

The BROWN MOUSE

By HERBERT QUICK

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CHAPTER XXII

And So They Lived—

And so it turned out quite as if it were in the old ballad, that "all in the merry month of May," and also "all in the merry green wood," there were great doings about the hold little promontory where once stood the cabin on the old wood-lot where the Simms family had dwelt.

The brook ran about the promontory, and laid at its feet on three sides a carpet of blue-grass, amid clumps of trees and wild bushes. Not far ahead on either hand came the black corn-land, but up and down the bluffy sides of the brook for some distance on both sides of the King-dragged highway, ran the old wood-lot, now regaining much of the unkempt appearance which characterized it when Jim Irwin had drawn upon himself the gentle rebuke of Old Man Simms for not giving a whoop from the big road before coming into the yard.

The cabin was gone, and in its place stood a pretty little bungalow, about which blossomed lilacs and peonies and roses and other old-fashioned flowers furnished by Mrs. Irwin. For this was the teacher's house or schoolmanse for the new consolidated Woodruff district, and the old Simms wood-lot was henceforth to be the glebe-land of the schoolmanse.

Jim turned over and over in his mind these new applications of old, historic, significant words, dear to every reader of history—"glebe-land," "schoolmanse"—and it seemed to him that they signified the return of many old things lost in Merrie England, lost in New England, lost all over the English-speaking world, when the old publicly-paid clergyman ceased to be so far the servant of all the people that they refused to be taxed for his support. Was not the new kind of rural teacher to be a publicly-paid leader of thought, of culture, of progress, and was he not to have his manse, his glebe-land, and his "living"? And all because, like the old clergyman, he was doing a work in which everybody was interested and for which they were willing to be taxed. Perhaps it was not so high a status as the old; but who was to say that? Certainly not Jim Irwin, the possessor of the new kind of "living," with its "glebe-land" and its "schoolmanse." He would have rated the new as at least quite as high as the old.

From the brow of the promontory, a light concrete bridge took the pretty little gorge in the loop of a single arch, and landed the eye at the bottom of the front yard of the schoolhouse. Thus the new institution of life was in full view of the schoolmanse veranda, and yet shut off from it by the dry moat of the brook and its tiny meadow of blue-grass.

Across the road was the creamery, with its businesslike unloading platform, and its addition in process of construction for the reception of the machinery for the co-operative laundry. Not far from the creamery, and also across the road, stood the blacksmith and wheelwright shop. Still farther down the street were the barn, poultry house, pens, hutches and yards of the little farm—small, as were all the buildings save the schoolhouse itself, which was builded, as it should have been, for the future.

And even the schoolhouse, when one thinks of the uses to which it was to be put—kitchen, nursery, kindergarten, banquet hall, theater, moving picture hall, classrooms, manual training rooms, laboratory and counting room and what not, was wonderfully small—Colonel Woodruff said far too small—though it was necessarily so large as to be rather astonishing to the unexpected passer-by.

The unexpected passer-by this May day, however, would have been especially struck by the number of motor cars, buggies and surreys parked in the yard back of the creamery, along the roadside, and by the driveway running to the schoolhouse. People in numbers had arrived by five o'clock in the afternoon, and were still coming. They strolled about the place, examining the buildings and grounds, and talking with the blacksmith and the butter-maker.

Gradually they drew into the schoolhouse like a swarm of bees into a hive selected by the queen. None of them, however, went across the concrete bridge to the schoolmanse, save Mrs. Simms, who crossed, consulted with Mrs. Irwin about the shrubbery and flowers, and went back to Boddie and Jinnie, who were good children but natchally couldn't be trusted with so many other young ones withouten some watchin'.

"They're coming! They're coming!" This was the cry borne to the people in and about the schoolhouse by that

the sudden rush of the snouters into the big assembly room, now filled with tables for the banquet. And here the domestic economy classes, with their mothers, sisters, female cousins and aunts, met them, as waiters, hat snatchers, hostesses, floor managers and cooks, scoring the greatest triumph of history in the Woodruff district. For everything went off like clockwork, especially the victuals—and such victuals!

There was quantity in meats, breads, vegetables—and there was also savor. There was plenty, and there was style. Ask Mrs. Haakon Peterson, who yearned for culture, and had been afraid her children wouldn't get it if Jim Irwin taught them nothing but farming. She will tell you that the dinner—which so many thought of all the time as supper—was just as well served as if it had been in the Chamberlain Hotel in Des Moines, where she had stayed when she went with Haakon to the state convention.

Why shouldn't it have been even better served? It was planned, cooked, served and eaten by people of intelligence and brains, in their own house, as a community affair, and in a community where, if any one should ask you, you are authorized to state that there's as much wealth to the acre as in any strictly farming spot between the two oceans, and where you are perfectly safe—financially—in dropping from a balloon in the dark of the moon, and paying a hundred and fifty dollars an acre for any farm you happen to land on. Why shouldn't things have been well done, when every one worked, not for money, but for the love of the doing, and the love of learning to do in the best way?



