

The BROWN MOUSE

By HERBERT QUICK

(Copyright by The Bobbs-Merrill Company)

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Jennie Woodruff contemptuously refuses to marry Jim Irwin, young farm hand, because of his financial condition and poor prospects. He is intellectually above his station, and has advanced ideas concerning the possibilities of expert school teaching, for which he is ridiculed by many.

CHAPTER II—More is joked than otherwise Jim is selected as teacher of the Woodruff district school.

CHAPTER III—Jim, in his new position, sets out to make staunch friends of his pupils, especially two boys, Newton Bronson and "Buddy" Simms, the latter the son of a wealthy farmer. Colonel Woodruff, Jennie's father, has little faith in Jim's ideas of improving rural educational methods. He nicknames him the "Brown Mouse," in illustration of an anecdote.

CHAPTER IV—Jim's conduct of the school, where he endeavors to teach the children the wonders of nature and some of the scientific methods of farming, as well as "book learning," is commended.

CHAPTER V—Jennie Woodruff is nominated for the position of county superintendent of schools. The school board grows bitter in its opposition to Jim and his innovations.

CHAPTER VI—At a public meeting Jim roundly condemns the methods of teaching in the rural schools, and makes no friends thereby.

CHAPTER VII—A delegation of prominent women condemn Jim's methods of teaching, but he is stoutly defended by his pupils, especially Newton Bronson.

CHAPTER VIII—Jim has Christmas dinner at Colonel Woodruff's, and listening to him, Jennie begins to do some thinking concerning his ability and his prospects.

CHAPTER IX—In the evening Jim, as well as he knows how, courts Jennie, without, however, making much progress, though she is quickly losing her poor opinion of him.

CHAPTER X—Jennie, elected county superintendent of schools, receives so many complaints from people of the district concerning Jim's methods of teaching that she finds herself compelled formally to ask for his resignation. After she has left, Jim is visited by Colonel Woodruff, who strongly urges him to refuse to resign, and offers to back him. Jim agrees to stick, for a while at least.

CHAPTER XI—A meeting of the school board, which had been gathered to "get" Jim, is confronted by Jennie, who upholds him. He conducts an examination of his pupils at the meeting, to prove that he is not neglecting their "book learning" by the introduction of other subjects which he considers of importance. The splendid showing made by the children converts many, who had doubted, to his views.

The Chicago papers had a news item which covered the result of the examinations; but the great sensation of the Woodruff district lay in the Sunday feature carried by one of them.

It had a picture of Jim Irwin, and one of Jennie Woodruff—the latter authentic, and the former gleaned from the morgue, and apparently the portrait of a lumber-jack. There was also a very free treatment by the cartoonist of Mr. Simms carrying a rifle with the intention of shooting up the school board in case the decision went against the schoolmaster.

"When it became known," said the news story, "that the schoolmaster had bet his job on the proficiency of his school in studies supposed and alleged to have been studiously neglected, the excitement rose to fever heat. Local sports bet freely on the result, the odds being eight to five on General Proficiency against the field. The field was Jim Irwin and his school. And the way those rural kids rose in their night and ate up the textbooks was simply scandalous. When the fight was over, and the dead and wounded cared for, the school board and the county superintendent were forced to admit that they wished the average school could do as well under a similar test.

"The local Mr. Dooley is Cornelius Bonner, a member of the board." When asked for a statement of his views after the county superintendent had decided that her old sweetheart was to be allowed the priceless boon of earning forty dollars a month during the remainder of his contract, Mr. Bonner said, "Aside from being licked, we're all right. But we'll get this guy yet, don't fall down and ferret that!"

"The examinations tend to show," said Mr. Bonner, when asked for his opinion on the result, "that in order to learn anything you shud study somethin' else. But we'll git this guy yet!"

"Jim," said Colonel Woodruff, as they rode home together, "I'm just beginning to understand what you're driving at. And I like being a wild-eyed-reformer more and more."

CHAPTER XII

At the Farmers' Institute.

Every Iowa county has its Farmers' Institute. Usually it is held in the county seat, and is a gathering of farmers for the purpose of listening to improving discussions and addresses both instructive and entertaining. The Woodruff district was interested in the institute, however, because of the fact that a rural-school exhibit was one of its features that year, and that Colonel Woodruff had secured an urgent invitation to the school to take part in it.

Such exhibits are now so common

that it is not worth while for us to describe it; but then, the sight of a class of children testing and weighing milk, examining grains for viability and fowl seeds, planning crop rotations, judging grains and live stock was so new in that county as to be the real sensation of the institute.

