

The Homesteader

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By
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BUILDING THE HOME.

Synopsis.—Dissatisfied because of the seemingly barren outlook of his position as a school teacher in a Canadian town, John Harris determines to leave it, take up land in Manitoba and become a "homesteader." Mary, the girl whom he loves, declares she will accompany him. They are married and set out for the unknown country. Alec McCrae, pioneer settler and adviser of newcomers, proves an invaluable friend. Leaving his wife with the family of a fellow settler, Fred Arthurs, Harris and McCrae journey over the prairie and select a homestead. Mary insists on accompanying him when he takes possession, and they begin their life work of making the prairie fertile farm land.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

That night, before the darkness had gathered too deep, they selected the site of their house on the very bench that McCrae had indicated. It was about an acre in extent, and stood halfway between the prairie level and the bottom of the coulee, where a small river was now running. . . . It was quite dark when they sought the cover of their little tent, and the wolves were howling far down the ravine.

Presidently they were startled by a crashing noise, as of some big animals rushing upon them through the poplars, and the horses, in headlong haste, almost swept over their sleeping place.

"That wolf howl put the fear into the silly brutes," said Harris, speaking calmly, although his own flesh was creeping just a little. "I suppose they've ripped their tether ropes to pieces. Well, we'll tie them down here, where they'll have company." And he led them back a short distance into the bushes.

A moment later, suddenly, as if congealed out of thin air, on the bank right above them, silhouetted against the dim light in the western sky, stood a horse and rider. Instantly Harris' mind came a warning of McCrae: "Sleep with one eye open when your horses are tethered out."

Harris had no proof that the strange rider was a horse thief, but it struck him at the moment that the terror of the horses might not have been due altogether to wolves.

He stole silently toward the tent. There was a gun there, loaded with shot for any possible game on the prairie. As he moved in the deep darkness of the valley he stumbled over a root and fell. The same moment came a flash of light on the bank, and Harris heard the "thuk" of a ball burying itself in the sod. He lay perfectly still. The stranger peered into the darkness for a full minute; then, dismounting, began to come cautiously down the hillside. Harris would have rushed for his gun, but he feared to reveal the whereabouts of his wife. So he lay still, and the stranger came on, the glint of his gun barrel showing in the darkness. It was evident he thought his bullet had found its mark, and he proposed still to possess himself of the horses. But he was taking no chances. Presently he discerned Harris' body on the ground, and again raised his gun to his shoulder. Harris lay in an agony of suspense, praying that the aim would be faulty, and that his assailant would advance until he could spring up and disarm him. Then came another flash, a loud report, a yell from the intruder, who half-fell to earth, then scrambled to his feet, rushed up the bank, pulled himself somewhat limply on his horse, and rode into the darkness.

"Oh, Jack, are you killed?" cried the girl, rushing in his direction.

"Not even hurt," he answered; and she fainted in his arms.

He carried her to the tent and applied water to her forehead. As he was engaged in restoring her his hand fell on his gun. The barrel was hot.

He raised her face to his, and kissed her again and again.

In the morning they found a few drops of blood on the grass at the top of the bank.

Harris and his wife allowed themselves no time for nerve strain over the experience of their first night on their homestead. The next morning, after caring for their cows, they hitched the horses to the wagon, took an ax, a saw, their gun, and a lynch, and set out for the valley, returning late at night with sufficient logs and poles for the framework of their house and stable. The next day construction was commenced. Four stout posts were set on end, enclosing a rectangle 12x16 feet. The tops of the posts were connected by logs laid upon them

dove-tailed at the corners after the fashion of woodsmen, and held in position by wooden pins driven in auger holes. Lengthwise along the center, to form a ridge pole, another stout log was laid and the whole framework supported by additional posts, among which were two on the east side to enclose the door. Small poles were then placed on end, sloping slightly inward and resting against the plate logs. Similar poles were laid from the plate logs to the ridge pole to support the roof.

Harris found a southern slope where the frost was out enough to admit to him plowing some sods. He plowed them, three inches thick and 14 inches wide, and cut them into two-foot lengths with his ax, to the sad injury of its cutting edge. These sods were then built into a wall like bricks, resting gently against the framework of poles, from which, however, they were separated by a padding of grass, which Harris cut in a slough with his scythe, and small willows from the ravine. This mattress of grass and willows prevented any earth shaking through into the house itself. A framework made of a hewn log was inserted in the south wall to leave space for a window, which should be bought when the family finances could afford such luxuries. For the time being it would be left open in fine weather and covered with canvas when the elements were gruff or unruly. The rag carpet, when no longer needed as a tent, would be draped in the doorway, pending the purchase of boards to make a wooden floor.

For a roof grass was laid on the poles and covered tightly with sods. Then Harris found a sticky, yellow clay in the side of the ravine, and two or three inches of this he spread carefully over the sods, like tiling on a great cake. The greasy clay soon hardened in the sun, and became so impervious to water that the heaviest rains of summer made no impression upon it.

