

The Homesteader

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By
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Puncher," Etc.

CHAPTER XII—Continued.

"Oh, it's Sergeant Grey," she said, with a tone of relief. "I am Beulah Harris. And I've just been getting myself engaged to your prisoner here. Oh, it's not so awful as you think. You see, we knew each other in Manitoba, and we've really been engaged for quite a while, but he didn't know it until tonight."

For a moment the policeman retained his reserve. He remembered the girl, who had already cost him a dejected glance, and he reproached himself that he could doubt her even as he doubted, but how could he know that she had not been passing in firearms or planning a release?

"What she says is right, sergeant," said Travers. "She has just broken the news to me, and I'm the happiest man in Canada, jail or no jail."

There was no mistaking the genuine ring in Travers' voice, and the policeman was convinced. "Most extraordinary," he remarked, at length, "but entirely natural on your part, I must say. I congratulate you, sir." The officer had not forgotten the girl who clung to his arm the morning before. "Hang me, sir," he continued, "there's luck everywhere but in the mounted police."

He unlocked the door of the cell. "I ought to search you," he said to Beulah, "but if you'll give me your word that you have no firearms, weapons, knives, or matches, I'll admit you to this—er—drawing room for a few minutes."

"Nothing worse than a hat pin," she assured him. "But you must come, too," she added, placing her hand on his arm. "You must understand that."

He accompanied her into the cell, but remained in the doorway, where he suddenly developed an interest in astronomy. At length he turned quickly and faced in to the darkness.

"Speaking, not as an officer, but as a fellowman, I wish you were damned well—that is, very well—out of this old chap," he said to Travers.

"Oh, that's all right," Jim assured him. "You couldn't help taking me up, of course, and for all your kindness you would quite cheerfully hang me if it fell to your lot. But it isn't long to."

"I stand ready to be of any service to you that is permissible."

"The inquest is to be tomorrow, isn't it?" asked Beulah. "I think you should be at the inquest, Jim."

"That's right," said the sergeant. "You may throw some new light on the case."

"I've just one request," said Travers. "You know Gardner?"

"I've heard of him."

"Have him at the inquest."

"As a juror or witness?"

"It doesn't matter, but have him there."

"All right. I'll see to it. And now, Miss Harris, if you will permit me, I will bring your horse for you."

Grey took a conveniently long time to find the horse, but at last he appeared in the door. Beulah released her fingers from Jim's and swung herself into the saddle.

"Sergeant Grey," she said, "I think you're the second best man in the world. Good night."

The sergeant's military shoulders came up squarer still, and he stood at attention as she rode into the darkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

An Inquest—and Some Explanations.

The inquest party consisted of the coroner, who was the doctor that had already attended Allan; Sergeant Grey, six jurors, selected from the townspeople; the manager of the bank, whose suspicions had first been communicated to Grey; Travers, and Gardner. In the early morning the policeman had ridden out to the ranch or Gardner, but had met him on his way to town. News of the tragedy had reached him, he said, and he was hurrying in to see if he could be of some assistance to Travers in arranging for a lawyer, or in any way that might be practicable. Grey told him that as yet no formal charge had been laid against Travers; that he was merely held pending the finding of the coroner's jury, and suggested that Gardner would accompany him to the inquest he might be able, not only to throw some light on Travers' character, but also on his whereabouts on the night of the tragedy. To this Gardner readily agreed.

It was noon when the party reached the Arthurs' ranch. They swung into the yard amid a cloud of dust, the

jingle of trappings, and the hearty exchange of greetings between Arthurs and his acquaintances from town. Gardner was introduced to Arthurs, and shook hands without removing his gauntlets. Then the rancher walked over and shook hands with Travers. There were no signs of handcuffs now, and an outsider would not have known that the young man's position differed from that of the others present.

After the meal Gardner joined them again, and the party, which now included Arthurs and Harris, proceeded up the valley to the scene of the tragedy. It was a great shock to Harris to find that the victim of Allan's gun was his old neighbor, Miles. He stood for a long time as one dazed by the discovery, but gradually out of the confusion a horrible fear took shape in his mind. Allan had shot this man, with whom they had an appointment at this spot; had shot him down, as far as could be shown, without excuse or provocation, before he had so much as entered the door. The body proved to be unarmed, and from its position had evidently fallen into the building after receiving the fatal charge.

