

JOE THE BOOK FARMER MAKING GOOD ON THE LAND

By GARRARD HARRIS

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SYNOPSIS

Joe Weston, fourteen years old, decides to make a success of his father's run-down farm. He reads the latest scientific books...

Joe's father is pessimistic. He sneers at book farming and book farmers. Mr. Somerville, struck with Joe's business ability and ambition, backs him in prize competitions.

Passersby on the road linger to watch Joe operate. The sneers that were in evidence at first soon give way to looks of surprise. Joe is showing them something he's a farmer.

Joe's corn is the wonder of the country. Joe's corn is the wonder of the country. Joe's corn is the wonder of the country.

There is a constant demand for the corn Joe is raising. In the prize competition Joe makes 125 bushels on an acre at a cost of \$12.50.

It is announced that book farmer, won the first corn prize for his country. His father says, "Son, I'm powerful proud of ye."

Joe is overwhelmed with joy at receipt of a telegram that he also had won state championship. With the money he pays off part of the farm's indebtedness. He also wins trip to White House.

Joe describes to his mother and sister his trip to the White House and his talk with the president. Then he goes back to the farm, which now is the talk of the entire countryside.

Joe meets Tom Ralston, a boy of about his own age. Tom is from the north and is in quest of health. The Ralston boy's father is wealthy, and Joe and Tom become fast friends.

CHAPTER XI.

Joe's Father Studies.

JOE went ahead with his preparations on his own acre, the same land that he had used the last year. He had sowed it down in rye as a winter cover crop and to prevent washing of the soil and at the same time to afford a winter pasture for the stock and pigs. The rye was to be turned under when the ground was first broken in the spring. Mr. Weston had planted six acres in oats, but proposed to let them mature after having been grazed by the stock during the winter.

In his spare time Joe now hauled leaves; but, since there was stock on the place, the leaves were not applied direct to the land. The cows and horses were bedded in the leaves, and a covered pen was built back of the barn into which the leaves and bedding from the stalls were thrown each day.

"Ain't no use in buildin' a fertilizer pen, Joe," objected his father when the subject was first mentioned. "Just pitch it out there under the eaves, an' the rain an' water 'll help rot it."

"Yes, and over half its value will be running off in waste water toward the creek," said Joe. "The water will take most of the ammonia and a heap of the nitrogen and phosphoric acid and such out of it. No; let's keep it dry until we are ready to apply it; then it will not lose its strength. There's a government bulletin on the care of barnyard fertilizer. Haven't you read it?"

"No; I ain't had time yet. I've got so much to learn an' so much to read. An' you know readin' is mighty hard work for me. I ain't had as much schoolin' in all my life as you've had a ready."

Joe felt sorry for his father, who seemed so keenly conscious of late regarding his own limitations. Joe sought to make him feel easier.

"Well, it isn't strange you haven't read it—there are so many of them—but I have, and that's what it says about taking care of the fertilizer. Fols lose from 25 to 60 per cent of the value letting it stay out in the weather."

"All right, then; let's fix a shelter for it."

"And I'll tell you what, pa," suggested Joe. "Let's go through that pile of bulletins and pick out the ones that will help us right now—read some one every night. While I study my lessons you read as much as you can on the bulletins. Then when I get through with the school books I'll read aloud what you've been reading, and we'll talk about it as we go along."

"That's just a fine idee!"

"We'll sort out that pile tonight and make a start."

Accordingly after supper Joe and his father went through the armful of government bulletins and picked out about a dozen to form their course of study until summer. After they had finished the one on barnyard fertilizers they took two evenings to review and discuss it.

"Tell you what, Joe," said Mr. Weston the second evening, "that there bulletin has given me lots of ideas. Now, we all know one of the biggest expenses in farmin' right is this here



"Now, I see by this here bulletin," said Joe's father.

commercial fertilizer. Seems to me if we could find some way to take its place we could save a whole lot."

"That's just the thing we want to do—instead of paying the fertilizer factories for it, do our own manufacturin'."

"Sure, an' make the profit ourselves. You know and I know the commercial fertilizer is gone in a year. Maybe a little of the phosphate stays in the soil for the next year, but not enough to do any good. Got to buy again next year."