Two persons were a good deal embarrassed by the success of the exhibit. One was the county superintendent, who was constantly in receipt of undesired compliments upon her wisdom in fostering really "practical



"Come and Tell Us About Those Things."

work in the schools." The other was Jim Irwin, who was becoming famous, and who felt he had done nothing to deserve fame. Professor Withers, an extension lecturer from Ames, took Jim to dinner at the best hotel in the town, for the purpose of talking over with him the needs of the rural schools.

"You've got to come down to our farmers' week next year, and tell us about these things," said he to Jim. "Can't you?"

Jim's brain reeled. He got to a gathering of real educators and tell his crude notions! How could he get the money for his expenses? But he had that gameness which goes with supreme confidence in the thing dealt with.

"I'll come," said he. "Thank you," said the Ames man. "There's a small honorarium attached, you know."

Jim was staggered. He tried to remember what an honorarium is. Was he obliged to pay an honorarium for the chance to speak before the college gathering? Well, he'd save money and pay it.

"I'll try to take care of the honorarium," said he. "I'll come." The professor laughed. It was the first joke the gangling innovator had perpetrated.

"It won't bother you to take care of it," said he, "but if you're not too extravagant it will pay your expenses and give you a few dollars over."

Jim breathed more freely. An honorarium was paid to the person receiving the honor, then. What a relief!

"All right," he exclaimed. "I'll be glad to come!"

"Let's consider that settled," said the professor. "And now I must be going back to the opera-house. My talk on soil sickness comes next. I tell you, the winter wheat crop has been—"

But Jim was not able to think much of the winter wheat problem as they went back to the auditorium. He was worth the appreciation of a college professor, trained to think on the very matters Jim had been so long mauling over in isolation and blindness!

Callista Simms thought she saw something shining and saint-like about the comely face of her teacher as he came to her at her post in the room in which the school exhibit was held. Callista was in charge of the little children whose work was to be demonstrated that day, and was in a state of exaltation to which her starved being had hitherto been a stranger. Perhaps there was something similar in her condition of fervent happiness to that of Jim. She, too, was doing something outside the sordid life of the Simms cabin. She yearned over the children in her care, and would have been glad to die for them—and besides was not Newton Bronson in charge of the corn exhibit, and a member of the corn-judging team?

To the eyes of the town girls who passed about among the exhibits, she was poorly dressed; but if they could have seen the clothes she had worn on that evening when Jim Irwin first called at their cabin they could perhaps have understood the sense of well-being and happiness in Callista's soul at the feeling of her dress, and the "boughten" cloak she wore—and any of them, even without knowledge of this, might have understood Callista's joy at the knowledge that Newton Bronson's eyes were on her from his station by the big pillar.

"Hello, Callista!" said Jim. "How are you enjoying it?"

"Oh!" said Callista, and drew a long, long breath. "Ah'm enjoying myself right much, Mr. Jim."

"Any of the home folks coming in to see?"

"Yes, seh," answered Callista. "All the school board have stopped by this morning."

Jim looked about him. There they were now, over in a corner, with their heads together. He went toward them, his face still beaming with that radiance which had shone so plainly to the eyes of Callista Simms, but they saw in it only a grin of exultation over his defeat of them at the hearing before Jennie Woodruff. When Jim had drawn so close as almost to call for the extended hand, he felt the repulsion of their attitudes and sheered off on some pretended errand to a dark corner across the room.

They resumed their talk.

"And as I was sayin'," went on Bonner. "I want to get this guy. Jim

Irwin, an' wear the course of his gait in the school, I'd like to be on the board to kick him off; but if you fellers would like to have some one else, I won't run, and if the right feller is named, I'll line up what friends I got for him."

"You got no friend can git as many votes as you can," said Peterson. "I thank you better run."

"What say, Ez?" asked Bonner. "Suits me all right," said Bronson. "I guess we three have had our fight out and understand each other."

"I don't like the way Colonel Woodruff acts," said Bonner. "He rounded up that gang of kids that shot us all to pieces at that hearing, didn't he?"

"I tank not," replied Peterson. "I tank he was just interested in how Jennie managed it."

"Well," said Bonner, "he seems to take a lot of interest in this exhibition here. I think we'd better watch the colonel. That decision of Jennie's was crooked."

"Well," said Hankon Peterson, "talk of crookedness wit' Jennie Woodruff don't get wery fur wit' me."

"Oh, I don't mean anything bad, Hankon," replied Bonner, "but it wasn't an all-right decision. I think she's stuck on the guy."

