



**BEULAH AND JIM.**

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. Returning from selling his first crop, Harris finds his wife dependent almost to insanity from loneliness, and with the immediate expectation of becoming a mother. A son is born to them, to whom they give the name of Allan.

**CHAPTER IV.**

**In the Spell of the Mirage.**

A quarter of a century is a short time as world history goes, but it is a considerable era in the life of the Canadian west. More things—momentous things—than can be hinted at in this narrative occurred in the 25 years following the great influx of 1882. The boundless prairie reaches of Manitoba were now comparatively well settled, and the tide of immigration, which, after a dozen years' stagnation, had set in again in greater flood than ever, was now sweeping over the newer lands still farther west. The vast sweep of the horizon, once undefiled by any work of man, was pierced and broken with elevators, villages, and farm buildings, and the whiff of coal smoke was blown down the air which had so lately known only the breath of the prairies.

Mary Harris hurried about her capacious kitchen, deep in preparation of the evening meal. The years had taken toll of the freshness of her young beauty; the shoulders, in mute testimony to much hard labor of the hand, had drooped forward over the deepening chest; the hair was thinner, and farther back above the forehead, and streaked with gray at the temples; the mouth lacked the rosy sensuousness of youth, and sat now in a mold, half of resolution, half submission. Yet her foot had lost little of its sprightliness, and the sympathy in her fine eyes seemed to have deepened with the years.

A moist but appetizing steam rose from the vegetable pots on the range, and when she threw back the iron door to feed more coal the hot glow from within danced in reflection along the bright row of utensils hanging from the wall, and even sought out the brass plate on the cream separator at the far end of the big room. Through the screen door came the monotonously redundant clink . . . a . . . clank of the windmill, and a keen ear might have caught the light splash of water as it fell in the wooden horse troughs from the iron nozzle of the pump.

Mary stuck a fork in a potato to ascertain if the "bone" was all gone, meanwhile shielding her face from the steam with the pot lid, held aloft in an aproned hand. Having satisfied herself that the meal was making satisfactory progress, she stepped to the door and sent a quick look across the fields, to where a streak of black smoke was scrawled along the sky. "Beulah," she called, turning toward the interior part of the house. "Come, Beulah, set the table. They're coming from the field."

In a moment a girl of twenty, plainly attired in a neat calico dress, entered the kitchen. She was fresh and beautiful as her mother had been that first summer in the sod house on the bench, and something in her appearance suggested that with her mother's beauty and fine sensibility she had inherited the indomitable spirit which had made John Harris one of the most prosperous farmers in the district. She moved in an easy, unconscious grace of self-reliance—a reliance that must be just a little irritating to men of old-fashioned notions concerning woman's dependence on the sterner sex—drew the long wooden table, with its covering of white oil cloth, into the center of the kitchen, and began placing the dishes in position.

The scraping of heavy boots on the plow share nailed to the block at the door, and John Harris, followed by Allan and the hired man, Jim, walked into the kitchen. The farmer's frame was heavier than in his younger days,

and his hair, too, was streaked with gray, but every muscle in his great body seemed to bulge with strength. His face was brown with the prairie sun and wind of 25 summers, and lines of worry and care had cut their tracings about the mouth and eyes. Beside him stood Allan, his only son, straighter and lither of figure, but almost equally powerful. The younger man was, indeed, a replica of the older, and although they had their disagreements, constant association had developed a fine comradeship, and, on the part of the son, a loyalty equal to any strain. The hired man, Jim, was lighter and finer of feature, and his white teeth gleamed against the nut-brown of his face in a quiet smile that refused to be displaced in any emergency, and at times left the beholder in considerable doubt as to the real emotions working behind.

The men all wore blue overalls, dark blue or gray shirts, and heavy boots. They were guiltless of coat or vest, and tossed their light straw hats on the water bench as they passed. There was a quick splashing of greasy hands at the wash basin, followed by a more effectual rubbing on a towel made from a worn-out grain sack. The hired man paused to change the water and wash his face, but the others proceeded at once to the table, where no time was lost in ceremony. Harris helped himself generously, to meat and vegetables and having done so, passed the platters to his son, and in this way they were circulated about the table. There was no talk for the first few minutes, only the sound of knife and fork plied vigorously and interchangeably by father and son, and with some regard for convention by the other members of the family. John Harris had long ago recognized the truth that the destiny of food was the mouth, and whether conveyed on knife or fork made little difference. Mary, too, had found a carelessness of little details both of manner and speech coming over her, as her occasional "ain't" betrayed, but since Jim had joined their table she had been on her guard. Jim seldom said anything, but always that quiet smile lay like a mask over his real emotions.