Harris' evidence was first received. He found it difficult to give his story connectedly, but item by item he told of his acquaintance with Miles in the eastern province; of their decision to come west and take up more land; of the chance by which they had fallen in with Gardner, and the prospect he had laid before them of more profitable returns from another form of investment; of how his hesitation had finally been overcome by the assurance that all he need do was have his money ready—he was to be under no obligation to go any further in the



"Perhaps I Am a Murderer," He Continued Simply.

transaction unless entirely satisfied; of the offer wired by the New York capitalists; of the sale of his farm for a disappointing sum, and their journey with the money to the old shanty up the valley, where they were to be met by Miles and Gardner, and also, as they expected, by the owner of the mine, with whom they would open direct negotiations, producing the money as proof of their desire and ability to carry out their undertaking; of how they hoped the owner would be induced to accept a deposit and accompany them back to town, where an option would be secured from him for a period sufficient to enable them to turn the property over to the New York investors at a handsome profit; of how he—Harris—wheeled by the long ride in the bright, thin air, had gone to sleep confidently with Allan at his side, and of how he had suddenly been awakened by a shot and heard Allan spring to his feet and rush across the floor of the old building. Then there had been another shot—a revolver shot this time—and everything was darkness, and he could hear only something struggling at the door. Then he told of his own fight; of how they had fallen and rolled about on the rotten floor, and how, in desperation, he had not hesitated to use his teeth on the hand of his assailant, who had finally broken away and disappeared in the darkness. Then he told the rest of his story; of his vigil with Allan, of the loss of the money, of the capture of Travers, and finally of

the arrival of the policeman on the scene.

"Didn't it seem to you a foolish thing to go into the hills with all that money to meet a man you had never seen, and buy a property you had never examined?" asked the coroner.

"It wasn't foolishness; it was stark, raving madness, as I see it now," Harris admitted. "But I didn't see it that way then. It looked like a lot of easy money. I didn't care what the coal mine was like—I didn't care whether there was a coal mine at all or not, so long as we made our turnover to the New York people."

"But did it not occur to you that the whole thing—coal mine and mine owner and New Yorkers and all—was simply a scheme hatched up to induce you away into the fastnesses of the foothills with a lot of money in your possession?"

A half-bewildered look came over Harris, as of a man gripped by a new and paralyzed thought. But he shook his head. "No, it couldn't have been that," he said. "You see, Miles was an old neighbor of mine, and Mr. Gardner, too, I knew for a good many years. It wasn't like as if I had been dealing with strangers."

"We will go deeper into that matter after a little," said the coroner. "It's very fortunate Mr. Gardner is here to add what light he can to the mystery. We will now adjourn to the room where the younger Mr. Harris lies and hear his evidence. It would be unwise to move him for some days yet."

"I can't tell you how it happened, Doctor," he said, turning his eyes, larger now in his pale face, upon the coroner, "but I think I got very homesick—I guess I was pretty tired, too—and I began thinking of things that had happened long ago, back when I was a little child, in a little sod shanty that the old shack in the valley some way seemed to bring to mind. And then I guess I fell asleep, too, but suddenly I sat up in a great fright. I'm not a coward," he said, with a faint smile. "When I'm feeling myself it takes more than a notion or a dark night to send the creeps up the back of my neck. But I own I sat up there so frightened my teeth chattered. I had a feeling that I was going to be attacked—I didn't know by what—maybe by a wild beast—but something was going to rush in through that old blanket hanging in the door and pounce on me."

The sweat was standing on Allan's face, and he sank back weakly into the pillows. Beulah placed a glass to his lips, and the doctor told him to take his time with his story.

"As the minutes went by," Allan continued, after an interval, "that terrible dread grew upon me, and my sense of danger changed from fear to certainty. Something was going to attack me through that door! I raised my gun and took careful aim. I saw the blanket swing a little; then I saw the fingers of a man's hand. Then I fired."

