

# The Fence And After

## A Man and a Girl and Philosophy

By BARRY PRESTON

Across the fields, through the golden sunshine of the Indian summer morning, strode Arthur Gray, a look of absorbed abstraction upon his intellectual brow and three heavy tomes of German philosophy beneath his arms.

Behind him on the terrace Mrs. Renwick and her husband watched his retreat. Mrs. Renwick's face was clouded by an impatient frown. Tom Renwick was grinning sardonically.

"I can't understand it," Mrs. Renwick complained. "I invited all these young people solely on his account. I picked out only the deep ones of our acquaintance, the Taylor girls and Miss Frayne and Charlotte Brand."

"They know all about the ego and the subconscious self and all that sort of thing. They could talk it to him by the hour. And what does he do? Goes off every morning with his musty books and stays all day by himself. I call it downright indelicacy in him."

Her big, easy-going, happy-go-lucky husband laughed. "My dear Agatha," said he, "this comes of harboring a genius in our midst, a genius we can never hope to understand. Now, if he could talk horse or shoot or get a bit more speed out of a road car than it was ever intended to show we could give him the time of his life. But a philosopher, dropped here among our un-intellectual selves—dear heavens!"

He threw out his hands in a gesture of deprecation and made a wry face.

"But he is a coming man," Mrs. Renwick began.

Tom Renwick's grin broadened.

"He seems to be a coming man just at present," he remarked, with a bob of his head in the direction of the stoop-shouldered figure trudging across the fields. "It's desolation, pure and simple. Your intellectual maidens corralled here must evidently philosophize without your lion to inspire them."

"Come on! Let's round 'em up and give 'em a whirl in the road cars up to the top of Bald hill and back. That will take their minds up for the time being at least."

"It's the last time I'll ever try to entertain a genius," Mrs. Renwick declared flatly, "even if the said genius is my cousin and has done the family proud."

"Amen! I'm with you there," said Tom heartily as he turned from the terrace and strode off toward the garage.

In the meantime Arthur Gray, quite oblivious to this criticism of his actions, tramped down the field, climbed a stone wall into an orchard, where the trees were deep laden with their wealth of fruit, and, selecting a corner where the mottled shadows were most inviting, settled himself comfortably on the ground, opened one of the ponderous volumes and was soon lost in the abstruse speculations of its author.

He read on in absorbed fashion, now pausing to thoroughly digest some choice morsel, now frowningly noting upon the margin his own opinion of the text at that point. It was an ideally quiet place in which to pursue his research.

But suddenly the quiet was rudely shattered. Just beyond the orchard came the pounding of rapid hoof beats.

A girl's voice urging forward her mount rang through the still air. There was the swish of a hunting crop, a loud command, "Up, Rajah!" Then the sound of hoofs suddenly ceased.

A masculine voice said, "He'll never take it, ma'am!"

And the girl's voice replied, with a note of obstinacy in it, "He'll stay here until he does!"

Gray arose. He walked to the edge of the orchard and looked around. On the smooth turf of the adjoining field a girl—a wonderfully pretty girl—sat on a horse, which she had evidently been trying to take the fence just before her.

A little distance to the rear a trim, silent groom upon another horse impassively watched the proceedings.

Even as Gray watched them the girl wheeled her horse and galloped away from the fence. Then she turned him, touching him lightly with the crop, and rode full tilt for the fence again.

But, arrived at the fence, the horse refused to jump. The girl gave a little cry of annoyance.

"Silly Rajah!" she said. "You should be ashamed of yourself. You could take it easily. I know you could. Now, then, once more!"

Again she wheeled the horse and cantered away, only to turn him and ride for the fence once more.

Gray in his interest quite forgot himself. He vaulted the low wall that separated the orchard from the field and ran forward.

"Don't try it!" he cried warningly. "It's too high! He'll never do it in the world!"

The girl turned to look at him coldly. Then she smiled.

"Oh, yes, he will!" said she. "All he needs is a little confidence."

"Don't try again," said he.

She raised her eyebrows. "I can't stop now," said she. "He must go over that fence now that he knows it is what I expect of him."

"Then let me put him to it," said he.

The girl looked surprised. "Aren't you the philosopher friend of the Renwicks?" she asked.

"I am," he confessed. Involuntarily he straightened his stooping shoulders. "But even philosophers sometimes ride," said he. "I'd like to put him to the fence if you don't mind."

Instantly the girl slid from the saddle.

"Do so by all means," she suggested. "I've been trying it all the morning, and I confess I'm beginning to doubt my ultimate success with him."

Gray looked at her pretty flushed face and her sparkling eyes.

"And if I succeed what reward do I get?" he inquired boldly.

The girl laughed. "You may have a canter with me up to Bald hill and back," said she.