"That's so."

"Now, I see by this here bulletin we've just read that an experiment showed that seven years after a piece of soil was treated with barnyard fertilizer it showed effects of the stuff as against a piece of the same land treated with commercial fertilizer. That showed no trace hardly after the second year."

"Looks like the thing to do is to figure the way to get more barnyard stuff and build the land up so it will stay built," commented Joe.

"That's just what I mean, son. Stop the outgo for the commercial chemical stuff."

"How are we going to do it?"

"It's goin' to be slow work. In the first place, we've got to have more cattle, an' we've got practically no money now. But we can do this: Winter is on, an' folks will sell cattle cheap rather than feed 'em. We ought to be able to pick up a dozen or so half starved little calves for next to nothing. We can get credit at the bank for a hundred dollars, an' I think we better put it in calves."

"Say," observed Joe, "that's a perfectly fine scheme. I know where I can buy two five-months-old calves now for \$2 apiece."

"An' I'll start tomorrow to bust up six or seven acres more an' put in more oats. It's late, I know, but they will make all right. That will give winter grazing and stuff to feed on an' straw to bed 'em in an' turn under later. We can pull them calves through without much cost until grass comes out; then next summer put every foot of ground we can in pea vine hay."

"Peas are fine for the land—collect nitrogen from the air and store it on the roots in those little bumps—'nodules' the book calls them," said Joe. "Then the leaves that fall from the pea vines help put humus in the land along with the decaying roots."

"So with the oats and pea vine hay and fodder we will be well fixed to take a big herd of cattle through next winter, and what nibbin' corn we raise," said Mr. Weston. "We'll keep the cattle up at night, bed 'em in leaves an' straw, compost it, and we've got a good start on fertilizer. In two years more we ought to have those calves in prime fix for beef cattle and get \$50 apiece for 'em."

"That looks mighty fine," assented Joe. "Besides, the oats being grazed by the cattle will help the oats, and the land will get the benefit of what fertilizer is dropped there then, and that will amount to a heap."

"Then," continued Mr. Weston, "I figure that this next fall, instead of selling our cotton seed, we ought to swap it to the oil mill for cottonseed meal and hulls. There's a heap of fattening stuff in the meal, and it forms about a fourth of these commercial fertilizers and furnishes nitrogen. Mix the meal and hulls and feed it to our cattle. We get the benefit of the fattening for the beaves an' then have the rest of it with the nitrogen in it for the land."

"Say, you were late getting started, but you sure are farming like an up to date farmer now!" enthused Joe.

"Tryin' to make up for lost time, son. We'll have somethin' yet, you an' I. Well, as I was sayin', in this scheme we practically get our beef cattle for nothing, get the benefit of permanent fertilizer for the land and ought to make a profit of 60 or 75 per cent on each animal."

"It looks good," judiciously admitted Joe.

"It is good, and it's horse sense too. Why, if we just broke even on han-

dling the cattle it would pay us, for the good we will get in fertilizer for the land and to stop the outgo for chemical stuff each year. But we'll make money on 'em, big money."

"If we keep planting peas and filling the ground with the roots full of nitrogen and planting cover crops in winter and grazing it and turning under stubble and putting rotted leaves and straw and cornstalks and stable cleanings mixed in this land in five years we'll have the richest place in the county," continued Mr. Weston.

"Well, I'm going to go huntin' for scrubby half starved calves," said Joe. "I'll ask all the boys at school if they have any to sell for cash, and you go and get the money from the bank."

"All right, and first thing we know we'll have a fertilizer factory here that will be paying us biggest sort of profits!" said Mr. Weston.

Joe was on his way to school a few days later when he saw a boy about his own age approaching him on a nice bay pony. The boy was evidently a city youth, and, seeing Joe, he reined up.

"Hello," he remarked, in a friendly tone. He was a nice, mainly looking boy, but very thin and pale.

"Hello, yourself!" answered Joe, stopping and sizing him up. Joe liked his looks, but thought he was remarkably puny in appearance.

"You're Joe Weston, the champion corn grower, aren't you?" he said. Joe nodded. "I saw your picture in the papers, but I thought you were a heap bigger than you are. I've wanted to meet you."