The caucus broke up after making sure that the three members of the school board would be as one man in maintaining a hostile front to Jim Irwin and his tenure of office. It looked rather like a foregone conclusion, in a little district wherein there were scarcely twenty-five votes. The three members of the board with their immediate friends and dependents could muster two or three ballots each—and who was there to oppose them?

CHAPTER XIII

The Colonel Takes the Field.

Jim stood apart and alone with his thoughts after his rebuff by the caucusing members of the school board.

"I don't see," said a voice over against the cooking exhibit, "what there is in this to set people talking. Buttonholes! Cookies! Humph!"

It was Mrs. Bronson who had clearly come to scoff. With her was Mrs. Bronson, whose attitude was that of a person torn between conflicting influences. Her husband had indicated to the crafty Bonner and the subtle Peterson that he was still loyal to the school board, but while consorting with the censorious Mrs. Bronson she evinced restiveness when the school and its work was condemned. Was not her Newton in charge of a part of this show? Was he not an open and defiant champion of Jim Irwin, and a constant and enthusiastic attendant upon, not only his classes, but a variety of evening and Saturday affairs? And had not Newton become a better boy—a wonderfully better boy?

Mrs. Bronson's heart was filled with resentment that she also could not be enrolled among Jim Irwin's supporters. And when Mrs. Bonner sneered at the buttonholes and cookies, Mrs. Bronson, knowing how the little fingers had puzzled themselves over the one, and young faces had become flouzy and red over the other, flared up a little.

"And I don't see," said she, "anything to laugh at. I'd like to help them."

Mrs. Bonner was far too good a diplomat to be cornered in the same enclosure with a rupture of relations. "And quite right, too," said she. "The little things ought to be helped—at home and by their mothers."

"Well," said Mrs. Bronson, "take them Simms girls, now. They have to have help outside their home."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Bonner, "and a lot more help than a farm-hand can give 'em in school. I shouldn't wonder if there was a lot we don't know about why they come north."

"As for that," replied Mrs. Bronson, "I don't know as it's any of my business so long as they behave themselves."

Again Mrs. Bonner felt the situation getting out of hand. "Ain't it some of our business?" she queried. "I wonder now! By the way Newtie keeps his eye on that Simms girl, I shouldn't wonder if it might turn out your business."

"Pshaw!" scoffed Mrs. Bronson. "Puppy love!"

"You can't tell how far it'll go," persisted Mrs. Bonner. "I tell you these schools are getting to be nothing more than sparkin' bees, from the county superintendent down."

"Well, maybe," said Mrs. Bronson, "but I don't see sparkin' in everything boys and girls do as quick as some."

"I wonder," said Mrs. Bonner, "if Colonel Woodruff would be as friendly to Jim Irwin if he knew that everybody says Jennie decided he was to keep his certifi-kit because she wants him to get along in the world, so he can marry her?"

"I don't know as she is so very friendly to him," replied Mrs. Bronson; "and Jim and Jennie are both of age, you know."

"Yes, but how about our schools bein' ruined by a love affair?" interjected Mrs. Bonner, as they moved away. "Ain't that your business and mine?"

Instead of desiring further knowledge of what they were discussing, Jim felt a dreadful disgust at the whole thing. Jennie was against him, he believed, and as for her being in love with him—to hear these women discuss it was intolerable. He felt his face redden as at the hearing of some horrible indecency. And while he was raging inwardly, paying the penalty of a publicity to which he was not yet hardened, he heard other voices. Professor Withers, County Superintendent Jennie and Colonel Woodruff were making an inspection of the rural-school exhibit.

"I hear he has been having some trouble with his school board," the

professor was saying.

"Yes," said Jennie, "he has. Proceedings before me to revoke his certificate."

"On what grounds?"

"Incompetency," answered Jennie. "I found that his pupils were really going very well in the regular course of study—which he seems to be neglecting."

"I'm glad you supported him," said the professor. "I'm glad to find you helping him."

"Really," protested Jennie, "I don't think myself—"

"What do you think of his notions?" asked the colonel.

"Very advanced," replied Professor Withers. "Where did he imbibe them all?"

"He's a Brown Mouse," said the colonel. "A phenomenon in heredity—perhaps a genius."

"Ah, I see," replied the professor, "a Mendelian segregation, you mean?"

"Certainly," said the colonel. "The sort of mind that imbibes things from itself."

"Well, he's rather wonderful," declared the professor. "I had him to lunch today. He surprised me. I have invited him to make an address at Ames next winter during farmers' week."

"He?"

Jennie's tone showed her astonishment. Jim the underling, Jim the office boy, Jim the thorn in the county superintendent's side, Jim the country teacher! It was stupefying.

