

The Homesteader
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CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

The dinner was late that day, and Harris was in worse humor than usual. He had just broken a plow-beam, which meant an afternoon's delay and some dollars of expense. When he had started his meal his wife laid the full envelope before him. "A letter from Beulah," she said.

Without a word he rose from the table, took the letter in his hand, and thrust it into the kitchen range. A blue flame slowly cut round the envelope; the pages began to curl like dry leaves in autumn, and presently the withered ghost of the mislaid shrank away in the dull glare of the coal fire behind.

At last the plowing was finished, and, although the rich smell of wheat in the milk filled the air, it still would be almost a month before the ripening crops were ready for the binder. Harris felt that he could now allow himself a breathing spell, and that the opportunity to investigate the rich lands of the Farther West was at hand. Many a night, while Mary milked the cows, he had walked over to Riles', and the two had discussed their forthcoming venture until they had grown almost enthusiastic over it. A quarter of a century having elapsed since his former homesteading, Harris was now eligible again to file on free government land; Allan could do the same, and, by also taking advantage of the purchase of script, it was possible to still further increase their holdings.

Harris found the task of disclosing his intentions to his wife more unpleasant than he would have supposed, and it took him some days to make up his mind to broach the subject. He felt that he was doing what was for the best, and that his business judgment in the matter could hardly be challenged; and yet he had an uncomfortable feeling that his wife would not fall in with his plans. That, of course, would not be allowed to affect his plans; since Beulah's departure nothing but the most formal conversation had taken place in their household; yet it would certainly be easier for him if Mary should give her encouragement to his undertaking. He felt that he was entitled to this, for was it not for her that he was making the sacrifice? Was not all he had hers? And were not all his labors directed toward increasing her reserve against the rainy day? And yet instinctively he felt that she would oppose him.

It was the evening of a long day in July when, very much to Mary's surprise, her husband took the handle of the cream separator from her. To the sad-hearted woman it seemed that the breach was at length beginning to heal, and that happiness would shortly return to their hearthside. Below the din of the separator she actually found herself humming an old love-song of the 'eighties.

But her happiness was of short duration. When the milk had been run through, and the noise of the whirling bowl no longer prevented conversation, Harris immediately got down to business.

"Allan and me will be leavin' for the West in a day or two," he said. "I suppose you can get along all right for a few weeks until harvest. Bill (the hired man) will be here."

In an instant she saw the motive behind his apparent kindness, and the hopes she had just entertained only deepened the flood of resentment which swept over them. But she answered quietly and without apparent emotion: "That's unfortunate, as I was planning for a little trip myself."

"You?" he exclaimed. "You plannin' a trip! Where in the world do you want to go?" Such a thing as Mary going on a trip, and, above all, unaccompanied by herself, was unheard of and unthinkable.

"Yes, I thought I would take a little trip," she continued. "I've been working here pretty hard for something over twenty-five years, and you may say I've never been off the place. A bit of a holiday shouldn't do me any harm."

"Where do you think of goin'?" he demanded, a sudden suspicion arising in his mind. "Goin' to visit Jim and Beulah?"

"I think you might at least be fair to Beulah," she retorted. "If you had read her letter, instead of putting it in the stove, you would have known better."

lah may have to say, and any other letters that fall into my hands will go in the same direction. And what's more, she's not goin' to have a visit from any member of this family at the present time. I'm goin' out west to take up land, and Allan's going with me. It ain't fair or reasonable for you to try to upset our plans by a notion of this kind."

"It isn't a notion, John, it's a resolve. If you are bound to take up more land, with more work and more worry, why go ahead, but remember it's your own undertaking. I helped to make one home in the wilderness, and one home's enough for me."

"Don't be unreasonable," he answered. "There's a great opportunity right now to get land for nothin' that in a few years will be worth as much or more than this here. I'm ready to go through the hardship and the work for the sake of what it will do for us. We can be independently rich in five years, if we just stand together."

"Independent of what?" she asked. "Why, independent of—of everything. Nothin' more to worry about and plenty laid up for old age. Ain't that worth a sacrifice?"