"Perhaps I am a murderer," he continued, simply, "but before God I know no more why I fired that shot than you do."

There were deep breathing and shuffling of feet as Allan completed this part of his statement, but only the coroner found his voice. "Most remarkable evidence," he ejaculated. "Most extraordinary evidence. I have never heard anything so obviously sincere and at the same time so altogether unexplainable."

"Perhaps it's not so unexplainable," said a quiet voice; and Mary Harris made her way through the circle of men to the side of the bed. She sat down on the coverlet and took the boy's hand in hers. It mattered not how many were looking on; he was her little boy again.

"You will understand, Doctor, and some of you men are parents," she began. "Allan will be twenty-five years old this coming winter. A little less than 25 years ago my husband was obliged to leave me alone for a considerable period in our little sod shanty on the homestead where we had located down in Manitoba. There were no near neighbors, as we count distance in well-settled districts, and I was altogether alone. I stood it all right for the first day or two, but my nerves were not what they should have been, and gradually a strange, unreasoning fear came upon me. I suppose it was the immensity of the prairies, the terrible loneliness of it all, and my own state of health, but the dread grew from day to day and from night to night. I tried to busy myself, to keep my mind active, to throw off the specter that haunted

me, but day and night I was oppressed with a sense of impending danger. We had no wooden door on the house; we hadn't money to buy the boards to make one, and all my protection was a blanket hung in the doorway. I used to watch that blanket at night; I would light the lantern and sit in the corner and watch that blanket. My fear gradually pictured to itself an attack through that doorway—I didn't know by what; by white man, or Indian, or wild beast, or ghost, or worse, if that is possible; my mind could not balance things; nothing seemed too unreasonable or terrible to expect. So I took the gun, and sat in the corner, and waited."
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

USE OF ETHER IN SURGERY

Youthful Dentist Said to Have Been Responsible for Its Introduction to General Practice.

While various experiments had been made with so-called "laughing gas" or nitrous oxide gas in America prior to 1840, it was some 74 years ago that the first practical operation under ether was performed in the Massachusetts General hospital in Boston, and the peculiar part of it was that the sulphuric ether was given, not by one of the house physicians, but by a young dentist who had been experimenting on himself and had gone to sleep for eight minutes. He rushed over to the hospital and asked a chance to demonstrate his discovery. A man about to have a tumor removed from his neck gave permission to have the "new-fangled dope" applied. Dentist Morton went to work and the tumor was removed. The patient opening his eyes after the operation cried, "Gentlemen, this is no humbug," and with that remark ether was given to the medical world.

Oliver Wendell Holmes came forward with names for the process and the liquid, and the dictionary gained "anesthesia" and "anesthetic." In three months the drug was being used throughout the civilized world.

China's Miracle.

The miracle of South China is associated in my mind with a certain landscape in northern China. Near Chinglungshan, on the Peking-Kalgan section of the Chinese government railways, it was necessary for a section of the great wall of China to be demolished in order to let the locomotive pass through. At a point where one instinctively pauses to enjoy an impressive view of the historic barrier which winds up the precipitous sides of the mountain like a huge dragon, the eye drops back to the foreground and to the familiar switch signal that indicates a sidetrack. There it stands in the very gap made in the great wall, this prosaic emblem of modern progress. This switch signal and a huge billboard on the crest of the mountain to remind the visitor of the merits of a certain brand of cigars are my most vivid memories of the great wall of China.—Edgar Allan Forbes in Leslie's.

Dignified Rebuke.

The captain of a battleship recently in New York harbor is celebrated throughout the fleet for his dignity and his conscientious efforts to set in his own behavior a good example to his men. Among other rules he made for himself while in port was one which, when he went ashore, brought him back to his ship every night before midnight. On one occasion a combination of circumstances delayed him and he did not get aboard until near 1 a. m. The lieutenant on duty saluted the skipper with professional smartness and cheerfully said: "Good morning, captain."

The captain returned the salute punctiliously and replied thus to the greeting: "Good evening, Mr. Blank; you have a great deal to learn of your profession, sir."

An Egyptian Orchestra.