"Oh, you mustn't judge him by his looks," said the professor. "I really do hope he'll take some advice on the matter of clothes—put on a cravat and a different shirt and collar when he comes to Ames—but I have no doubt he will."

"He hasn't any other," said the colonel.

"Well, it won't signify, if he has the truth to tell us," said the professor.

"Has he?" asked Jennie.

"Miss Woodruff," replied the professor earnestly, "he has something that looks toward truth, and something we need. Just how far he will



"I Have Invited Him to Make an Address."

go, just what he will amount to, it is impossible to say. But something must be done for the rural schools—something along the lines he is trying to follow. He is a struggling soul, and he is worth helping. You won't make any mistake if you make the most of Mr. Irwin."

Jim slipped out of a side door and fed. He started home, on foot as he had come. A mile or so out he was overtaken by the colonel, driving briskly along with room in his buggy for Jim.

"Climb in, Jim!" said he. "Dan and Dolly didn't like to see you walk."

"They're looking fine," said Jim. "There is a good deal to say whenever two horse lovers get together. But when Jim had alighted at his own door, the colonel spoke of what had been in his mind all the time.

"I saw Bonner and Hankon and Ez doing some caucusing today," said he. "They expect to elect Bonner to the board again."

"Oh, I suppose so," replied Jim.

"Well, what shall we do about it?" asked the colonel.

Jim was silent. Here was a matter on which he really had no ideas except the broad and general one that truth is mighty and shall prevail—but that the speed of its forward march is problematical.

"I think," said the colonel, "that it's up to us to see that the people have a chance to decide. It's really Bonner against Jim Irwin."

"What you need is a man to take that office away from Bonner."

"Well, I'm free to say I don't know that any one can, but I'm willing to try. I think that in about a week I shall pass the word around that I'd like to serve my country on the school board."

Jim's face lighted up—and then darkened.

"Even then they'd be two to one, Colonel."

"Maybe," replied the colonel, "and maybe not. That would have to be figured on. A cracked log splits easy."

"Anvhow," Jim went on, "what's the

use? I shan't be disturbed this year—and after that—what's the use?"

"Why, Jim," said the colonel, "you aren't getting short of breath are you? I thought you good for the mile, and you aren't turning out a quarter horse, are you? I don't know what all it is you want to do, but I don't believe you can do it in nine months, can you?"

"Not in nine years!" replied Jim.

"Well, then, let's plan for ten years," said the colonel. "I ain't going to become a reformer at my time of life as a temporary job. Will you stick if we can swing the thing for you?"

"I will," said Jim, in a manner of a person taking the vows in some solemn initiation.

"All right," said the colonel. "We'll keep quiet and see how many votes we can muster up at the election. How many can you speak for?"

Jim gave himself for a few minutes to thought. It was a new thing to him, this matter of mustering votes—and a thing which he had always looked upon as rather reprehensible. The citizen should go forth with no coercion, no persuasion, no suggestion, and vote his sentiments.

"How many can you round up?" persisted the colonel.

"I think," said Jim, "that I can speak for myself and Old Man Simms!"

The colonel laughed.

"Fine politician!" he repeated. "Fine politician! Well, Jim, you round up yourself and Old Man Simms and I'll see what I can do—I'll see what I can do!"

(To be continued)

Hitching Horseless Buggies.

Because of being pestered by motor thefts a small town in California has set up a row of concrete hitching posts on the main street for the use of motorists. When the farmers drive in for their Saturday shopping now they drive the car up to the hitching rail, as in bygone days, and chain the wheels to the nearest post.

IT PAYS TO READ THE HERALD ADS

Forehanded People

Inside of the vault of the bank are located the individual Safe Deposit Boxes maintained for those forehanded people who want the BEST OF PROTECTION for their valuables. Bonds, stocks, insurance policies, mortgages, records, receipts, jewelry, trinkets, etc., deserve better protection than they receive when kept in an office safe, tin box or hidden away somewhere.

This bank has these Safe Deposit Boxes for rent at the rate of two dollars a year and up, according to the size of the box. It offers you the opportunity to keep your valuables where it keeps its own. Rent a Safe Deposit Box today, for the number now vacant is limited.

Farmers and Stockgrowers National Bank

HEPPNER, OREGON

Thomson Bros.

OUR STORE is headquarters for seasonable merchandise.

We can feed and clothe the whole family from soup to nuts and from hats to shoes

See our line of

Suits and Overcoats for Men and Boys

Job Printing SEE US

When in need of anything in the line of neat and attractive printing.