The Homesteader

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By ROBERT J. C. STEAD

Author of "The Cow Puncher" Etc

BUILDING THE HOME.

Illinois.—Dissatisfied because of seemingly barren outlook of his life as a school teacher in a town, John Harris determines to leave it, take up land in Nebraska and become a "homesteader." Mary, the girl whom he loves, declares she will accompany him. They are married and set out for the unknown country. Alec McCrae, a pioneer settler and adviser of homesteaders, proves an invaluable friend. Leaving his wife with the family of a fellow settler, Fred Arthurs, Harris and McCrae journey into the prairie and select a homestead. Mary insists on accompanying them when he takes possession, and they begin their life work of making the prairie fertile farm land.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

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That night, before the darkness had deepened too deep, they selected the site of their house on the very bench that McCrae had indicated. It was half an acre in extent, and stood midway between the prairie level and the bottom of the coulee, where a small river was now running. * * *

It was quite dark when they sought the cover of their little tent, and the wolves were howling far down the ravine.

Suddenly they were startled by a rushing noise, as of some big animal rushing upon them through the ravine, and the horses, in headlong flight, almost swept over their sleeping place.

"That wolf howl put the fear into the silly brutes," said Harris, speaking calmly, although his own flesh was creeping just a little. "I suppose they've ripped their tether ropes to pieces. Well, we'll tie them down here, where they'll have company." And he led them back a short distance into the bushes.

A moment later, suddenly, as if conjured out of thin air, on the bank far above them, silhouetted against the dim light in the western sky, stood man and rider. Instantly Harris' mind came a warning of McCrae: "Sleep with one eye open when your horses are tethered out."

Harris had no proof that the strange rider was a horse thief, but it struck him at the moment that the terror of the horses might not have been due altogether to wolves.

He stole silently toward the tent. There was a gun there, loaded with shot for any possible game on the prairie. As he moved in the deep darkness of the valley he stumbled over a root and fell. The same moment came a flash of light on the bank, and Harris heard the "thuk" of a ball burying itself in the sod. He lay perfectly still. The stranger peered into the darkness for a full minute; then, disappointing, began to come cautiously down the hillside. Harris would have crept for his gun, but he feared to reveal the whereabouts of his wife. So he lay still, and the stranger came on, the glint of his gun barrel showing in the darkness. It was evident he thought his bullet had found its mark. He proposed still to possess himself of the horses. But he was taking no chances. Presently he discerned Harris' body on the ground, and again raised his gun to his shoulder. Harris lay in an agony of suspense, praying that the aim would be faulty, and that his assailant would advance until he could spring up and disarm him. Then came another flash, a loud report, a yell from the intruder, who then fell to earth, then scrambled to his feet, rushed up the bank, pulled himself somewhat limply on his horse, and rode into the darkness.

"Oh, Jack, are you killed?" cried the girl, rushing in his direction.

"Not even hurt," he answered; and she fainted in his arms.

He carried her to the tent and applied water to her forehead. As he was engaged in restoring her his hand fell on his gun. The barrel was hot.

He raised her face to his, and kissed her again and again.

In the morning they found a few drops of blood on the grass at the top of the bank.

Harris and his wife allowed themselves no time for nerve strain over the experience of their first night on their homestead. The next morning, after caring for their cows, they hitched the horses to the wagon, took an ax, a saw, their gun, and a lunch, and set out for the valley, returning late at night with sufficient logs and poles for the framework of their house and stable. The next day construction was commenced. Four stout posts were set on end, enclosing a rectangle 12x16 feet. The tops of the posts were connected by logs laid upon them, dove-tailed at the corners after the fashion of woodsmen, and held in position by wooden pins driven in auger holes. Lengthwise along the center, to form a ridge pole, another stout log was laid and the whole framework supported by additional posts, among which were two on the east side to enclose the door. Small poles were then placed on end, sloping slightly inwards and resting against the plate logs. Similar poles were laid from the plate logs to the ridge pole to support the roof.