"Much obliged," said Joe. "Who are you?"

"Excuse me for not telling. I'm Tom Ralston. Father bought that big old plantation of Major Deen's down the road about two miles. We've only been here a couple of weeks."

"Where you from?"

"Up north. I'm just over a spell of typhoid and awfully weak. Then mother is no strong, and we wanted to get away from the hard winters up there, so father bought this old house and plantation for a winter home. He can't stay here all the time, but he will come down and hunt and fish whenever he can get off. He's about worn himself out working. Owns a big factory."

"Well, I'm glad you all have moved in the neighborhood, and hope you'll like it. Ever lived in the country before?"

"Never have, but I think it's fine, what I have seen of it," said Tom, with enthusiasm.

"Come over and see me some time. It's easier for you to come to see me than for me to go to your house; you've got a pony, and I have to hoof it or ride one of the work horses."

"Sure will, and thank you for asking me. It's kind of lonely until one gets acquainted. How far you going?"

"Bout a mile, to the schoolhouse."

"Hop up behind me, and I'll give you a lift. This pony rides as easy as a rocking chair rock. Come on!" He extended his hand, Joe placed one foot in the stirrup and vaulted up behind him. The pony was indeed a fine one. By the time they reached the schoolhouse the two boys were well started on a friendship. Several of the boys at the school crowded about as they rode up.

"Say, fellows," called Joe. "This is Tom Ralston. His folks bought the old Deen place and just moved in. He's been mighty sick with fever an' ain't strong yet, but he wants to get acquainted. When you get a chance go over and see him."

"Wish you would," added Tom.

"Some of the gang will be over Saturday, sure," announced Reddy Haywood. "Pleased to meet you. Won't you 'light an' rest your saddle?" Reddy was doing the elegant as host for the school.

"No; much obliged. Got to go to town and do some errands for mother, but I'll come over once in awhile at recess and see you fellows. Glad to have met you, and so long!" He waved a farewell, and the pony sped down the road.

The boys talked him over and decided he "would do." Several expressed the opinion that he looked sort of "sissy" and feeble.

"If you'd been in bed nine weeks with typhoid you'd look just as bad," retorted Joe. "An' if I hear of anybody imposing on him until he gets strong enough to take care of himself they've got me to whip. He's a stranger an' a Yankee boy, and the decent thing is for us all to act like gentlemen an' make him welcome to our neighborhood like we'd appreciate his doing if we moved up in the neck of the woods where he comes from."

"Joe's right!" exclaimed Reddy Haywood. "When these two leaders of the school agreed on a matter it was settled in so far as that crowd of boys was concerned."

In two weeks Tom had got strong enough to stand considerable exercise, with the daily horseback rides and the fresh, invigorating air of the country. He was very much possessed with the idea of going on a possum hunt.

"I can fix that all right," assured Joe. "I'll see old Uncle Jeff Johnson—that old darkey who lives up the road; he'll take us. He's got some good possum dogs. I'll tell him to come and see you when the time is right, and we'll go. Old Uncle Rube that works here on this place of yours is a good hunter too."

CHAPTER XII.

Off on a Possum Hunt.

THE next Saturday Joe rode one of the work horses down to the Ralston place and was explaining to Tom how he could teach Tom to be a good shot, when Uncle Jeff shuffled around the corner of the house.

"Maw'nin', young marsters! Hope I sees you well ter day?" he saluted them, raising his hat. Uncle Jeff prided himself on his manners, as he belonged to one of the prominent families of the county before the war.

"Very well, thank you," answered the boys. "How's your health, Uncle Jeff?"

"Powerful porely, powerful porely. I has de rheumatiz an' de dyspepsy, but I'm thankful hit ain't no wuss. Jes' think of all de ailments I mount have en ain't got. Dat's what I'm thankful fer."

"Hope you will get better soon," assured Tom.

"Thanky, suh, en I hopes yo' enjoys de same blessin'."

"How about the possums," inquired Joe.

"Dat's persackly what I come up hyar ter see yo' all erbout. Marse Tom, yo' wuz a-talkin' erbout wantin' ter go possum huntin' en ter tas'e er baked possum wid yam taters swimmin' in de gravy on de side."

