

His Heart's Desire

By SIR WALTER BESANT

CHAPTER XXI.

"Quick, David, quick!" cried the old man, eagerly. "Let us get to work. Oh, you waste half the morning; let us get on. At this rate," he sighed, "we shall take months before I get back the property."

"There will be no trade this morning, uncle," David replied, standing in the doorway. It was a week after I had told him the truth. He had been turning it over in his mind in the interval.

"Why not? David, if you were nearly seventy you would be anxious to get on; you would not shilly-shally over a single bit of paper. Let us get on, David. Oh, you've got all the power now, and I am in your hands. I won't grumble, David. No, take your own time, my boy; take your own time."

The poor old man was strangely altered in four or five weeks, that he should thus humble himself before his nephew. But David had all the power so long as he had any of those coupons left.

"You little thought when I came here that I was going to give you so much trouble, did you, Uncle Daniel? You thought you had the whip hand over me always, didn't you? But you see, first the fall from your pony, then the loss of your papers, then the stroke, then my coming home and finding those papers—all part of the judgment—and now there's more to follow."

"What more? Oh, David, what more?" the helpless old man only groaned.

"To-day, uncle, I have come to talk about my aunt's will. Will Nethercote told me. You did not. You thought that as soon as our little business was finished I should go away and never come back any more. You thought you would keep the money, did you? Not so, uncle; not so!"

"I thought you would never find it out, David," Mr. Leighan confessed, with somewhat surprising candor. "I soon found that you knew nothing about it, and that you never got about and talk; and I was pretty certain that you would never find out. Well, now you know what difference does it make? You are no nearer the money."

"We shall see. My aunt might just as well have left it to me as to you. To be sure, I never thought she had half so much. She began with a thousand. She must have pinched and saved. She left it to Mary, on the condition of her marrying with your consent; and, if not, the money was to go to me. And if I was dead, the will said nothing. So you thought you could stick to the money. Uncle, you're a foxy one! You ought to be in the States, and thirty years younger. There you would find yourself at home, with plenty of opportunity. Well, I am wiser now than I was. And see now, uncle, I don't mean to go away until this question is settled. What are you going to do?"

"Why should I tell you?"

"Keep it to yourself, then. I will tell you what you thought you were going to do: I've worked it all out. First, if you let George and Mary get married before the law lets you take Sidcote you will lose Sidcote." He began, in his slow way, to tick off his points upon his fingers. "That's the first thing. After you have got Sidcote, you will be still loath to let the money go, and you will keep Mary waiting on. You think that I shall soon go. Then you will keep the money as long as you live. But suppose they were to marry without your consent, all the money comes to me—comes to me. That sticks, doesn't it? You can let them marry now—and you will lose Sidcote; you can let them marry after you have got Sidcote; and you will have to pay up; if you keep on refusing your consent, you can keep the money as long as you like—unless they marry without. Then you've got to give it to me. You've had a taste of me already."

He waited a little. His uncle said nothing, but watched him from under his long, white eyebrows—not contemptuously, as on the first interview after his return, but with the respect due to the strength of the situation.

"Very well, then; you would rather give that money to Mary than to me. But you would like to get Sidcote; you hate the thought of giving it to me, you intended to keep it yourself. Yet there is no way out of it if you want Sidcote. Perhaps you think you would give it to Mary, after you have got Sidcote. But suppose she marries before? Then you would be obliged to give it all to me."

"Go on, David; perhaps you are going to propose something."

"I have been thinking things over, uncle. You are getting old, you may die any day; then Mary would be free. It is true that she might marry to-morrow, in which case I should be entitled to everything. But I don't think she would be such a fool. If I were Mary, I should wait. You are seventy now, and you've lost the use of your legs. You can't last very long. I should wait, if I were Mary. Yes; it might be a year or two; it couldn't be longer."

His uncle heard without any emotion this argument in favor of his approaching demise—country people use plainness of speech about such matters—but he felt himself very far from dying, as masterful men always do up to the very end.