Gray sprang into the saddle. A man in a sidesaddle is not a particularly graceful figure. But there was a light in his eyes and a general determination in his whole bearing that went far toward making up for his lack of grace.

Three times he put the horse to the fence, each time with no success. The fourth time he plied the crop freely.

They reached the fence, and the big horse rose lightly, cleared the top bar by a good two feet and landed easily on the other side.

"Bravo!" cried the girl. "Splendid! Splendid! Splendid!" And even the groom ventured an involuntary "Well done, sir!"

"And now," said Gray, his eyes glowing with eager light, "I shall claim that canter with you. Shall we go now?"

He slipped from the saddle and helped her to mount.

"You will take Peter's horse," she said, turning to the groom.

"Come on!"

Up the field they galloped gaily together, saving into the road and headed for Bald hill. Back in the orchard a woodpecker chased a nimble grasshopper over the pages of a work of German philosophy.

Just as they reached the bend near the summit of the hill they encountered Renwick and his party in the two road cars coming down the road.

Mrs. Renwick stared in wonder. Her husband chuckled openly.

Gray lifted his hat, utterly without embarrassment, and with the girl at his side, went on up the hill, both in high spirits.

"To think of it!" exclaimed Mrs. Renwick some two weeks later. "Arthur engaged to that Carlton girl! Why, she can't draw a breath without talking horse, and that's all she can talk! She doesn't know a thing about philosophy."

Renwick looked out the French window to the drive beyond, where Gray was helping a decidedly pretty young woman to her horse.

"For my part, Agatha," said he, with deep conviction, "I am mightily rejoiced. It shows that for all his intellect he has a decidedly human streak in him!"

Eyes With Double Pupils.

Cicero says that "the glance of all women with the double pupil in the eye is noxious, blighting and withering." Cadmus tells us that such persons would not draw. Still others say that if they did draw the body would never sink, neither would it decay. They could cure the disease of the chest—consumption—by rubbing their perspiration on the affected parts of the individual, and in case the double pupils were red instead of black they could cure the leprosy and the blind. So thought the ancients.

Church of St. Sophia.

Mohammedans reverence Constantinople next to Mecca, and St. Sophia, or the "Church of the Divine Wisdom," holds first rank in the affections of the faithful.

Commenced in the year 532 A. D. on the site of several successive Christian churches of the same name, no fewer than 10,000 workmen are said to have been employed upon its construction, under the direction of 100 master builders.

## THIRTY DAYS IN FEBRUARY.

Yes, It Is Possible, and This Writer Explains Exactly How.

Leap year never comes oftener than once in four years, and sometimes only once in eight years, so February usually has to be content with exactly four weeks and not a day over. Calendars never give more than twenty-nine days to the second month of the year, and it seems as if the whole world must believe that February never can have more than twenty-nine days.

But it can. It can have thirty. I know enough people to fill a large schoolhouse, each of whom has lived thirty days in February. Among these people are many distinguished army and navy officers, several statesmen and financiers, engineers, schoolteachers and other famous folk.

I know these people as fellow passengers. We were together on board ship coming from Yokohama, Japan, to Honolulu, and on to San Francisco. We were crossing from the eastern hemisphere into the western, out on the Pacific ocean, where, according to the map, lies the one hundred and eightieth meridian, just halfway around the world from Greenwich, England.

All school children know that it is from the famous observatory at Greenwich that people who make geographies measure degrees of longitude or distances east and west.

So we on the opposite side of the earth from Greenwich were sailing or steaming east toward the sunrise. Now, it is the custom of the masters of vessels crossing the Pacific ocean to do a curious thing. Both the thing they do and the way they do it are curious, for what they do going east is directly the opposite of what they do if they are going west, though they do it at the same place. As most of you know, to keep their calendar dates right they drop a day out of their lives and out of the lives of everybody on board the ship, passengers and crew alike, if they are going west, but they add a day to the lives of every one and give each person on board an extra day to live if they are going east. Sea captains are the only persons who can do this, and they can do it only on the Pacific ocean.

By common consent of seagoing peoples the one hundred and eightieth meridian, on the opposite side of the world from Greenwich, is the line—quite an imaginary line, of course—where the dates are adjusted. Our good ship happened to come to this line on Feb. 29. As we were going east from Yokohama to Honolulu, there was nothing to do but write in our diaries Feb. 30.

But when would a lady born on board that day have another "birthday"?—C. I. Brownell, F. R. G. S., in St. Nicholas.

Winter Home of Deer.

The winter home of the American red deer is very interesting. When the snow begins to fall, the leader of the herd guides them to some sheltered spot where provisions are plentiful. Here as the snow falls they pack it down, tramping out a considerable space, while about them the snow mounts higher and higher until they cannot get out if they would. From the main opening, or "yard," as it is called, tramped out paths lead to the nearby trees and shrubbery which supply them with food. In this way they manage to pass the winter in comparative peace and safety.—St. Nicholas.