Harris found a southern slope where the frost was out enough to admit of his plowing some sods. He plowed them, three inches thick and 14 inches wide, and cut them into two-foot lengths with his ax, to the sad injury of its cutting edge. These sods were then built into a wall like bricks, resting gently against the framework of poles, from which, however, they were separated by a padding of grass, which Harris cut in a slough with his scythe, and small willows from the ravine. This mattress of grass and willows prevented any earth shaking through into the house itself. A framework door of a hewn log was inserted in the south wall to leave space for a window, which should be bought when the family finances could afford such luxuries. For the time being it would be left open in fine weather and covered with canvas when the elements were gruff or unruly. The rag carpet, when no longer needed as a tent, would be draped in the doorway, pending the purchase of boards to make a wooden door.

For a roof grass was laid on the poles and covered tightly with sods. Then Harris found a sticky, yellow clay in the side of the ravine, and two or three inches of this he spread carefully over the sods, like icing on a great cake. The greasy clay soon hardened in the sun, and became so impervious to water that the heaviest rains of summer made no impression upon it.

By this time the snow was all gone, except in north-facing nooks along the ravine, and the frost was out of the sod in all places deep enough to admit of plowing. As the stock were taking no harm from the open air, thanks to the shelter of the ravine, Harris decided to delay the construction of his stable until after seeding and to proceed at once with the plowing of his land. He had also to make a trip to Arthurs' for seed grain, and to borrow a couple of sections of drag harrows. With it all, by the middle of May he had sown 15 acres of wheat, and notwithstanding a heavy snowfall about the twenty-third, by the first of June he had added ten acres of oats. With his help Mary had planted a small garden of potatoes and vegetables, and a few flowers were springing up at the door of the house.

CHAPTER III.

The Shores of the Infinite.

The summer was a season of great activity and development. Harris did not sow any crop after the first of June, but applied himself then to the construction of his stable, which was built after the same fashion as the house.

As McCrae had predicted, there was a considerable movement of settlers into the district, and at several points their tents or rude houses now broke

"Not Even Hurt," He Answered, and She Fainted in His Arms.

the vast sweep of the horizon. Tom Morrison had found land to the satisfaction of his heart within three miles of the Harris homestead, and his big log house, 18x24, assumed the proportions of a castle by comparison with the smaller homes springing up around. Some miles to the east Dick Matheson, straight from the lumber camps of the Madawaski, had pitched his tent, and a few miles farther on was his friend of the shanties, John Burton. To the west were the Grants, and to the north Hiram Riles and his wife, Eliza. A missionary had in some way spied out the field, and held monthly Sunday services at Morrison's house; and Dr. Blain, when not in one of his unfortunate debauches, had his headquarters at the new town of Plainville, which consisted of Sempter's general store and a "stopping place," and which had sprung up near the junction of two streams in anticipation of the railway.

And so the first summer wore away and the first harvest was at hand. Any disappointment which had been occasioned by backward conditions earlier in the season was effaced by the wonderful crop which now crowned the efforts of the pioneers. On their finest eastern farms they had seen nothing to equal the great stand of wheat and oats which now enveloped them, neck-high, whenever they invaded it. The great problem before the settlers was the harvesting of this crop. It was a mighty task to attempt with their scythes, but there was no self-binder, or even reaper, within many miles.

Finally Morrison solved the problem for the whole community by placing an order, at a fabulous figure, for a self-binder from the United States. It was a cumbrous, wooden frame contrivance, guiltless of the roller bearings, floating aprons, open elevators, and sheaf carriers of a later day, but it served the purpose, and with its aid the harvest of the little settlement was safely placed in sheaf. The farmers then stacked their grain in the fields, taking care to plow double fireguards, with a burnt space between, as a precaution against the terrifying fires which broke over the prairie as soon as the September frosts had dried the grass. A community some 20 miles to the eastward boasted a threshing mill, and arrangements were made for its use after it had discharged the duties of its own locality.