"Well, David, supposing that what you say is common sense, what next? If Mary marries at once she is a fool, and then I have you to reckon with. There is a good bit outstanding on the old account, and I don't suppose there would

be much coming to you when compound interest and all comes to be reckoned up."

"As for your outstanding accounts, we shall see when the time comes. And as for compound interest, it will be for you to pay that on my aunt's six thousand pounds."

"The interest went for the keep of Mary."

"I haven't heard that there's a word about that in the will. You've had her services as housekeeper for five years, and you've pocketed the interest. Way, I take it that you made 5 per cent. That's three hundred a year. There will be a beautiful day of reckoning, uncle. The sale of your coupons is nothing to it."

"You were going to make a proposal, David?"

"Buy me off, old man."

"Always buy—always buy!"

"To be sure. You've got to buy your own property back because I've come home. You've got to buy me out on the chance of the money coming to me. Please yourself. What do you say to buying me out at a thousand?"

"O thousand pounds?"

"Yes, Uncle Daniel, a thousand pounds. And a very moderate figure, too. Consider, if they were to get married, you'll make five thousand by the bargain, not to speak of the interest. If they don't you'll have the satisfaction of giving your nephew a few thousand pounds back out of the property you've robbed him of."

"A thousand pounds! I'll think it over."

CHAPTER XXII.

Mary went to plead with David for her uncle. He was in the deserted farmyard of Berry, with its tumble-down buildings. He leaned against the gate, thinking always of the fields he had lost, and the way in which they had been taken from him. Of course his first thought was to get out of her way.

"Don't run away, David," she said; "I came to talk with you."

"Well, come through the gate then, Mary. Will you talk in the cottage, or will you talk here?"

"Let us stay outside—here in the shade, David. When will you cease to worry your uncle?"

"Did he tell you that I worry him? Has he been complaining?"

"No. He even denies that you have any share in the new trouble that seems to have fallen upon him. But I know that it is caused by you. After every one of your morning visits he is miserable. Every day he grows more nervous and more irritable. He sheds tears when he is alone. I am quite sure that you are the cause of his trouble."

"Well, Mary, perhaps you are right. I may be the cause of it. Perhaps I may be the cause of a good deal more trouble than I have done."

"Oh! David, think—he is an old man; he is afflicted with paralysis; you are hastening his end. What good will it do to you if you worry him into his grave? Will that restore the past? Will that make you what you used to be?"

"Nay, that it will not do. But when I see him at my mercy, crying for pity, I think of the day when I came to ask him to lend me a poor fifty pounds, with which to try my luck in Canada, and he laughed me in the face."

"Well, then, David, does it do you any good to remember that day? Let the past be dead, David, and live for the future."

"You don't know what you are saying, Mary. What should you know about it? You are only a girl!"—he spoke roughly and rudely, but not unkindly—"what do you know? Let the past be dead. Why, all the world is crying because the past won't die. I only wish the past would die." Here, it seems to me, David hit upon a profound truth; for very nearly all the world—not quite—it would be, unhappily, far better if the past would die. "If the past should die, Mary, I should forget that I was once a substantial man, who sat respected at the market ordinary, rode my own horse, and farmed my own land. I should forget that I had to go away from my native place and take ship with the lowest emigrants. I should forget—Mary," he whispered, "I can trust you—I have told no one else—I should forget that I had been in prison—yes, in prison—"

"David!" She shrank from him, but recovered, and laid her hand softly upon his.

"Yes; in prison. And now I am no longer fit to sit and talk with George and you. But I am fit to talk with your uncle, because, bad as I am, he is worse."

"But if he is, David, forgive him."

"I will worry him," said David, "as long as I can. I will never spare him. I've got another—But never mind. Oh! when you are gone, Mary, he shall have a life that he little dreams of now!"

"David! It is terrible. Can nothing move you?"

"Nothing, Mary; not even you. And mind you, don't try to put yourself between him and me, because he won't stand it. It isn't me that won't stand it, because I don't greatly care who knows; but it's him. He likes me to come; he watches for me and waits for me, though he knows that when I am gone he will turn and wriggle in his chair, and cry and curse. Yet he wants me back. Say no more about it, Mary."