"John," she said, turning and raising her eyes to his face. "Answer me a straight question. What was the happiest time in your life? Wasn't it when we lived in the one-roomed sod shant with scarcely a cent to bless ourselves? We worked hard then, too, but we had time for long walks together across the prairies—time to sit in the dusk by the water and plan our lives together. We have done well; we have land, horses, machinery, money. But have we the happiness we knew when we had none of these? On the contrary, are you not worried morning, noon and night over your work and your property? Don't you complain about the kind of help the farmers have to hire nowadays, and the wages they have to pay? And if you get more land won't all your troubles be increased in proportion? John, sit down and think this thing over. We don't need more property; what we need is a chance to enjoy the property we already have. We have all the chance to choose now between life and land; won't you think it all over again and let us seek that which is really worth while?"

"Now I know where Beulah got her nonsense," he retorted. "All this talk about real life is very fine, but you don't get much life, real or any other



"Yop!" He Exclaimed. "You Plannin' a Trip!"

kind, unless you have the cash to pay down for it. We've done pretty well here, as you say, but it's only a beginnin' to what we can do, if we set about it, and don't wait until the cheap land is all gone. I don't see why you should go back on me at this time o' life, Mary. We've stood together for a long while, and I kinda figured I could count on you."

"So you can, John; so you can to the very last, for anything that is for your own good, but when you set your heart on something that means more trouble and hardship and won't add one iota to your happiness, I think it is my duty to persuade you if I can. We've been drifting apart lately; why not let us both go back to the beginning and start over again, and by kindness, and fairness, and liberality, and—and sympathy, try to recover something of what we have lost?"

"I have always thought I had been liberal enough," he said. "Didn't I build you a good house and buy furniture for it, and do I stint you in what you spend, either on the table or yourself? More than that, didn't I put the title to the homestead in your name? And ain't I ready to do the same with the new homestead, if that's the sticker?"

"I never thought of such a thing," she protested. "And you shouldn't claim too much credit for putting the homestead quarter in my name. You know when you bought the first railroad land you were none too sure how things would come out, and you thought it might be a wise precaution

to have the old farm stand in your wife's name."

"That's all the thanks I get," he said bitterly. "Well, I'll take the new one in my own name, but I'll take it just the same. If you don't want to share in it you won't have to. But for the present it's your duty to stay here and run things till we get back."

"What are you going to do after you get your new farm? You can't work two farms a thousand miles apart, can you?"

"Oh, I guess that won't worry us long. The Americans are comin' in now with lots o' good money. I was figurin' up that this place, as a gold concern, ought to bring about forty thousand dollars, and I'll let it could sell it inside of a week."

"Sell it?" she exclaimed. "You don't mean that you intend to sell this farm?"

"Why not? If somebody else wants it worse'n we do, and has the money to pay for it, why shouldn't I sell it?" The tears stood in her eyes as she answered: "In all these years while we have been building up this home I never once thought of it as something to sell. It was too near for that—a part of ourselves, of our very life. It seemed more like—like one of the children, than a mere possession. And now you would sell it, just as you might sell a load of wheat or a fat steer. Is this place—this home where we have grown old and gray—nothing to you? Have you no sentiment that will save it from the highest bidder?"

"Sentiment is a poor affair in business," he answered. "Property was made to sell; money was made to buy it with. The successful man is the one who has his price for everything, and knows how to get it. As for growin' old and gray on this farm, why, that's a grudge I have against it, though I don't think I'm very gray and I don't feel very old. And if I get my price, why shouldn't I sell?"

"Very well," she answered. "I've nothing more to say. Sell it if you must, but remember one thing—I won't be here to see it pass into the hands of strangers." She straightened herself up, and there was a fire in her eye that reminded him of the day when she had elected to share with him the hardships of the wilderness, and in spite of himself some of his old pride in her returned. "I leave tomorrow for a visit, and I may be gone some time. You reminded me of your liberality a few minutes ago; prove it now by writing me a check for my expenses. Remember, I will expect to travel like the wife of a prosperous farmer, a man whose holdings are worth forty thousand dollars cash."