When Harris' thrashing was done he found he had 600 bushels of wheat and 700 bushels of oats in cone-shaped piles on his fields. The roads were fine and hard, and no snow had yet fallen, so he determined to begin at once with the marketing of his wheat. His last cent had been spent months before; indeed, it had been only through the courtesy of the storekeeper at Plainville, who was also postmaster, and who had stretched the law to the point of accepting hen eggs as legal tender in exchange for postage stamps, that Mary Harris had been able to keep up the brave, optimistic series of letters written "home." So Harris decided that he would at once market some of his wheat. Most of the oats would be needed for his horses and for seed, and what remained would command good prices from new settlers the following spring, but some of the wheat must be turned into money at once. During the latter part of the summer they had lived exclusively on the produce of their farm; on vegetables from the garden, fish and ducks from the stream, prairie chickens, and an occasional rabbit from the fields. The wild geese had deserted them early in the spring, and returned only after harvest. But now they should have a change on their table. Mary had accepted the pioneer fare of the summer without complaint, but of late Harris had discovered a strange longing in her eyes, and more than once she had arrested herself in the words "I wish we had——" Then two penitent little tears would steal softly down her cheeks, and she would bury her head in his arms as he soothed her with loving words and promised that "after thrashing things would be different."

So now he set out for Emerson with the best load his horses could draw. The first few miles he drove in silence, for there was a heavy weight at his heart as he thought of the little wife alone with the responsibilities of the farm. * * * That she would be faithful to every responsibility he knew beyond question. * * * But he was not quite satisfied. A strange moodiness had come over her, and even with him at home she had at times given way to fits of downheartedness which seemed altogether alien to her nature.

Ten days later he retraced his course in the teeth of a blinding blizzard. A dozen times he had been lost in the last 48 hours, but he had developed the prairie dweller's sense of direction, and had always been able again to locate the trail. The Arthurs would have detained him, almost by force, but the thought of a pale, patient face, wrung with an agony of anxiety not for itself, made him adamant in his resolve to go home at whatever cost. The roads were almost impassable; he left his lumber at Arthurs', but carried with him his window, a few boards for a door, and a little bundle of dry goods. Everything else had gone by the way surrendered in exchange for food and shelter for himself and horses.

"Thank God, oh, thank God!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WILL THAT ALARMED WORLD

Eccentric Frenchman Planned to Build Up Large Estate, But in the End Signally Failed.

Mingled wonder, indignation and alarm were excited in the public mind over a will left by Peter Thelusson, a Frenchman, who died on July 21, 1797. It appears that the testator had accumulated a large fortune as a London merchant, and by the provisions of his will he left to his wife and children the sum of £100,000, and the residue of his property, amounting to about £600,000, he committed to trustees, to accumulate during the lives of his sons, and finally to revert to his eldest great-grandson. Should no heir exist, the accumulated property was to be conveyed to the sinking fund for the reduction of the national debt. According to the lowest calculation it was estimated that the fortune would amount to £19,000,000. The will was generally stigmatized as absurd and illegal, and the family tested it in court, where it was sustained, as it was likewise in the house of lords. In 1800 an act was passed making null all bequests for the purpose of accumulation for longer than twenty years after the testator's death. The last grandson died in 1856, and a dispute arose as to whether the eldest son's grandson should inherit or the eldest great-grandson. It was decided in favor of the former. By reason of litigation and accidents of management the fortune inherited was little more than the original £600,000.

Considerate Hen.

A hen which deposits a fresh breakfast egg on her owner's bed, and then awakens him at the proper time to consume the fruits of her industry, is, states the Timber Trades Journal, the prized possession of a sawmill employee at Bend, Ore. Retiring at 3 a. m.—the end of his working day—the man leaves open the window at his bedside. Shortly before noon the hen flies in, nestles near her master's shoulder, lays her egg, and rising pecks the sleeper gently on the forehead.

The price of an Egyptian war chariot at the time of Solomon was about $300.

BOX COAT DESERVES PLACE OF HONOR

"WHEN in doubt choose a box coat" might be taken as a safe guide to the purchase of a suit in the late winter. For there is hardly a season within the memory of fashion reporters which has not offered the box coat among its showings of coat suits, therefore the story of the season's suits may very well begin and end with this particular and always chic style. But the box coat is for the woman whose carriage is correct, for the upstanding figure and especially for slenderness.