It was indeed useless to try further

persuasions. Mary was silent. Her cousin, worked up by his wrath, stood before her with purple cheeks and flaming eyes.

"I must go away soon," she said. "I cannot let George go out into the world without any one. And then I must leave him—alone."

"Yes; but he will have me," said David, grimly.

"Well, I have said what I came to say, David, and I have done no good. If you would only forget."

"I cannot forget. Stay, Mary; one thing I must say. Remember afterward that I said it in time. Then, perhaps, you'll think that if it hadn't been for him I might have been a different man."

"What is it, David?"

"It is this. His face softened the moment he ceased to think upon his wrongs. It was but the wreck of a face which had once been handsome and full of hope; but it was better and healthier to look upon than the face black with revenge. 'Will tell me that you are going to marry George without your uncle's consent!'"

"Yes."

"You know that he must then give me the whole of my aunt's money?"

"Yes."

"Very well, Mary. I am fooling him. Never mind how. But you shall not be wronged. You shall have all your fortune. Marry George without any fear. Remember—you shall not be wronged! I am as bad as you like, but I will not rob you, Mary; I will not rob you!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was heard in the office of the paper which had secured my services that there was to be held a special meeting, on an evening early in October, of the Royal Geographical Society, in order to hear a paper read by a German traveler recently arrived in Europe, after a lengthened stay in the South Sea Islands.

At the hour of eight the chairman entered with his captive traveler. The latter, certainly one of the tallest and finest men I have ever beheld, took his place in front of his maps, and began, after the usual introduction, to read his paper.

After this paper was read, the usual irrepressible persons got up and began to discuss. At this point I retired to add a few things to my article and hand it in. I then repaired to the Savage Club, which at 11 o'clock begins to be a cheerful place. Here I found, in fact, an animated circle, and among them my friend of the R. G. S., the Baron Sergius von Holstein, who had been brought by one of the members.

It is always interesting to meet with men who have been on desert islands, or lived among cannibals. It is enough for some people only to gaze upon such a man. For our part, at the Savage, we found the baron not only an interesting person, but also a singularly amusing companion, and brimful of anecdotes and stories of all kinds.

We talked till late. At about three in the morning, when we had gone half round the world with him, he told us a very singular and surprising story.

He had not been the only European on a certain island all the time, he said. For six months or so he had a companion in the shape of a poor fellow—an Englishman—who had been washed ashore upon a piece of timber. The natives were going to spear this human jetsam, when he interfered and saved him, and continued to protect him until he was able to get him off the island in a vessel which came a blackbirding. "This fellow," said the baron, "was the most intolerable creature in existence. Earlier in his existence he had committed a murder, and during the whole of his stay on the island he was suffering agonies of remorse; all day long he wept and groaned, and was afraid to leave me for fear of being speared. At night he would not sleep at a distance of more than a foot or so from me for fear. And he was always visited every night by the ghost of the respectable uncle whom he had slain."

"Did you see the ghost?"

"No, nor did I hear his voice. Yet it spent the best part of the night in abusing the poor man, and he in answering it with prayers and protestations. As for revenge, I suppose no other murdered man ever took so much out of his murderer. Well, it was tedious. At length my Englishman declared that he desired nothing so much as to get away from the island, and give himself up to justice. If he could only make his way to Australia and then get a passage to England, he would give himself up and confess the whole truth."

"A lively companion."

"Yes. But to look at him you would think him a dull, heavy fellow, who seemed to have no spirit for such a desperate deed. Well, I got him away at length, and was left happy at last and alone. Before he went, however, I wrote down, at his request, a statement of the murder; a confession, in fact, which he and I witnessed. I warned him that I should make any use of it that I thought fit. As yet I have done nothing with it; and as I dare say he is dead by this time, I do not see why I should not tear it up. Here it is, however, written in my old note book."

(To be continued.)

A Gay Deceiver.