By this time the snow was all gone, except in north-facing nooks along the ravine, and the frost was out of the sod in all places deep enough to admit of plowing. As the stock were taking no harm from the open air, thanks to the shelter of the ravine, Harris decided to delay the construction of his stable until after seeding and to proceed at once with the plowing of his land. He had also to make a trip to Arthurs' for seed grain, and to borrow a couple of sections of drag harrows. With it all, by the middle of May he had sown 15 acres of wheat, and notwithstanding a heavy snowfall about the twenty-third, by the first of June he had added ten acres of oats. With his help Mary had planted a small garden of potatoes and vegetables, and a few flowers were springing up at the door of the house.

CHAPTER III.

The Shores of the Infinite.

The summer was a season of great activity and development. Harris did not sow any crop after the first of June, but applied himself then to the construction of his stable, which was built after the same fashion as the house.

As McCrae had predicted, there was a considerable movement of settlers into the district, and at several points their tents or rude houses now broke the vast sweep of the horizon. Tom Morrison had found land to the satisfaction of his heart within three miles of the Harris homestead, and his big log house, 18x24, assumed the proportions of a castle by comparison with the smaller homes springing up around. Some miles to the east Dick Matheson, straight from the lumber camps of the Madawaski, had pitched his tent, and a few miles farther on was his friend of the shanties, John Burton. To the west were the Grants, and to the north Hiram Riles and his wife, Eliza. A missionary had in some way spied out the field, and held monthly Sunday services at Morrison's house; and Dr. Blain, when not in one of his unfortunate debauches, had his headquarters at the new town of Plainville, which consisted of Sempster's general store and a "stopping place," and which had sprung up near the junction of two streams in anticipation of the railway.

And so the first summer wore away and the first harvest was at hand. Any disappointment which had been occasioned by backward conditions earlier in the season was effaced by the wonderful crop which now crowned the efforts of the pioneers. On their finest eastern farms they had seen nothing to equal the great stand of wheat and oats which now enveloped them, neck-high, whenever they invaded it. The great problem before the settlers was the harvesting of this crop. It was a mighty task to attempt with their scythes, but there was no self-binder, or even reaper, within many miles.

Finally Morrison solved the problem for the whole community by placing an order, at a fabulous figure, for a self-binder from the United States. It was a cumbersome, wooden frame contrivance, gullible of the roller bearings, floating aprons, open elevators, and sheaf carriers of a later day, but it served the purpose, and with its aid the harvest of the little settlement was safely placed in sheaf. The farmers then stacked their grain in the fields, taking care to plow double fireguards, with a burnt space between, as a precaution against the terrifying fires which broke over the prairie as soon as the September frosts had dried the grass. A community some 20 miles to the eastward boasted a threshing mill, and arrangements were made for its use after it had discharged the duties of its own locality.

When Harris' thrashing was done he found he had 600 bushels of wheat and 700 bushels of oats in cone-shaped piles on his fields. The roads were fine and hard, and no snow had yet



"Not Even Hurt," He Answered, and She Fainted in His Arms.

fallen, so he determined to begin at once with the marketing of his wheat. His last cent had been spent months before; indeed, it had been only through the courtesy of the storekeeper at Plainville, who was also postmaster, and who had stretched the law to the point of accepting hen eggs as legal tender in exchange for postage stamps, that Mary Harris had been able to keep up the brave, optimistic series of letters written "home." So Harris decided that he would at once market some of his wheat. Most of the oats would be needed for his horses and for seed, and what remained would command good prices from new settlers the following spring, but some of the wheat must be turned

WILL THAT ALARMED WORLD

Eccentric Frenchman Planned to Build Up Large Estate, But in the End Signally Failed.

Mingled wonder, indignation and alarm were excited in the public mind over a will left by Peter Thelsson, a Frenchman, who died on July 21, 1797. It appears that the testator had accumulated a large fortune as a London merchant, and by the provisions of his will he left to his wife and children the sum of £100,000, and the residue of his property, amounting to about £600,000, he committed to trustees, to accumulate during the lives of his sons, and finally to revert to his eldest great-grandson. Should no heir exist, the accumulated property was to be conveyed to the sinking fund for the reduction of the national debt. According to the lowest calculation it was estimated that the fortune would amount to £19,000,000. The will was generally stigmatized as absurd and illegal, and the family tested it in court, where it was sustained, as it was likewise in the house of lords. In 1800 an act was passed making null

into money at once. During the latter part of the summer they had lived exclusively on the produce of their farm; on vegetables from the garden, fish and ducks from the stream, prairie chickens, and an occasional rabbit from the fields. The wild geese had deserted them early in the spring and returned only after harvest. But now they should have a change on their table. Mary had accepted the pioneer fare of the summer without complaint, but of late Harris had discovered a strange longing in her eyes, and more than once she had arrested herself in the words "I wish we had—" Then two penitent little tears would steal softly down her cheeks, and she would bury her head in his arms as he soothed her with loving words and promised that "after thrashing things would be different."