"So that's your decision, is it? You set me at defiance; you try to wreck my plans by your own stubbornness. You break up my family piece by piece, until all I have left is Allan. Thank God, the boy, at least, is sound. Well, you shall have your check, and I'll make it a big one that it may carry you farther."

Even in the teeth of his bitterness the mention of Allan's name strained the mother's heart beyond her power of resistance, and she turned with outstretched arms towards her husband. For a moment he wavered, the flame of love, still smoldering in his breast, leaping up before the breath of her response. But it was for a moment only. Weakness would have meant surrender, and surrender was the one thing of which Harris was incapable. So he checked the impulse to take her in his arms, and walked stolidly to his desk in the parlor.

He returned shortly and placed a check in her hands. She looked at it through misty eyes, and read that it was for \$200. It represented a two hundredth part of their joint earnings, and yet he thought he was dealing liberally with her; he half expected, in fact, that his magnanimity would break her down where his firmness had failed. But she only whispered a faint "Thank you," and slowly folded the paper in her fingers. He waited for a minute, suspecting that she was overcome, but as she said nothing more he at length turned and left the house, saying gruffly as he went out, "When that's done I'll send you more if you write for it."

It was now 10 at night, and almost dark, but Harris' footsteps instinctively turned down the road toward Riles'.

At the gate he met Allan, returning home from spending a social hour with the Grant boys.

"Where going, Dad?" the younger man demanded.

"Oh, I thought I'd take a walk over to Riles'. There's a lot o' things I talk about."

"What's the matter, Dad?" The strained composure of his father's voice had not escaped him.

"Nothin' . . . I might's well tell you now; you'll know it in a little while anyway. . . . Your mother is goin' away—on a visit."

"Like Beulah's visit, I suppose. So it's come to this. I've seen it for some time, Dad, and you must've seen it too. But you're not really goin' to let her go? Come back to the house with me—surely you two can get together on this thing, if you try."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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

CORN ROOT ROT CAUSE BIG LOSS

Specialists Advise Germinating Kernels From Every Ear to Be Used for Seed.

RAG-DOLL TEST IS FAVORED

Estimated Damage by Disease in 1919 Placed at 125,000,000 Bushels—Destroy or Plow Under All Stubble Possible.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Corn, of one variety or another, is our most widely distributed cereal crop. Therefore, any single disease that takes a toll of 4 per cent is a matter for serious consideration. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates the damage done by corn root rot in 1919 at over 125,000,000 bushels. Multiplied by the average price of corn for that year, we have before us the unpleasant fact that these rots exacted a tax of over \$200,000,000.

When it is considered that one of the same organisms which causes corn root rot also causes wheat scrub and that these organisms carried over on corn stubble may infect a field of wheat the next year, the seriousness increases.

Works Inadvisably. Corn root rots are among the most deceptive diseases known to agricul-



Preparing Rag Dolls According to the Improved Method.

ture, say specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture. They affect the kernels of corn in such a way that while they may germinate they often will produce sickly, diseased plants which may die in early stages or produce infected corn. These diseases weaken the plants at the lower joints, and if they come to maturity the damage is perpetuated.

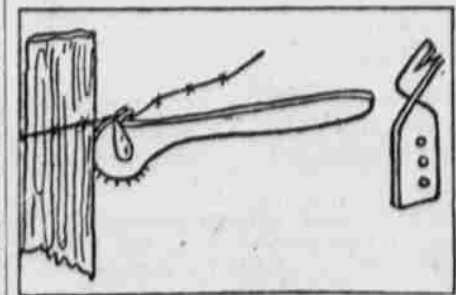
It is necessary for farmers wishing to avoid corn root rot to germinate kernels from every ear of corn to be used for seed. The simplest method of making a test is by means of an improved rag-doll germinator. This, in its essential features, consists of nothing more than a broad strip of muslin backed by moistureproof fiber paper. Rows of seed kernels are placed on the cloth which is rolled up and left in a warm box. The results are, of course, checked against the ears from which the kernels were taken, and only perfect, or nearly perfect, ears are kept for seed. This germinator is very simple and furnishes a practically complete test.