"Oh, yes; I'd love to do both."

"Well, now's de time."

"How do you know, Uncle Jeff?"

"Oh, I knows. De moon is in de first quarter, jes' eruff ter give er little light en not eruff ter throw er shade. Er possum is er powerful coo-wardly varmint, en he won't feed on er bright moonlight night. His own shade skeers 'im. An' den hit's sorter nipin' en frosty, en er possum ain't fitten ter eat jes' he be dressed en put on top of er shingle roof fer de fros' ter soak in 'im all de night."

"Oh, that's foolshness! Why won't a refrigerator do as well? The object is to get the animal heat out of the carcass," answered Tom.

"Mout be foolish, but I wants ter ax yer one queshtun. Who started dis yer business er entin' possums—niggers, what 'pen on de fros', or w'ite folks, what has dese legy freezeraters—huh?"

"I don't know," admitted Tom sheepishly.

"In co'se you dunno. Hit wuz de niggers, en dat's de way de niggers fixes possums. Can't nobody but er nigger cook er possum jes' right neither? I'd as soon eat er dawg ez er possum cooked by any one else en ouless de fros' has soaked in 'im."

Joe had been an amused listener. "That's a fact, Tom, about nobody but a darky knowing how to cook possums just exactly right. Why, Colonel Almsworth, who lived down the river from here, got to speculating in cotton and made a whole lot of money. He undertook to put on a great deal of style then—had his house fixed over and sent to New Orleans and got a French chef, and the first entertainment was a big possum supper to a lot of his cronies from New Orleans. You just ought to hear the colonel tell about it."

"That Frenchman didn't know how to cook possums, and he brought them in roasted and swimming in cream gravy with a lot of chopped vegetables all over 'em, a la something or other. The colonel called him to the dining room and asked him about it. Then the colonel got so mad at his dinner being ruined he grabbed a big fat possum by the hind legs from the dish and slammed the chef over the head with it and ran him down the front steps trying to hit him again."

"The colonel said he agreed to pay that chef a hundred dollars a month, but any cook who couldn't fix a possum right wasn't worth two bits a year. He sent the chef back on the next boat and sent for Aunt Venus, Uncle Jeff's wife, and she cooked the possums next day."

Uncle Jeff stood chuckling.

"I wuz dar. Yo' jes' oughter seed dat Frenchy bounce down dem steps. He wuz fat, an' de colonel he wuz fat too, a-makin' a lick at 'im wid every jump wid dat possum all smeared over wid cream gravy! He wuz de maddest w'ite man I ever seed. De guests ain't quit luffin' twell yit, I reckon. Hit shore wuz funny!"

"All right, have your way about the fros', Uncle Jeff," conceded Tom. "Only I want to help catch a possum and eat it if it is cooked right."

"Now dat's de way ter talk. Yo' leave de huntin' ter me en Unk' Rube, an' de cookin' ter M'is' Venus, en' all we axes yo' boys is ter furnish de appetites en don' founder yo'se'fs."

"We can furnish the appetites all right," assured Joe.

"Well, right atter supper yo' all put on yo' ole clo'es, en me en Rube'll git de dawgs en de res' of de fixin's."

Joe stayed to supper, and about half past 7 Uncle Jeff sounded his horn as he came up the front drive, accompanied by four yelping dogs. Uncle Rube came from the rear of the house carrying in one hand a light, sharp ax and a lantern in the other. Slung across his back and that of Uncle Jeff were bundles of very rich "fat" pine cut in splints about the size of a finger and about four feet long. Each carried an empty sack wrapped about the cord that held the pine splints.

"What are those pine sticks for?" inquired Tom.

"Torches," answered Joe, who was an old hand at the game. "Take four or five of those long splinters, hold them together in your hand and light the other end and it makes the best sort of a light—harder the wind blows the brighter it gets."

"What we better go, Unk' Rube?" inquired Uncle Jeff.

"I see we stand a better chance over in dat big ole fiel' by de creek. Dey's some simmonses lef on de trees yit down dar. I come tho' dar tressy tiddy and seed whar possums been feedin'. Den dey's plenty black haws down in de bottoms en choke berries en red haws too. Dey's plenty er feed, en I bets we gits er possum er so."