Seismic Waves.

Years before the genius of the Japanese gave birth to the science of seismology a very rough record of a Scotch earthquake was obtained at Combe by means of a basin of treacle. The basin was about half full of treacle, and by noticing the magnitude and direction of the treacle marks made on the inside when the "spoke" disturbed its normal level a fair approximation was obtained as to the magnitude and movement of the seismic waves which caused the earth disturbance.—London Chronicle.

Substantial Meal.

The pythons at the zoo are dainty creatures. Nothing but the choicest and tenderest of rabbits will satisfy them. Sometimes, however, they get a bit sick of rabbit week in and week out, and then they will eat anything that strikes their fancy. One, for instance, suddenly took a fancy to its blanket, and, what's more, ate it.—Youth's Companion.

A Pious Wish.

It was in a city hospital that a man refused to undergo an operation for appendicitis until his minister could be present.

"What do you want the minister here for?" asked the surgeon.

"Because I want to be opened with prayer," was the reply.—New York Tribune.

## CLEVER FRIGATE BIRDS.

Their Fish Catching Feats as Seen by Colonel Roosevelt.

Man-of-war birds are the most wonderful fliers in the world. No other bird has such an expanse of wing in proportion to the body weight. No other bird of its size seems so absolutely at home in the air. Frigate birds, as they are also called, hardly ever light on the water, yet they are sometimes seen in mid-ocean. But they like to live in companies near some coast. They have very long tails, usually carried closed, looking like a marlin-spike, but at times open, like a great pair of scissors, in the course of their indescribably graceful aerial evolutions.

We saw them soaring for hours at a time, sometimes to all seeming absolutely motionless as they faced the wind. They sometimes caught fish for themselves, just rippling the water to seize surface swimmers or pouncing with startling speed on any fish which for a moment leaped into the air to avoid another shape of ravenous death below. If the frigate bird caught the fish transversely it rose, dropped its prey and seized it again by the head before it struck the water.

But it also obtained its food in less honorable fashion, by robbing other birds. The pelicans were plundered by all their fish eating neighbors, even the big terns, but the man-of-war bird robbed the robbers. We saw three chase a royal tern, a very strong flier. The tern towered, ascending so high we could hardly see it, but in great spirals its pursuers rose still faster until one was above it, and then the tern dropped the fish, which was snatched in mid-air by one of the bandits.

Captain Sprinkle had found these frigate birds breeding on one of the islands the previous year, each nest being placed in a bush and containing two eggs. We visited the island, big birds—the old males jet black, the females with white breasts, the young males with white heads—were there in numbers, perched on the bushes and rising at our approach. But there were no nests, and, although we found one fresh egg, it was evidently a case of sporadic laying, having nothing to do with home building.—From "The Bird Refuges of Louisiana," by Theodore Roosevelt, in Scribner's.

Hemp Eaters.

The drug hashish or Indian hemp, for which Egyptians will pay almost any price, has given us our word "assassin." These desperadoes formed originally a secret society in Persia in the eleventh century, members of which were under a vow of blind obedience to their chief. They were called upon to perpetrate the most atrocious deeds, and before these ruffians were sent out to perform their gruesome tasks they were given hashish, by which they were thrown into a kind of ecstasy or intoxication; hence they were called "hashishim," meaning the hemp eaters. The word became part of western language, but was changed into "assassins."—London Chronicle.

Dreams.

The London Observer explains the causes for the different kinds of dreams which we are wont to experience, as direct results of physical conditions which surround us at the time. Thus, when we dream of appearing in company attired in insufficient clothing, it is due to the fact that at that time we are not possessed of our usual day attire. We often dream of flying through space, which comes from the fact that we are sensible of no pressure when lying in bed. External causes, such as noises, etc., may also be responsible for the character of our dreams by exciting the subconscious mind.

Bad Handwriting.

Sometimes the worst of handwriting becomes intelligible when one grasps the rules, for a man's script—particularly an author's—is frequently made difficult chiefly by his deliberate or unconscious inversion of the accepted rules of calligraphy. Henry Ward Beecher had a daughter who acted as copyist, and she read him with ease simply by remembering three principles—that in her father's manuscript no dotted letter was meant for an "i," no crossed letter stood for "t," and that no capital letter ever began a sentence.—Indianapolis News.

Vogue of the Mirror.

Only since the early part of the sixteenth century have mirrors become articles of household furniture and decoration. Previous to that time—from the twelfth to the end of the fifteenth century—pocket mirrors, or small hand mirrors carried at the girdle, were indispensable adjuncts to ladies' toilets. The pocket mirrors consisted of small circular plaques of polished metal fixed in a shallow circular box covered with a lid.

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