Bleached or unbleached muslin can be used for the rag doll. The cloth, which usually comes in a 54-inch width, is torn across into 12-inch strips, 54 inches long. Before being

STRETCHER IS QUITE HANDY

Particularly Convenient in Repairing Wire Fences and Is Easy to Put Together.

For a common wire stretcher which is especially handy in repairing fence take a piece of hardwood cut as



Stretcher for Repairs.

shown in the drawing. Then drive small nails into the edge at the large end, and cut off the heads, filing them to a point. This keeps the stretcher from slipping on the post while in use. Then make a hook from a heavy

used the cloth is boiled, and it should be damp when the seeds are placed on it. This cloth is laid on a strip of glazed paper, a little longer than the cloth, to allow folding over at the ends, fresh newspapers being placed on the table under the paper to avoid infection.

About 8 kernels are then taken from each ear and, beginning at the butt, are laid in rows across the muslin strip, so that when the strip is rolled up and placed in a germinating box the tips of the seed will be downward. The rag dolls are sprinkled twice daily, and at the end of 7 days are taken out, unrolled, and inspected. The appearance of the sprouts is a guide to the quality of the seed. If more than one seed shows signs of infection, the infected ear is thrown out. If the farmer has enough corn it is best to throw out an ear for a single bad kernel.

Destroying the Stubble.

Root rot is carried over in stubble, and every effort should be made to destroy or plow under as much stubble as possible. Increasing the fertility of the soil and crop rotation have also been found beneficial. One difficulty about rotation as a remedy is that root rot affects corn and wheat and in many localities is always present on the farm. For this reason the department is anxious that rag-doll germinators be put into general and intelligent use, and the season started with clean seed.

WIDESPREAD WAR ON NATIVE FARM WEEDS

Survey Set on Foot by Department of Agriculture.

New Varieties Constantly Arriving in Foreign Seed and Through Other Sources—Entire Farms Abandoned to Pests.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

The United States Department of Agriculture has set on foot what is intended to be the most comprehensive weed survey ever undertaken. Up to date comparatively little is known of American farm weeds. They are classified in botanies and herbariums, but there are no definite data in regard to their spread; the prevalence of any particular weed in any locality; the amount of annual damage; new weeds, increase of old species; or local methods of eradication.

To supply the need for such data the section of weed investigations has sent a questionnaire to all the more than 2,000 county agents of the department. This questionnaire asks the names of five worst weeds in each county, in order of their importance; the methods, if any, used by farmers to combat these weeds; and what weed problems are especially serious in any particular county.

Comparatively few native American weeds have given farmers serious trouble, but new varieties are constantly arriving in foreign seed and through other sources. Some of these have become such pests that entire farms have been abandoned to them. A canvass of 200 representative eastern farmers showed that an average of 22 days a year is spent at the busiest season in trying to get rid of weeds. Investigations by the bureau of plant industry over a number of years are taken to indicate that cultivation after the seedbed is prepared has no other use than to destroy weeds. If this theory proves correct, it will add more heavily still to the annual expense chargeable to weeds.

It is the purpose of the department to use the projected survey as a basis of operation in directing a widespread war on the weeds now here, or the importation of any new ones, and to seek any local eradication methods which may be worth general dissemination.

piece of strap iron as shown in the drawing and bolt to the stick with small bolts.

WORMS OF DIFFERENT KINDS

Fowls Affected Are Likely to Be Extremely Thin in Cases of Long Standing.

Some chickens have worms of various kinds. The intestines should be slit to find this out. Chickens having worms are likely to be unduly thin, and this loss of weight is extreme in cases of long standing.

Egg Mash Is Essential.

Without a good egg mash a hen cannot lay the maximum of eggs. She requires daily a large amount of protein in the most available form to make the white or albumen of the egg.

Indications of Vigor.

The appearance of a bird is not always a sure indication of its vigor, but appearance and action taken together are a fairly reliable guide.