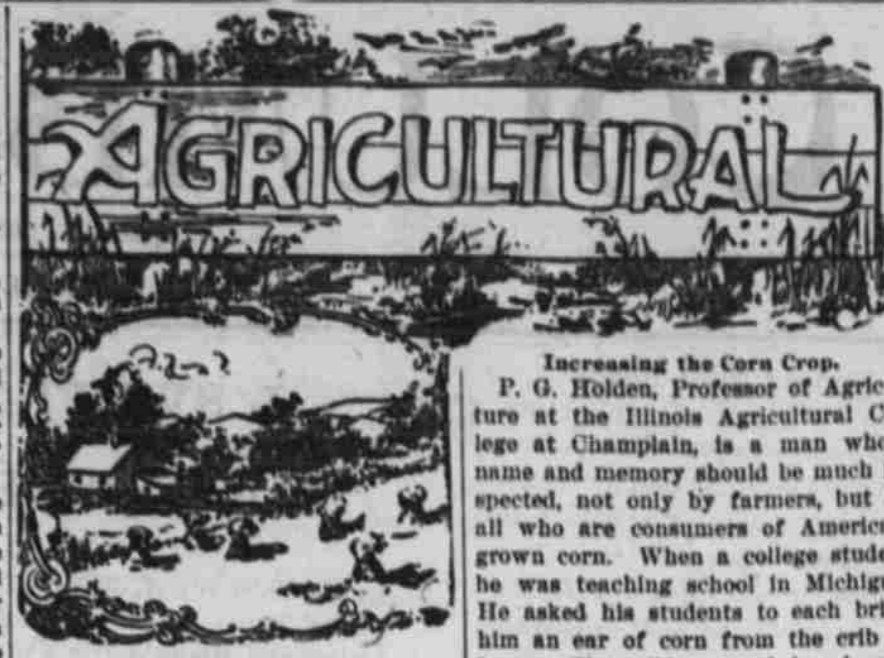
"George," said the bride of a week, "didn't you promise me that you would give up smoking the day I married you?"

"That's what I did," replied George.

"And now," she continued, "I find you puffing a cigar, just as though I were not in existence. What explanation have you to offer?"

"Well, I kept my promise all right," answered the husband. "I didn't smoke a single cigar on our wedding day."

If there be any truer measure of a man than by what he does, it must be by what he gives.—South.

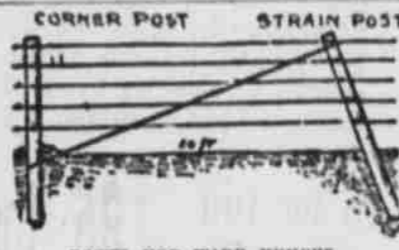


Increasing the Corn Crop.

P. G. Holden, Professor of Agriculture at the Illinois Agricultural College at Champaign, is a man whose name and memory should be much respected, not only by farmers, but by all who are consumers of American-grown corn. When a college student he was teaching school in Michigan. He asked his students to each bring him an ear of corn from the crib at home. They did so, and he showed them the different grades, from very good to very poor. Then he asked each one to plant three seeds from the best ear in a box, and water it. The result was an excellent crop of large, well-filled ears. The parents became interested, and soon began to plant only the best corn for seed, much to the advantage of their crop. After he went to Illinois, he began to talk the benefits of selected corn for seed to the farmers, and soon not only were most of them converted to his ideas, but the farmers of Iowa and Missouri were looking for better seed. Later on he became director of a farm near Bloomington, where they usually planted twenty thousand acres of corn, with an average yield up to that time of forty to fifty bushels per acre. The first year he increased the yield by ten thousand bushels above the best previous season. On some acres he brought the products up to seventy bushels per acre. This year he had a special train from which to talk about corn to the farmers of Iowa, and if we have this year the largest crop of corn ever grown in the United States, Professor Holden is entitled to the credit of having added millions of those bushels to the crop by his advocacy of the doctrine of using only the best seed.

Home-Made Corn Cutter.