In the suit pictured, which might be of duvetyn, velours or other suitings in a solid color, the flaring box coat model buttons straight up the front in the most approved of fashions. It has pockets and collar of Australian opossum fur, very becoming and cozy looking, and plain coat sleeves finished at the wrist with two cloth-covered buttons and button holes.

Except for narrow braid in rows, by which the skirt acknowledges an acquaintance with coming spring styles, there is nothing to say of it that is not told by the picture.

In company with this dependably stylish suit, there is an equally efficient coat, as practical and as smart. It is long and double-breasted, has full sleeves and deep, turned-back cuffs with fur border. The belt with sash ends of cloth is given character by handsome silk tassels which match up in smart style the deep cape with three bands of fur for ornament. This cape is the pride and glory of a coat which it elevates into the class of the best models and worn with it is a smart satin hat with ornaments at the front made of ostrich flues.

Niceties of the Toilet

THE woman who gives thought to her coiffure, her hat and her dress accessories is about sure of success in the matter of her toilette, whether it is made for the everyday occupations of life or for high occasions. More than half the battle is won for street dress when the coiffure and hat are all that they should be, and it is the niceties of the costume that give it a flavor which cannot be overlooked. Old father Christmas brought in a huge pack of purely personal gifts for dainty women this year, which is worth while reviewing in order to become acquainted with the mode in accessories. Leaving out jewels of all kinds there are left gloves, hose, fans, belts, neckwear, handkerchiefs, hand bags, veils, umbrellas, scarfs and many other things that give the costume character.

Among fans, those of curled or uncurled ostrich with dark shell sticks, hold the lead as the favorites of fashion. From two to seven plumes, in a variety of colors, are used for making one of these rich belongings and they may be had in jade, orchid, sapphire, turquoise, orange, flesh color, black and red or ordered in any other colors. Another lovely accessory of ostrich feathers, to be worn with evening frocks, appears in bracelets for bare arms, made of ribbon and flues. They are made to be worn on the arm just above the elbow.

Next to handkerchiefs, gloves and neckwear rank in importance, simply because they are so universal. Neckwear is a story by itself, but one of the new items in it appears in the round collar and vestee pictured above. This is made of fine net, Venice lace insertion and Val edging as shown by the photograph and is a simple matter for the home needle worker to handle. It is to be made by hand.

In gloves, washable varieties for street wear find ever-increasing favor, white doeskin fastening with pearl buttons standing at the peak of daintiness. They are rivalled by gray cloth gloves of a suede-like texture, woven with lining in a contrasting tint and fastened with strap and slide. Gauntlet and slip-on styles are in great demand. A very handsome pair of French glace kid is shown in the picture with Van Dyck points and back stitching in black. White gloves are often finished with tan or beige instead of black and divide honors with gray gloves in popularity.

Julia Bottomley

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Veils With Border.

Long, draping veils have been much in vogue, with a border done in bonnaz stitching, either in self color or some contrasting shade. They fall from the edge of either the small turban or medium sized hat.

Topcoats of the Season.

In the line-up of topcoats this season, the very mannish overcoat type of garment is at present sharing honors with the rather draped, "wrappy" model.

Combinations Are Liked.

Combinations of fabrics are well liked. Duvetyn and crepe de chine are new and very effective when used together.

French Millinery Fashion.

The French are using ribbons in fringes and velvet fruits on their winter millinery.

Collars on Dresses and Blouses.

Medici and Elizabethan collars are appearing on dresses and blouses.

CALOMEL DANGER TOLD BY DODSON

Says You Cannot Gripe, Sicken, or Salivate Yourself if You Take "Dodson's Liver Tone" Instead

Calomel loses you a day! You know what calomel is. It's mercury; quicksilver. Calomel is dangerous. It crashes into sour bile like dynamite, cramping and sickening you. Calomel attacks the bones and should never be put into your system.