Jim Picked Jennie Up and Carried Her in His Arms.

Jennie up in his arms and carried her in, will enable any good detective to put one and one together and make a pair—which comes pretty near telling the whole story.

By this time it was nearly seven, and Cullista Simms came across the charmed bridge as a dispatch-bearer, saying that if Mr. Jim and Miss Jennie didn't mind, dinner would be served right soon. It was cooked about right, and the folks was gettin' right hungry—an' such a crowd! There were fifteen in the babies' room, and for a while they thought the youngest Hamu young one had swallowed a marble. She would tell 'em they would be right over; good-by.

There was another cheer as the three elderly and the two younger people emerged from the schoolmanse and took their way over the bridge to the school side of the velvet-bottomed moat, but it was shut off like the vibration of a bell dinned in water by

the sudden rush of the snouters into the big assembly room, now filled with tables for the banquet. And here the domestic economy classes, with their mothers, sisters, female cousins and aunts, met them, as waiters, hat snatchers, hostesses, floor managers and cooks, scoring the greatest triumph of history in the Woodruff district. For everything went off like clockwork, especially the victuals—and such victuals!

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Some of these things came out in the speeches following the repast—and some other things, too. It was probably not quite fair for B. B. Hamu to incorporate in his wishes for the welfare and prosperity and so forth of Jim and Jennie that state one about the troubles of life, but he wanted to see Jennie blush—which was a matter of fact he did; but she failed to grow quite so fiery red as did Jim. But B. B. was a good fellow, and a Trojan in his work for the cause, and the schoolmaster and superintendent of schools forgave him. A remark may be a little broad, and still clean, and B. B. made a clean speech, mainly devoted to the increased value of that farm he at one memorable time was going to sell before Jim's fool notions could be carried out.

Colonel Woodruff made most of the

above points which I have gleaned from Jim. He had begun as a reformer late in life, he said, but he would leave it to them if he hadn't worked at the trade steadily after enlistment. He had become a follower of Jim Irwin, because Jim's reform was like dragging the road in front of your own farm—it was reform right at home, and not at the county seat, or Des Moines, or Washington. He had followed Jim Irwin as he had followed Lincoln, and Grant, and Blaine, and McKinley—because Jim Irwin stood for more upward growth for the average American citizen than the colonel could see any prospect of getting from any other choice. And he was proud to live in a country like this, saved and promoted by the great men he had followed, and in a neighborhood served and promoted, if not quite saved, by Jim Irwin. And he was not so sure about it not being saved. Every man and nation had to be saved anew every so often, and the colonel believed that Jim Irwin's new kind of rural school is just as necessary to the salvation of this country. "I am about to close my speech," said the colonel, "and the small service I have been able to give to this nation. I went through the war, neighbors—and am proud of it; but I've done more good in the peaceful service of the last three years than I did in four of fighting and campaigning. There's the way I feel about what we've done in Consolidated District Number One." (Vociferous and long-continued applause.)

"Oh, Colonel!" The voice of Angie Talcott rose from away back near the kitchen. "Can Jennie keep on bein' county superintendent, now she's married?"

A great guffaw of laughter reduced poor Angie to tears; and Jennie had to go over and comfort her. It was all right for her to ask that and they ought not to laugh at Angie, so there! Now, you're all right, and let's talk about the new schoolhouse, and so forth. Jennie brought the smiles back to Angie's face. Just in time to hear Jim tell the people amid tender cheers that he had been asked to go into the rural school extension work in two states, and had been offered a fine salary in either place, but that he wasn't even considering these offers. And about that time, the children began to get sleepy and cross and naughty, and the women set in motion agencies which moved the crowd homeward.

Before a bright wood fire—which they really didn't need, but how else was Jim's mother to show off the little

reformer—sat Jim and Jennie. They had been together for a week now—this being their homecoming—and had only begun to get really happy.

Jim sat looking into the fire, oblivious of it. When Jennie spoke, her voice seemed to emanate from Jim's shirt front.

"Did you hear," said she, "what Angie Talcott asked?"

"M'h'm," said Jim.

"Well," said Jennie, "now that I'm married can I go on being county superintendent?"

There was a long silence.

"Would you like to?" asked Jim.

"Kind of," said Jennie; "if I knew enough about things to do anything worth while; but I'm afraid that by rising to my full height I shall always just fail to be able to see over anything."

"You've done more for the schools of the county," said Jim, "in the last year than any other county superintendent has ever done."

"And we shall need the money so like—so like the dickens," was Jennie's rejoinder.

"Oh, not so badly," laughed Jim, "except for the first year. I'll have this little farm paying us much as some quarter sections when we get squared about. Why, we can make a living on this school farm, Jennie—or I'm not fit to be the head of the school."

There was another silence, during which Jennie took down her hair, and wound it around Jim's neck.

"It will settle itself one of these days anyhow," said he at last. "There's enough to do for both of us right here."

"But they won't pay me," she protested.

"They don't pay the ministers' wives," said Jim, "and yet, the ministers with the right sort of wives are always the best paid. I guess you'll be in the bill, Jennie."