When the first insistent demands of appetite had been appeased, Harris, resting both elbows on the table, with knife and fork trained on opposite corners of the ceiling, straightened himself somewhat and remarked: "Allan an' me's goin' to town to-night; anything you want from Sempster's store, Mary?" "That lets me in for the cows," said Beulah. "You were in town night before last, too, and it was 9:30 before I got through milking." "Oh, well, Jim was away that night," said Allan. "Jim has enough to do, without milking cows after hours," returned the girl. "What do you want to go to town for again tonight, anyway?" "Got to get more coal," said Harris. "We'll take two teams, an' it'll be late when we get back." "I think it's all nonsense, this day-an'-night work," persisted Beulah. "Is there never going to be any let-up on it?"

"Beulah, you forget yourself," said her father. "If you'd more to do you'd have less time to fret about it. Your mother did more work in one summer than you have in all your life, an' she's doin' more yet." "Oh, Beulah's a good help," interposed Mary. "I hope she never has to work like I did." "I guess the work never hurt us," said Harris, helping himself to preserved strawberries. "Just the same, I'm glad to see you gettin' it a bit easier. But this younger generation—it beats me what we're comin' to. Thinkin' about nothin' but fun and gaddin' to town every night or two. And clo'es—Beulah there's got more clo'es than there were in the whole Plainville settlement the first two or three years."

"I got more neighbors, too," interjected the girl. Then springing up, she stood behind her father's chair and put her arm around his neck. "Don't be cross, Dad," she whispered. "Your heart's in the right place—but a long way in."

He disengaged her, gently enough. As Beulah said, his heart was all right, but a long way in. Twenty-five years of pitched battle with circumstances—sometimes in victory, sometimes in defeat, but never in despair; always with a load of expense about him, always with the problem of income and outlay to be solved—had made of Harris a man very different from the young idealist of '82. During the first years of struggle for a bare existence in some way the flame of idealism still

burned, but with the dawn of the "better times" there came a gradual shifting of standards and a new conception of essentials. The crops of the early years were unprofitable on account of the great distance to market; later, when the railway came to their doors, the crops were still unprofitable, owing to falling prices and diminishing yields due to poor cultivation. Then came a decade during which those who stayed in the country stayed because they could not get out, and it became a current saying that the more land a man farmed the deeper he got in debt.

Then came the swing of the pendulum. No one knows just what started it prosperitywards. Some said it was that the farmers, disheartened with wheat growing, were applying themselves to stock, and certain it is that in "mixed farming" the community eventually found its salvation; others attributed the change to improved agricultural implements, to improved methods of farming, to greater knowledge of prairie conditions, to reductions in the cost of transportation and enlarged facilities for marketing, or to increasing world demand and higher world prices for the product of the farm. But whatever the causes—and no doubt all of the above contributed—the fact gradually dawned upon the settlers that land—their land—was worth money.

It was the farmers from the United States, scouting for cheaper lands than were available in their own communities, who first drove the conviction home. They came with money in their wallets; they were actually prepared to exchange real money for land. Such a thing had never before been heard of in Plainville district.

But a few transactions took place; lands were sold at five dollars, six dollars, eight dollars an acre. The farmers began to realize that land represented wealth—that it was an asset, not a liability—and there was a rush for the cheap railway lands that had so long gone a-begging. Harris was



"Don't Be Cross, Dad," She Whispered.

among the first to sense the change in the times, and a beautiful section of railway land that lay next to his homestead he bought at four dollars an acre. The first crop more than paid for the land, and Harris suddenly found himself on the way to riches.

