alfalfa, clover, vetches and cow peas, corn makes a valuable addition to the ration, but should not be given in excess, and will usually be found more profitable if mixed with shorts, bran or other feed combining a large proportion of protein. For young pigs bran is not so good as shorts and ground cow peas may be used in the place of the latter when the price exceeds $20 per ton.

Feeding for the finish should not begin more than ten or twelve weeks before the hogs are to be sold. For the last six or eight weeks corn is undoubtedly the best grain, as the feed consumed during this time greatly influences the quality of the meat. Hogs take on flesh rapidly during the first weeks of heavy feeding, but longer feeding means slower gains. Quick work pays in fattening as well as in growing hogs, and when the animals are on good feed and fail to make a gain of at least one pound daily they should be sold or butchered.

Market your hogs at 6 or 8 months of age, at which time they should weigh 200 to 250 pounds. A greater per cent of profit is secured than if you keep them until 10 or 12 months old, because you avoid 60 to 120 days of daily animal waste. However, a hog which is made to weigh 300 pounds at 1 year is quite profitable.

Ingenious Hay Rack Lifter.

It very often happens that one wishes to remove the rack from the wagon when there is no one to assist. This may be very easily done with the device illustrated herewith. The four



ONE MAN CAN HANDLE BIG RACK.

supporting poles are set in the ground at a sufficient distance apart to admit of driving between them with the rack. There are a number of hooks on the side of each, sufficient to make it possible to lift the rack a little at a time by means of the poles, as illustrated by the dotted lines. There is no need of a complicated block and tackle when such a simple device is so effective.—Frank Monroe in Farm and Home.

Best Type of Milch Cows.

A cow with her second or third calf is the most desirable of all, and this is undoubtedly the most profitable age to buy them. As milkers and breeders, they have all their best days in front of them, and with sufficient time to pay handsomely. Young and old cows are very distinct in appearance. The former have an unmistakable appearance of fullness of flesh and coat, while the old ones are more or less shrunk. The teeth give an indication of age, and the horns are often looked to as a guide, the young having smooth horns, while those of the aged are wrinkled. If cross-breeds are bought, get them with the greatest tendency toward the best breed the cross has been secured from. Cows with a male or bull type of head are rarely good milkers. The head should be refined, neck thin, forequarters wide, square and robust, with deep, broad thighs.

Destroying Quack Grass.

I often see directions given for killing out quack grass, but I think they are all inferior to the method that I employ. I would never try to drag out the roots with harrow or rake, because not all of the roots will be gathered and those left will soon fill the soil again. The pest can most easily be killed right where it is, the roots furnishing an abundance of plant food, by using a double action cut-away harrow. Now, please don't think that any kind of a harrow will do, because it will not. If you rely on any except the one I have mentioned you will be disappointed. I have used one to destroy quack grass many times, and am sure of what I am writing. If you plow before using the harrow, run the plow shallow—just deep enough to turn over the quack roots, bottom side up; let lay thus for a week and then go over the field with the double action cutaway harrow; then after a few days repeat the harrowing and keep at it, going over the field at intervals of a few days until the pest is all destroyed. It is no use to think that if the field be gone over, perhaps a dozen times in one day, the quack will be killed, for the sun, as well as the harrow, must get in its work. The way to do is to go over the field once, then wait a few days for the roots to dry and repeat the operation. By being thorough in this the grass can be destroyed and a crop grown the same year if commenced early in the spring.—F. H. Dow in Agricultural Epitomist.

Grain Smuts.

A dangerous parasite of many of the cereal plants is the fungus that produces in the grain or head what is known as smut. There are several well known kinds of smut, each of which is caused by a distinct species of the fungus.

The greatest loss from smuts in this country is from the stinking smut of wheat and the loose smut of oats. A considerable loss is also due to the loose smuts of barley and wheat, which are more difficult to control and prevent. They are widely distributed, and though they occur usually in small quantities the damage in the aggregate is large. They often are entirely unnoticed on account of their earliness and the absence of any conspicuous sign of them at harvest time.

The stinking smut of wheat transforms only the kernels into smut balls which do not break until the wheat is threshed and often remain intact in the threshed grain. The loose smuts of barley, on the other hand, early discharge their spores, which are blown off by the wind as soon as the smutted head comes out of the leaf sheath; they infect the plant in the flowering stage and enter the embryo inside the ovary before the latter ripens into seed. An infected seed developes a smutted plant the following year.

The most successful method thus far found for preventing these smuts is a hot-water treatment of the seed. This treatment is described in Bureau of Plant Industry bulletin 152, entitled "The Loose Smuts of Barley and Wheat," recently issued by the United States Department of Agriculture. The bulletin is a report of recent researches into the life histories of these smuts and the determination of methods for their prevention.

Value of Skim Milk for Hens.

Systematic tests made by the West Virginia Experiment Station prove that skim milk is a valuable food for laying hens.

The first test covered 122 days. The twenty-two hens fed the skim milk laid 1,244 eggs, as compared with 996 laid by twenty-two hens fed a mesh wet with water.

In another test sixty hens fed skim milk laid 862 eggs in thirty-seven days, as compared with 632 eggs laid by a similar lot fed no milk.

Other tests gave about the same comparative results.

The conductors of these experiments estimate under prevailing conditions, with eggs selling at 20 to 25 cents a dozen, that the skim milk had a feeding value of 1½ to 2 cents a quart.

Care of Milk Vessels.

The sooner the milk utensils and separator are washed after use the easier it is done and the less danger there is of their becoming foul. To do this properly you need three waters. First, use a lukewarm water to remove all the milk. Second, use water a little warmer, into which should be thrown a handful of salsoda or a few drops of concentrated lye. Third, use an abundance of boiling water, which must penetrate every nook and corner and remain long enough to destroy every germ that may still be looking for a home.

Fruit Tree Borers.

The Ohio Experiment Station recommends as a treatment for killing peach and plum tree borers, 3 pounds of naphtha soap emulsified by boiling in three gallons of water; while hot add one gallon of carbolineum avenarius, which can be obtained through dealers in market gardeners' and fruit growers' supplies. This can best be mixed by the use of a force pump. When the soap solution and carbolineum are thoroughly mixed add four gallons of water and apply with a spray pump, being careful to protect hands and face when using.

They'll Want the Wood.

The forest famine is not to be immediate, said Mr. Pinchot at Denver. "We have forests in plenty for the present generation, and perhaps for the next, but in the years to come there will be famine a-plenty if we don't at this time take the stitch in time."