Jim walked to the open window and looked out over the still landscape. Down in the little meadow grew the dreaming trees, their round crowns rising as from a sea not quite to the level of the bungalow, their thrifty leaves glistening in the moonlight. Across the pretty bridge lay the silent little campus with its Twentieth century temple facing its chief priest. It was all good, without and within.

He went across the hall to bid his mother good night. She clung to him convulsively, and they had their own five minutes which arranged matters for these two silent natures on the new basis forever. Jennie was in white before the mantel when he returned

singing at the inscription in person:

"Let Us Cease Thinking So Much of Agricultural Education, and Devote Ourselves to Educational Agriculture. So Will the Nation Be Made Strong."

"Why didn't you put it in Latin?" she inquired. "It would have had so much more distinction."

"I wanted it to have meaning instead," said Jim. "And besides, nobody who was at hand was quite sure how to turn the Latin phrase. Are you?"

Jennie leaned forward with her elbows on her knees, and studied it.

"I believe I could," said she, "without any pony. But after all, I like it better as it is. I like everything, Jim—everything!"

[THE END.]

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON For Morrow County

Cecile M. Dempsey, Plaintiff,

vs

Thomas V. Dempsey, Defendant.

IN THE NAME OF THE STATE OF OREGON: You are hereby required to appear and answer the plaintiff's complaint filed herein, against you in the above entitled court and cause, within six weeks from the date of the first publication of this summons; and if you fail to appear and answer said complaint, for want thereof the plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief prayed for in her complaint, which is as follows, to wit: That the bonds of matrimony now and heretofore existing between the plaintiff and the defendant be dissolved and forever held for naught, and that the plaintiff have an absolute divorce from the defendant.

This summons is served upon you by publication thereof for the period of six weeks in the Heppner Herald, a weekly newspaper of general circulation, printed and published at Heppner, Oregon, by order of Hon. W. T. Campbell, County Judge of Morrow County, State of Oregon, made and entered on the 3rd day of March, 1924.

The date of first publication is March 4, 1924.

WOODSON & SWECK, Attorneys for Plaintiff.

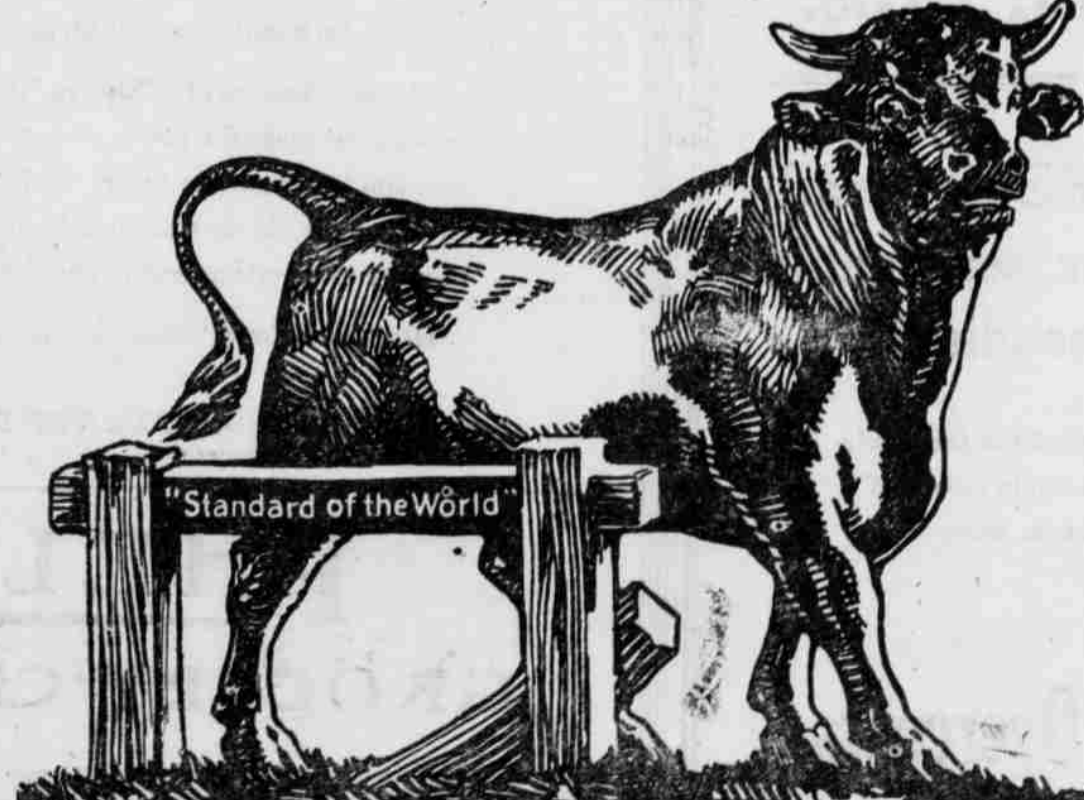
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