When you feel bilious, sluggish, constipated and all knocked out and believe you need a dose of dangerous calomel just remember that your druggist sells for a few cents a large bottle of Dodson's Liver Tone, which is entirely vegetable and pleasant to take and is a perfect substitute for calomel. It is guaranteed to start your liver without stirring you up inside, and can not salivate.

Don't take calomel! It can not be trusted any more than a leopard or a wild cat. Take Dodson's Liver Tone, which straightens you right up and makes you feel fine. Give it to the children because it is perfectly harmless and doesn't gripe.—Adv.

He Almost Believed—

"Sometimes I almost think that girl intends to be really rude and discouraging."

"What now?"

"Why, I met her out walking, and asked if I might see her home, and she said, 'Certainly; any one passing along our street may—or you can go up to the roof of this office building and see it without having to go any nearer.'"

Their Services Recognized.

British subjects who traveled at their own expense from the United States or other parts of the world to join their country's military forces during the war with Germany are entitled to receive refunds of their passage money.

An ounce of contentment is more beneficial to a woman's complexion than a pound of cosmetics.

say BAYER

Aspirin

Then it is Genuine

Warning! Unless you see the name "Bayer" on tablets, you are not getting genuine Aspirin prescribed by physicians for 21 years and proved safe by millions.

Accept only an "unbroken package" of "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin," which contains proper directions for Colds, Headache, Pain, Toothache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Neuritis, Lumbago.

Handy tin boxes of 12 tablets cost but a few cents—Larger packages.

Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid

If a man is a millionaire he can say all the fool things he wants to without impairing his reputation.

The world may owe every man a living but it takes a hustler to collect it.

People who agree to everything you say are about as entertaining as a phonograph.

What a man is and what he might be are as different as day and night.

FOR THE BEST TABLES

MAXWELL HOUSE COFFEE

"GOOD TO THE LAST DROP"

SEALED TINS AT GROCERS

MISEACRES WERE ALL WRONG

Wife Could Afford to Smile in Later Years at Those Who Opposed Her Marriage.

October 26, 1764, there were united in marriage a pretty girl of twenty, Abigail Smith, daughter of a minister, to John Adams, a young lawyer without a pactice, himself the son of a rather poor farmer. The lady's friends were not enthusiastic over the match, as the girl's forefathers were all of literary or professional caste, while the young lawyer could boast of no connection but with the soil. The parishioners were outspoken in their disapproval of the match, it being based largely on their suspicion of lawyers in general.

The fiery old minister-father of Abigail promptly took exception to the remarks, and the very next Sunday announced his text as "For John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and ye say he hath a devil." The minister's faith in his son-in-law proved well given, for the unknown and clientless lawyer became the second President of the United States.

Lamps Shine Downwardly.

A new form of lamp designed in England maintains a long, horizontal arc especially useful for the overhead lighting of film studios, or for photo printing.

WHY THE CELT WAS PUZZLED

Visitor's Inquiry Did Seem Unreasonable in View of Statement He Had Previously Made.

A well known physician of New York tells why he does not know whence his ancestors came.

Now, he had always understood that his ancestors were Scotch-Irish, and on the strength of that belief had prided himself on their royal blood.

Once it occurred to him to go and have a look at the old place whence they were supposed to have come. When he arrived at what he believed was the right district he appealed to an old Irishman to tell him the exact spot.

The Celt regarded him much as one does a crazy man, and then said:

"Ye say that your ancestors emigrated from here 200 years ago? Then why the deuce, sir, are ye lookin' for them here now?"

Surely a Star.

Young Author (reading from manuscript)—He flung her an imploring glance, fell on his knees, seized her hands, threw prejudice to the winds, and, grappling with fate, rushed forward to his destiny, determined to win or die!

Little Brother (admiringly)—Gee, wouldn't he a-made a grand football player?

A Ready-Cooked Food For Breakfast or Lunch

Grape-Nuts

Crisp granules of wheat and malted barley "sweet as a nut" from special processing and long baking.

No need to sprinkle sugar on your cereal when you use Grape-Nuts

"There's a Reason"