"All right, lead on, let's be going somewhere," said Joe, with impatience. Uncle Jeff sounded his horn. The dogs leaped joyfully with frantic yelps and sprang ahead.

"The party cut through the stable lot,

down through the lower pasture and up the long slope of the hill where the old field lay on the other side. They walked single file into the mysterious night. Rube with the lantern leading, then the boys, and Uncle Jeff bringing up the rear. As they reached the crest of the hill they stood still a few moments while the dogs ranged in front of them. Directly one of the dogs broke into cry, joined by the others shortly.

"Uh, huh! Hear dat? Done struck er trail erready!" exclaimed Uncle Jeff in triumph.

"Hot trail, too," observed Uncle Rube. "We'll git dat ole possum in er mighty few minutes."

The dogs were making the silent woods ring with their musical notes as the two men whooped encouragement. The trail led directly down the long slope and into the sweet gum flats near the creek.

"Makin' fer de swamp," said Uncle Jeff. There was a pause in the trailing cry of the dogs, and the long drawn out notes gave place to short, excited yelps.

"Treed, by granny—treed n'ready! Come on!" called Rube, striking a trot in the direction of the dogs and yelling encouragement to them so they would not desert the quarry and take up another trail.

During about the base of a tall, slim sweet gum tree were the four dogs jumping up with forefoot on the trunk and baying in a frenzy of excitement.

"Dar he—dar he!" cried Jeff in joy, peering up in the darkness. "Way up in de top. See 'im?"

Tom could merely see an indistinct blur against the starlight through the bare branches.

"I guess so. I see something."

"Climb or cut?" inquired Uncle Rube, unslinging his bundle of splinters and making two torches, which he lit and gave the boys to hold. As the fat pine splinters and flared the light disclosed two pine points of green light shining from the dark object.

"Oh, yes, doggone yer! Grinnin' at us, is yer? Thinks we ain't gwine git yer, does yer? Thinks yer too sharp fer us, huh? Gimme dat ax, Jeff. I'll have dat tree down 'fore yo' c'd git ter de fust limb climbin'."

Uncle Rube swung the ax, and in two licks it bit out an immense chip from the tree trunk. Two more licks brought another, then another.

"Hole dem dawgs, now, Jeff. We don't want no chawed up possum. Dis tree is trim'min' now; two more licks 'll bring hit down!" cautioned Rube. Jeff slipped the twine through the collars of the four dogs. They were wild with excitement, for they knew what was coming.

"Look out, folks; tree's a-fallin'!" sang Uncle Rube, and with a crash the tall stem fell. Almost at the same time Jeff was near where the top struck the ground, scuffling with the dogs, who had got tangled with his legs, and he was trying to keep his balance and handle the lantern at the same time.

"Turn dem dawgs loose—turn 'em loose, Jeff! My Lawd ha' mussy, ef we ain't let dat ole possum git erway. Turn 'em loose quick, befo' he c'n git far off!"

"Well, ain't he er slick un!" commented Jeff as he finally got untangled from the cord holding the dogs, and they plunged excitedly into the brush of the treetop, scuffling and sniffing in confusion. They lost several minutes in that way, then broke into full cry again, trailing up the hill, men and boys following as best they could. It was hardly five minutes after they took the trail the second time, but the party had traveled pell-mell over a quarter of a mile.

"Don't tell me dat ole possum ain been hunted befo' dis!" panted Rube. "He's a-makin' time like er deer."

The dogs signaled that they had treed again.

"Now we got 'im! I ain't gwine take no mo' chances—dem dawgs kin have dey fun en chaw 'im too, if dey wants. I don't suppose fer no possum ter make me run marse'f ter death!" announced Uncle Jeff.

This time the quarry had taken to a tall black oak about as large around as a man's leg.

"I'll hole de dawgs, Unk' Jeff—hit's yo' time ter cut de tree—but I sho's gwine ter let dem puppies in soon's hit hears de ground."

"All right, jes' so yer don' let 'em loose en let de tree fall on 'em. Dem's vallyble dawgs."