This idea of a corn cutter comes from Australia where the machine is used in harvesting sugar cane and sorghum, as well as corn. The implement has been tried by a number of farmers in this country and pronounced a success. It is made by bolting the blade of a strong heavy scythe to a sledge or sled, as shown in the illustration. A rod of wrought iron about one inch in diameter is



PORTS FOR WIRE FENCES

At the ground, I run wires to the top of the strain post, and stretch these wires tight. This puts most of the strain on the strain post, and all the strain placed on the corner post comes at its bottom. Again, the strain post is not put into the ground straight, but leans to the corner. The effect of this is that the strain tends to force it deeper into the ground, instead of drawing it out. It will be found easier to put in a good corner post and two strain posts than to put in one corner post in the way often directed. I show the plan in sketch sent herewith. It will be best first to stretch the wires around the strain post, making them secure to it, and then to complete the fence by building a short fence at the corner. Of course, such care is not needed for short lines of fencing.

Wagon for Fruit Barrels.

Professor Waugh, of Massachusetts, says in a report: In handling the fruit in the orchard, between the trees and the storage-room, or later between the storage and the shipping station, some suitable wagon ought to be provided. A stone boat is sometimes used and is not the worst thing that could be found, especially for short hauls and small loads. It is better, however, to have one of the low-down wagons made especially for handling fruit. In the illustration one is shown as it was actually made up at home. Some sills were hung by



WAGON FOR HANDLING FRUIT.

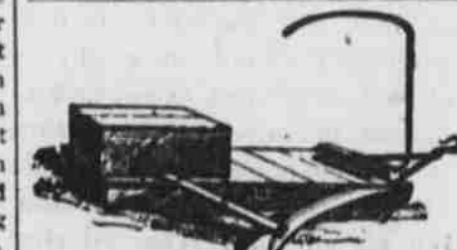
strap irons from the front and rear axles of a common wagon frame, and on these some boards were laid, making a floor for carrying the barrels. Handling barrels of apples in and out of the common high wagon is hard and expensive labor, and it is apt to damage the fruit.

The Dairy Barn.

The dairy barn, as built in the near future, may not have so much loft room, but instead a number of structures in the form of silos, but not air tight or so solid. Into these several months' or the entire winter's supply of roughage may be cut.—Inland Farmer.

"Worming" the Peach Trees.

"Worming" the trees to destroy the peach borer is in the routine of the peach grower, and the present is the season for it, provided precautions have not yet been taken earlier to make it unnecessary. But with every precaution examination is needed to find out if the vigilance was to no purpose. Whether the one or the other, now is the season for it. The external evidence of the presence of the peach borer is the gum exuded by the tree and the sawdust.



HOME-MADE CORN CUTTER.

bent to former follower, as shown. One of these machines is expected to cut about 2½ acres per day. After cutting, the crop is less easily handled than when cut by hand, but the total saving in labor is considerable.

Wire Chicken-Catcher.

A chicken-catcher is needed on many farms which can be made from No. 8 wire. Five feet of wire will be long enough. Bend a loop at one end for a handle, with a shepherd's crook at the other end, bending the crook small enough, of course, to hook around the leg of a chicken while it is eating. If the hook is made the least bit flaring, but closed up about a half inch, it will hold the chicken securely by the foot. This is the best way to catch a chicken when wanted on short notice. Many farmers train a dog to catch chickens, but this causes a commotion among the fowls and is one way to make them wild. Uneasy, frightened fowls are not thrifty, like quiet, contented birds.

Pulverizing the Soil.

Considering the pulverizing of the clods that turn up in the most heavy land after plowing, prevention is the best method. If the field is well drained and not plowed when wet, there may be no clods. It will, however, take two or three seasons to thoroughly fine the soil that has been injured by previous mismanagement. Fall or winter plowing, turning the land in ridges and leaving it as rough as possible, so as to expose the moist surface to the frost, will do the work, but unless there are underdrains to carry off the water the plowing may do as much harm as good.

Large Requirements of Celery.

Celery grows best in a soil of high humus content, is a great user of water and a large consumer of plant food. Quality suffers when there is a lack of ample food and drink, the crisp and sweet qualities giving way to stringiness and bitterness.

Half the secret of keeping a pleasure garden in proper condition consists in duly regarding the little things that ought to be done and doing all work at the right time.