A full Egyptian orchestra was composed of twenty harps, eight lutes, five or six lyres, six or seven double pipes, five or six flutes, one or two pipes (rarely used), two or three tambourines (seldom used). If vocalists were added, which was not necessarily the rule, they would number about three-fourths as many as the harpers.

Land of the Sugar Maple.

The finest and most abundant growth of the sugar maple is found in the New England states, New York, northern and western Pennsylvania and westward throughout the region of the Great Lakes to Minnesota. In the southern Appalachians it grows well where climatic conditions are similar to those farther north.

The Eyesight in Dreams.

To dream of your sight is a good omen. To dream you are near-sighted denotes annoyance from enemies. To dream you see a great distance signifies long life. A gunsight foretells quarrels.

The practical farmer raises better crops than the theoretical agriculturist.

FREEZING FRUIT TO HELP PRESERVATION

Method Has Passed Experimental Stage in West.

Practice Is to Be Recommended in Sections Where There is Surplus and Sufficient Cold-Storage Space Available.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Preserving fresh fruit by freezing has passed the experimental stage in the Middle Western and Pacific states. The office of preservation of fruits and vegetables, bureau of markets, has been investigating the new method for several years and the investigators report that such fruits as strawberries, raspberries, logan berries, blueberries, currants and cherries are now being frozen and held in commercial lots.

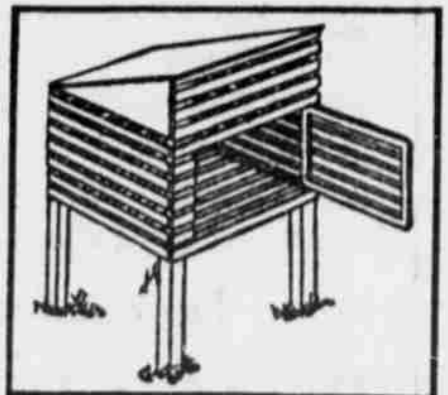
So far as the process is concerned, this method of preservation has all the merits of simplicity. The fruit is frozen in the same crates in which it is marketed. The temperature required is about 10 degrees F., though soft fruit is usually subjected to a lower temperature than that of better quality. So long as the temperature is maintained the fruit can be kept in storage. The frozen product must be used as soon as it is thawed, however, as thawing breaks down the tissues and allows the fruit to decay rapidly.

In ice cream, or when made into pies and preserves, the frozen fruit is in every way comparable to the fresh product. In preparing their report the representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture state that the practice is to be recommended in sections where there is a surplus of production and sufficient cold-storage space available to accommodate the fruit. Only fresh, sound fruit should be frozen. Freezing does not do away with mold, though mold will not develop as long as the fruit remains at the temperatures employed.

TREATMENT OF BROODY HEN

Large and Unnecessary Loss in Summer Production of Farm Flock Can Be Prevented.

There often is a large and altogether unnecessary loss in the summer production of the farm flock, due to the



Coop for Broody Hens.

idleness of numbers of broody hens which are permitted to remain on the nests indefinitely and so are unproductive for many weeks. If such hens are removed from the nest as soon as broodiness develops, are placed in a comfortable coop, and well fed and watered, they usually can be broken up promptly.

There is nothing better than the coop shown here. It is made of pine boards. The floor should be about a foot from the ground. The sides and floor are made of slats spaced one-half to three-quarters of an inch apart.

CULTIVATION IS IMPORTANT

Work Neglected in Garden Often Means Poor Vegetables and Then Very Few of Them.

The mistake of waiting till one has time to spare to cultivate the garden has too often meant poor garden vegetables, and few of them. The garden should be cultivated when the soil is in the proper condition and when the vegetables need it. It should not wait; it is as important as any other farm work and more important than most of it.

HARMFUL TO PASTURE WOODS

Practice Has Been One of Chief Causes of Deterioration—Young Growth Destroyed.

Pasturing of woods has been one of the chief causes of their deterioration. The severity of the damage depends largely on the number of stock and the size of the woods. One characteristic of a heavily pastured woods is the almost complete absence of young growth, or its existence only in small ragged patches as broken or scrubby stuff.