So now he set out for Emerson with the best load his horses could draw. The first few miles he drove in silence, for there was a heavy weight at his heart as he thought of the little wife alone with the responsibilities of the farm. . . . That she would be faithful to every responsibility he knew beyond question. . . . But he was not quite satisfied. A strange moodiness had come over her, and even with him at home she had at times given way to fits of downheartedness which seemed altogether alien to her nature.

Ten days later he retraced his course in the teeth of a blinding blizzard. A dozen times he had been lost in the last 48 hours, but he had developed the prairie dweller's sense of direction, and had always been able again to locate the trail. The Arthurs would have detained him, almost by force, but the thought of a pale, patient face, wrung with an agony of anxiety not for itself, made him adamant in his resolve to go home at whatever cost. The roads were almost impassable; he left his lumber at Arthurs', but carried with him his window, a few boards for a door, and a little bundle of dry goods. Everything else had gone by the way surrendered in exchange for food and shelter for himself and horses.

"Thank God, oh, thank God!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Isinglass.

Isinglass is the dried swimming bladders of several varieties of fish. The amount of gelatin in isinglass is from 86 to 93 per cent and even more. It is prepared by tearing the air bladder or sound from the back of the fish, from which it has been loosened by striking several blows with a wooden club, then washing in cold water. The black outer skin is removed with a knife, again washed and spread on a board to dry in the open air, with the white shiny skin turned outward. To prevent shriveling or shrinking the bladders must be fastened to a drying board. The best quality of isinglass comes from sounds that are dried in the sun. After drying the sound is again moistened with warm water and the interior shiny skin is removed by hammering or rubbing. Finally it is rolled between two polished iron rollers.

White and Red Roses Blended.

The most interesting combination of roses is that of the union of the white rose of York with the red rose of Lancaster after the long struggle between those two factions when the red rose might have represented the blood that was shed and the other one the condition of the people bled white by the wars. To cement the peace Henry of Lancaster wedded pretty Elizabeth of York and a clever gardener of old England blended the two roses and made a new one, striped red and white. We have it in this country where it is still called the York and Lancaster, though not every beholder realizes the story held in its fragrant petals.

all bequests for the purpose of accumulation for longer than twenty years after the testator's death. The last grandson died in 1856, and a dispute arose as to whether the eldest son's grandson should inherit or the eldest great-grandson. It was decided in favor of the former. By reason of litigation and accidents of management the fortune inherited was little more than the original £600,000.

Considerate Men.

A her which deposits a fresh breakfast egg on her owner's bed, and then awakens him at the proper time to consume the fruits of her industry, is, states the Timber Trades Journal, the prized possession of a sawmill employee at Bend, Ore. Retiring at 3 a. m.—the end of his working day—the man leaves open the window at his bedside. Shortly before noon the hen flies in, nestles near her master's shoulder, lays her egg, and rising, pecks the sleeper gently on the forehead.

Education is only like good culture; it changes the size, but not the shape. H. W. Beecher

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TREES BEAUTIFY OUR ROADS.

Enthusiasm Displayed All Over Country in Campaign for "Roads of Remembrance."

Motor travelers all over the country have stimulated a contagious interest in planting trees by the roadsides. The Federation of Women's Clubs, which was one of the first national organizations to assist in this work, has planted many trees along sections of the Lincoln highway, writes Victoria Faber Stevenson in Sinclair's Magazine. Today it is beautifying many roads by planting trees in memory of the men who served in the World war. In fact, enthusiasm for roadside tree planting is evident all over the country in the widespread interest which is taken in "Roads of Remembrance."

Patriotic and civic organizations, women's clubs and boy scouts' units are providing miles of roadway with young oaks and elms. These sturdy trees, which will perpetuate the memory of the men who took up arms for America are also giving the roads beauty and individuality.

Perhaps the most unique work of this character which is reported by the American Forestry association is being done in Georgia around the city of Macon. There the woman's auxiliary of the chamber of commerce is planting a huge cross of trees in honor of the men and women who went to war from their vicinity.

NUT TREES ALONG HIGHWAYS.

Michigan is First State to Offer Reward for Beautifying Its Improved Roadways.

Michigan is the first state to offer a reward for planting nut trees beside highways. In Europe the profit from roadside nut trees assists in maintaining roads. Roadside nut trees abroad are protected from vandalism by public sentiment, and this is true of the nut orchards in the principal centers of production in this country.

Much Money for Roads.

Great Britain is expending \$140,000,000 a year on highways.

Improve by Dragging.

Frequent dragging of a dirt road, with the King machine, not only maintains the proper curvature necessary for drainage, but develops a hard, well-packed wearing surface and a firm base, with the result that the road constantly improves instead of deteriorating.

Fines for Overloading.

Fines ranging from \$25 to \$100 are imposed on offenders who drive overloaded motortrucks on highways in Pennsylvania.