The joy that came with the realization that fortune had knocked at his door and he had heard was the controlling emotion of his heart for a year or more. But gradually, like a fog blown across a moonlit night, came a sense of chill and disappointment. If only he had bought two sections! If at least he had proved up on his preemption, which he might have had for nothing! He saw neighbors about him adding quarter to quarter. None of them had done better than himself, but some had done as well. And in some way the old sense of oneness, the old community interest which had held the little band of pioneers together amid their privations and their poverty, began to weaken and dissolve, and in its place came an individualism and a materialism that measured progress only in dollars and cents. Harris did not know that his gods had fallen, that his ideals had been swept away; even as he sat at supper this summer evening, with his daughter's arm about his neck, he felt that he was still bravely, persistently, pressing on toward the goal, all unaware that years ago he had left that goal like a lighthouse on a rocky shore, and was now sweeping along with the turbulent tide of Mammonism. He still saw the light ahead, but it was now a phantom of the imagination. He said, "When I am worth ten thousand I will have reached it;" when he was worth ten thousand he found the faithless light had moved on to twenty-five thousand. He said, "When I am worth twenty-five thousand I will have reached it;" when he was worth twenty-five thousand he saw the glow still ahead, beckoning him on to fifty thousand. To stop

now might mean losing sight of the goal, and John Harris held nothing heaven or earth so great as its attainment.

So, gently enough, he disengaged his daughter's arm and finished his supper in silence. As soon as it was ended the men started for the barn and in a few minutes two wagons rattled noisily down the trail.

Beulah helped with the supper dishes, and then came out with the milk pails to the corral where the cows, puffing and chewing, complacently awaited her arrival. But she had not reached the gate when the hired man was at her side and had slipped one of the pails from her arm.

"Now, Jim, I don't think that's fair at all," she said; and there was a tremor in her voice that vexed her. "Here you're slaving all day with coal and water, and I think that's enough, without milking cows at night."

But Jim only smiled and stirred a cow into position.

There was a tuneless song of the tin pails as the white streams rattled on their bottoms.

"Here I've slaved and saved until I'm an old woman."  
(TO BE CONTINUED)

**SONGS THAT ARE IMMORTAL**

Greatest Minds of All the Ages Bestowed Their Labors on the Poems of Homer.

The Iliad and Odyssey were probably sung by Homer about a century and a half after the destruction of the town of Troy following the ten years of war that was waged in the cause of Menelaus, king of Lacedaemon, whose consort had been carried away by the son of the Trojan monarch. The two poems are as old as David's psalms. Originally the Iliad would appear not to have been a single connected poem, but to have attained at a later period its present complete state.

About one hundred years after Homer, Lycurgus, the lawgiver of Lacedaemon, brought these poems into Greece, and two centuries and a half later Pisisstratus is supposed to have given them their perfect form. His son Hipparchus introduced the custom of reciting rhapsodies at the Panathenaia, or festival of the tutelary goddess. A more complete edition of the Homeric poems, from which the modern ones are taken, was prepared for Alexander the Great by Aristotle, which the former used to keep under his pillow in a golden case. Also Aratus, the astronomer, Aristarchus of Samos, and Aristophanes, librarian at Alexandria, bestowed their labor on these immortal songs. Because of the fine moral sentiment, Homer became the pattern of Thucydides, the favorite author of the greatest and noblest men, and one of the best teachers of the wisdom of human life.—Detroit News.

**Boy and a Sermon.**

The way of a boy with a sermon is thus:

Composes himself with a deep sigh listens attentively for three minutes in unimpeachable form. Cautiously reaches hymn book from rack; drops it; recovers it; reads hymns for five minutes. Explores trousers pocket and examines with deep interest one magnet, two nails, three pencil stubs and several bits of unclassified junk. Drops something and hunts under seat until discovered. Sighs heavily; inspects all the stained glass windows and the overhead architecture and decorations. Puts sole of left foot against back of pew in front, at level of knee and is highly surprised when foot drops noisily. Repeats same exercise with right foot with the same result. Sits still and gratefully sucks peppermint offered by merciful aunt. Sighs heavily. Experiments to see what will happen if he presses on his Adam's apple while head is extended forward strange choking sound ensues, immediately suppressed by domestic authorities.—Life.

**Moths Take Big Chances.**

The high-flying species of morpho which inhabit the mountainous districts of western America, are much easier captured than those which frequent the plains, though their capture is often attended with difficulty and danger, says the American Forestry Magazine of Washington. One naturalist hunting moths and butterflies in Bogota, fell over a precipice and broke his arm, and then found that he had three days' journey to make on horseback before he could meet with a doctor to set it. Another naturalist, who was collecting in Bolivia found the morpho godartii, Guer., a beautiful species, of a rather light blue which was previously almost unknown to entomologists, frequented an inaccessible ledge in the mountains; he was obliged to have himself lowered by ropes over the precipice before he could obtain it.

**Half Asleep.**

Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awake.—William James.

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