

"I'm slow by nature, but I'm sure. I am to live, rent free"—that was his own addition—"in the farmhouse. That's the first thing. I'm slow, but when I tackle a thing, I do tackle that thing. I am to sell the lease for a consideration." That was also his own addition.

"Not at all," said Alan. "You will not sell the lease; you will give it to me, to escape bankruptcy."

Mr. Bostock made a face. Nobody likes the ugly word bankruptcy.

"Well," he said, "you will have your joke, Mr. Dunlop. We'll say that I surrender the lease, not sell it. But I am to get something, I suppose. I am to give up the lease, am I? And then I am to be bailiff. On a celery. And what might be your opinion of the celery that I should be worth as a bailiff to this farm?"

"I have hardly thought about it," said Alan. Of course, a hundred a year would have been plenty for such a man. "But we might begin with two hundred."

"And fifty, if you please, Mr. Dunlop," said Mr. Bostock firmly. "And then we shall be going dirt cheap—dirt cheap. Two hundred and fifty, or three hundred. I think I ought to say a celery of four hundred. But, knowing you and your family as I do know you and your family, and having been a tenant for a many years, and my wife once a lady's maid to her ladyship, and all makes one inclined to cut down the figure."

"We will say, then, two hundred and fifty," said Alan. He was accustomed to make this sort of compromise, and thought it showed the prudence of a business man. The other contractor to an agreement, for instance, whoever he was, invariably asked him for three times what he ought to have demanded. Alan conceded twice, and congratulated himself on having shown extraordinary knowledge of the world. Then he offered the wily Bostock two hundred and fifty, when he might have got him for a hundred.

"Well," Bostock grumbled, "to please you, sir. But we must have the dairy, and a field for the cows, and the fowls, and the pigs, and the orchard, just as at present so arranged."

"You can have all those," said Alan, ignorantly adding another hundred to the new bailiff's salary.

"That," said Bostock, "won't make the

celery none too high. Besides, the dairy and the pigs is a mere nothink. But there— And when will you begin, sir?"

"As soon as I can," said Alan. "I am going"—here he hesitated a little—"to manage this farm on an entirely new principle, of which I will explain the details afterwards. That is, you will manage it, but the results of the farm—the profits—are to be applied on a new principle."

"I thought, sir," said Bostock—his face lengthened considerably at the prospect of the farm being managed on new principles—"I thought that I was to buy and to sell for the best advantage of the farm."

"Why, so you are. That is not what I mean."

"Oh!" said Bostock, relieved; "that is not what you mean, sir?"

"Not at all. You will really buy, sell, and do everything. You will be the responsible manager of the farm. The profits, however, deducting your salary first, and the necessary expenses of wages, stock, implements, and so forth, will be divided in certain proportions between myself and the farm labourers and you, as the bailiff."

Once more Mr. Bostock was obliged to take out that pocket-handkerchief, with which he blew his nose violently, choked, became crimson in the face, blew his nose again, choked again, and finally, resumed his calm.

"Oh!" he said; "the profits of the farm, after paying me, the bailiff, and the wages and the necessary expenses, will go to us all in proper proportions, will they? Well, sir, that's a most generous and liberal offer on your part. I don't think there's another Squire in all the country, as knows land as you know land, because you've been round the world and must know all the land as is fit to call itself land—no—not a single other Squire alive as would make that proposal. Mr. Dunlop, I'm with you, and if you'll shake the hand of an honest man"—he held out his horny paw—"there you are."

Alan took it, almost with tears.

"I believe you will serve the farm honestly and well, Bostock," he said.

"I will, sir," replied the new bailiff. "Look round you and see the improvements I've made already with my small means. Why am I poor man now and my neighbours rich? Because I put into that land what they take out of it. Look at the farm improvements—you'll buy them at a valuation, of