Tom and Joe stood holding the torches so Uncle Jeff could see to swing the ax. Directly came the preliminary crackling and swaying.

"Ready now!" warned Uncle Jeff as he hit the final lick, and the tree majestically swayed and fell with a thunderous crash. A second before it hit earth Rube turned the dogs loose, and they were in the treetop almost before it had settled from the rebound.

Men and boys ran forward, holding their lights aloft, and puzzled, too, for there was the liveliest scrap going on in those interlaced branches and twigs they had ever witnessed. The dogs were snarling and yelping and barking and biting. There were squeals and howls and growls, and every minute or so a dog would dash out, flapping a badly torn ear or bewailing lustily a bitten nose.

"Why, good gracious erlive, ef dat ain't er gre't big ole coon!" yelled Uncle Rube. "Whoopee! Sick 'im, Spot! Go to 'im, Rattle! Sick 'im, dawgs! Sick 'im, boys—whoopee!"

The coon plunged back to the fray. The dogs had about bested them in the thick branches, but on the second attack Br'er Coon made the fatal mistake of trying to get into the open. As he cleared the tree and landed in the grass there was another mixup of flying claws and snapping jaws.

The coon lay flat on his back and fought with all four feet and his teeth. He was holding off the dogs and in-

flicting more damage on them than they were on him until the dogs got down to team work and would rush him two at a time on different sides. It was as pretty a team play as ever a football game exhibited.

Finally Spot managed to get the coon by the throat, and the last heard of him was a shrill squeal as Spot shut off his breath and proceeded to shake the life out of him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WOODS.

There was church at this place last Sunday by Bro. Neff.

Death visited the home of Mr. Lacey Hunt last Monday evening and took from them their beloved daughter, Anna. She has been sick for the last two years. She was 22 years old. The funeral took place Wednesday at the old home place held by Bro. Isaac Stratton. She leaves a father, two sisters and seven brothers to mourn her loss.

Mrs. Dick Burchett is on the sick list this week.

Miss Ruth Herald and Arthur Brunk of Mossy Bottom called on friends on Cow creek Sunday.

William E. Riddle has commenced to build a new house on the lower end of Pete Burchett's farm. We are glad to have Mr. Riddle with us again.

Miss Lizzie Woods and Dewey Hunt spent Sunday with Miss Jude Lewis. Earle Campbell called on Miss Altie Hunt Sunday.

Oak Burchett and Elmer Morrison of this place is attending school at Frontsburg this winter.

Misses Ollie and Martha Burchett are spending the week with Mrs. Anna Burchett.

There will be church at this place every second Sunday by our pastor, Bro. Neff.

A LONESOME GIRL.

YATESVILLE.

A minister by the name of Cleveland, who hails from Frankfort, Ky., has been carrying on a series of meetings here for the last week. He is of the Methodist persuasion and is a very able speaker, and his meetings have been and are being attended by large and well ordered and highly appreciative congregations and as a result considerable interest has so far been manifested.

The biggest snow so far of the season is now on, but is softening up some at this writing. On Friday and Saturday night of last week the mercury went after the zero point with a little too much success for our comfort.

Reports from the William Taylor well say that the well has been drilled in and shot and that there is plenty of gas and considerable oil. The well being drilled by the Ohio Fuel on the land of Hester Carter is now down to a depth of 1000 ft. and the drillers hope to complete the well within the next ten days.

COUNTRY GREENHORN.

BUSSEVILLE.

Rev. M. E. Hill filled his appointment here Saturday night and Sunday.

There was quarterly meeting Sunday night by District Supt. Davenport. Miss Ruby Pigg and Charley Borders have gone to Huntington to visit relatives.

Cullie Meek is confined to the house with la grippe.

Mrs. Chesap and little daughter, of Salt Lick, are visiting relatives here this week.

Andy Cheek is transacting business in Ohio.

Deputy Sheriff H. B. Thompson was here on official business one day this week.

Miss Gypsy Thompson spent Sunday night, with Miss Victoria Judd. Charley Hughes is on the sick list.

Mrs. G. B. Carter of Paintsville is here visiting relatives.

Assa Meek came down from Williamson Friday.

KERRY.

TUSCULA.

Colds are epidemic. Nearly every one