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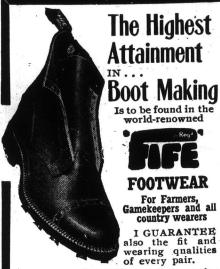
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bed he had been pruning. He had cut back the rose trees, buds and all, severely, leaving only the upright stick. This he explained to me was to give them strength. He had pruned everything-apples, pears, plums, raspberries; and the twigs with the green fru. on them, made a handsome show on the rubbish heap. In fact his rubbish heap was his specialty, and seemed to be the end and aim of his system. It had grown enormously since his arrival, so much so, that he had established branch rubbish heaps at all corners of the garden. They were beginning to dwarf the garden by their proportions.

whisper, that this was more or less the wrong time of the year for pruning, and I asked him.

"Why bless yer," he replied; "that was just whot his ludship was most pleased at. He used to say to me, John, he used to say, one thing I will say and maintain agen heverybody—you do proon. You don't skulk it, like other gardeners does-that I will say."

"Let me see," I said; "what was his lordship's name?"

"Lord Elpus," he replied. "Where was his place?"

"Why that's jest it. P'raps you knows Guildford."

"Yes," I said, "I know Guildford very well." "Ar-well-ar-it weren't at Guild-

ford," said my gardener. "Praps you might know Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham, and all o' them parts. Well it laid right atween them, as it did, as you might say, as the crow flies. When you was a-standin' with your back to Bristol it was right in front of you o' your left 'and, down in the valley, not arf a



I rummaged my memory, but could not localise the spot, but I confess my memory is defective.

I had to own, notwithstanding my great faith in his lordship's gardener, that I was a good deal disappointed with my garden that summer; in fact, that beastly Dibbler, frequently looked over the fence and grinned. His rose trees were a picture of blooms and his fruit trees bore a splendid crop; while mine were mere sticks. And my wife, too—but no my feelings are still too tender, I must draw a veil over our useless recriminations.

I remonstrated with my gardener, expressing a belief that his system of pruning off the twigs with the fruit on was partially responsible for our failure.

"It's this way," he said; "it ud ha bin allright but for that there blight—it's that there west wind as always brings it. Them trees should ha' made new branches and fruit-far stronger than wot was cut orf—in about a week arter, honly that there blight ketch'd 'em jest at the wrong moment, as you might

And he retired to his bed to look after the bottle of "patient manoor," no doubt to see whether that would bring the fruit on again.

Keenness of observation was not one of the strong points of my new gardener. I had been away from home for about a fortnight, and returned. The roses and palm trees were surrounded by a forest of suckers three feet high; half a dozen recently planted trees had blown down, and lay across the path; a few of the plants had been blown out of the window boxes; the grass was a foot high and seeding; and the flower border was buried in flowering

I led my gardener round, and pointed out these unconsidered trifles.

He shaded his eyes and looked closely at the tall suckers, and then a great light of cognition came into his eyes, showing that he had noticed them.

"Well, now, bless my soul, they are suckers, I do believe!" he said cheer-"Must ha' come up ther' when fully. my back was turned."

Then I gently led him to the fallen trees, which lay across the path. By a great effort of sight and deduction, he recognized those too.

"Why, now you come to speak about it, as one might say, they do seem to It dimly came to me, like a far off ha' blown down. I'll tell you what-it must ha' been that there wind. To think o' them a doin' it, and me a keepin' my eye about that watchful! That's jest what his ludship used to say to me. 'John,' he'd say, jest as yer might yerself, 'there's one thing I will say-yer do keep yer eyes about yer, and spots what's agoin' hon."

"What was his lordship's name," I asked.

"Lord Luvus," he said; "an' as good a himployer as hever."

And why did you say you left?" "Died, he did; 'is ludship did-fell orf a 'ors 'untin, and was carried into the 'ouse, an' honly 'ad jest time to send for me, as was a pottin' hup hasperren-

grass, and he sez to me, he sez, as it might be you, only a layin' on the sofer, 'John,' sez he, 'you've been a faithful gardner to me, so you 'ave, and I'm sorry we're partin'; and 'eres a 'undred pound,' he sez; an' then they buried

"And how long did you say you'd been with him?"

"Forty-five year to a day, an' afore that with a relative of 'isn—as 'ead gardner, with forty-five men and boys hunder me. Ar, that was a gardin, that was! Forty-five acres fruit—an' jest the same o' flowers—and forty-five glass ouses, each forty-five feet long-

"And how long were you at that place?"

"Forty-five year to a day." "But you must be a great deal older

than you look." "Forty-five years—that's my age. An' if you guessed it at that, you'd jest

I reflected some time over the facts which he had laid before me. I am not quick of thought; but it gradually dawned upon me that there were dis-

crepancies somewhere. Then it occurred to me that, whereas some weeks ago his experiences had all run in thirty-fives, they now ran in forty-fives; and this appeared oddalthough, of course, strange coincidences are always happening. But the thing

that puzzled me most was the fact of his having remained two distinct periods of forty-five years with those two -but there, I never like to suspect people on slight provocation. This tin bottle of "patient manoor," which he always had by him, and which

I had always observed to smell so strongly of rum, came more and more in evidence as time wore on. At all hours of the day I came upon him test-ing that "patient manoor"—"to see if it was the right strength: 'cos one 'as to be pertickler," as he explained.

It was some time before it occurred

to me to connect this circumstance in a vague way with his marked unsteadiness among the sweet peas; in fact, it was not until all these plants had been trodden into a kind of weed heap, and I found him sitting in the midst of a great clump of sweet peas as in a

He seemed unwilling to rise, and when I asked him whether anything was the matter, he murmured something about 'that there blight." The tin bottle of ratient manoor" lay by his side with

the cork out, gently dripping. Now when he had first come I had handed him a beautiful lot of begonia tubers and young dahlias to plant out; I had always been proud of my show of bedding begonias, and my rival Dibbler had never been able to approach it, and had ever gnashed his teeth with envy.

But this season I could not find a single begonia, out of my hundreds,

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