

SO BIG

[BY EDNA FERBER]

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DEATH OF PERVUS

SYNOPSIS.—Introducing "So Big" (Dirk DeJong) in his infancy. And his mother, Selina DeJong, daughter of Simeon Peake, gambler and gentleman of fortune. Her life, to young womanhood in Chicago in 1888, has been unconventional, somewhat seamy, but generally enjoyable. At school her chum is Julie Hempel, daughter of August Hempel, butcher. Simeon is killed in a quarrel that is not his own, and Selina, nineteen years old and practically destitute, secures a position as teacher at the High Prairie school, in the outskirts of Chicago, living at the home of a truck farmer, Klaas Pool. In Roelf, twelve years old, son of Klaas, Selina perceives a kindred spirit, a lover of beauty, like herself. Selina hears gossip concerning the affection of the "Widow Paarlensberg," rich and good-looking, for Pervus DeJong, poor truck farmer, who is inseparable to the widow's attractions. Pervus buys Selina's lunch box at the community "auction." Over her lunch box, which Selina and DeJong share together, the school-teacher arranges to instruct the farmer, whose education has been neglected. Prognosticity leads to mutual affection. Selina becomes Mrs. DeJong, a "farmer's wife," with all the hardships unavoidable at that time. Dirk is born. Selina (of Vermont stock, businesslike and shrewd) has plans for building up the farm, which are ridiculed by her husband.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

"You can't run far enough," Maartje had said. "Except you stop living you can't run away from life."

Well, she had run far enough this time.

Roelf was sixteen now, Geertje twelve, Jozina eleven. What would this household do now, Selina wondered, without the woman who had been so faithful a slave to it? Who would keep the pigstails—no longer giggling—in clean gingham and decent square-toed shoes? Who, when Klaas broke out in rumbling Dutch wrath against what he termed Roelf's "dumb" ways, would say, "Og, Pool, leave the boy alone once. He does nothing." Who would keep Klaas himself in order; cook his meals, wash his clothes, iron his shirts, take a pride in the great ruddy childlike giant?

Klaas answered these questions just nine months later by marrying the Widow Paarlensberg, High Prairie was rocked with surprise. For months this marriage was the talk of the district. So insatiable was High Prairie's curiosity that every scrap of news was swallowed at a gulp. When the word went round of Roelf's flight from the farm, no one knew where, it served only as sauce to the great dish of gossip.

Selina had known. Pervus was away at the market when Roelf had knocked at the farmhouse door one night at eight, had turned the knob and entered, as usual. But there was nothing of the usual about his appearance. He wore his best suit—his first suit of store clothes, bought at the time of his mother's funeral. It never had fitted him; now it was grotesquely small for him. He had shot up amazingly in the last eight or nine months. Yet there was nothing of the ridiculous about him as he stood there before her now, tall, lean, dark. He put down his cheap yellow suitcase.

"Well, Roelf."

"I am going away. I couldn't stay."

She nodded. "Where?"

"Away, Chicago maybe." He was terribly moved, so he made his tone casual. "They came home last night. I have got some books that belong to you." He made as though to open the suitcase.

"No, no! Keep them."

"Good-by."

"Good-by, Roelf." She took the boy's dark head in her two hands and, standing on tiptoe, kissed him. He turned to go. "Wait a minute. Wait a minute." She had a few dollars—in quarters, dimes, half dollars—perhaps ten dollars in all—hidden away in a canister on the shelf. She reached for it. But when she came back with the box in her hand he was gone.

Chapter VII

Dirk was eight; Little Sobig DeJong, in a suit made of bean-sacking sewed together by his mother. A brown blond boy with mosquito bites on his legs and his legs never still. Nothing of the dreamer about this lad. The one-room schoolhouse of Selina's day had been replaced by a two-story brick structure, very fine, of which High Prairie was vastly proud. The rusty iron stove had been dethroned by a central heater. Dirk went to school from October until June. Pervus protested that this was foolish. The boy could be of great help in the fields from the

beginning of April to the first of November, but Selina fought savagely for his schooling, and won.

"Sobig isn't a truck farmer."

"Well, he will be pretty soon." Time I was fifteen I was running our place."

Verbally Selina did not combat this. But within her every force was gathering to fight it when the time should come. Her Sobig a truck farmer, a slave to the soil, bent by it, beaten by it, blasted by it, so that he, in time, like the other men of High Prairie, would take on the very look of the rocks and earth among which they toiled!

Dirk, at eight, was a none too handsome child, considering his father and mother—or his father and mother as they had been. It was not until he was seventeen or eighteen that he was to metamorphose suddenly into a graceful and aristocratic youngster with an indefinable look about him of distinction and actual elegance.

Selina was a farm woman now, nearing thirty. The work rode her as it had ridden Maartje Pool. In the DeJong yard there was always a dado of washing. Faded overalls, a shirt, socks, a boy's drawers grotesquely patched and mended, towels of rough sacking. She, too, rose at four, snatched up shapeless garments, invested herself with them, seized her great coil of fine cloudy hair, twisted it into a utilitarian knob and skewered it with a hairpin from which the varnish had long departed, leaving it a dull gray; thrust her slim feet into shapeless shoes, dabbed her face with cold water, hurried to the kitchen stove. The work was always at her heels, its breath hot on her neck.

Seeing her thus one would have thought that the Selina Peake of the wine-red cashmere, the fun-loving disposition, the high-spirited courage, had departed forever. But these things still persisted. For that matter, even the wine-red cashmere clung to existence. So hopelessly old-fashioned now as to be almost picturesque, it hung in Selina's closet like a rose memory. Sometimes when she came upon it in an orgy of cleaning she would pass her rough hands over its soft folds and by that magic process Mrs. Pervus DeJong vanished in a puff and in her place was the girl Selina Peake perched a-tiptoe on a soap box in Adam Ooms' hall while all High Prairie, open-mouthed, looked on as the impecunious Pervus DeJong threw ten hard-earned dollars at her feet.

It would be gratifying to be able to record that in these eight or nine years Selina had been able to work wonders on the DeJong farm; that the house glittered, the crops thrived richly, the barn housed sleek cattle. But it could not be truthfully said. True, she had achieved some changes, but at the cost of terrific effort. A less indomitable woman would have sunk into apathy years before. The house had a coat of paint—lead-gray, because it was cheap. There were two horses—the second a broken-down old mare, blind in one eye, that they had picked up for five dollars after it had been turned out to pasture for future sale as horse carcass. A month of rest and pasturage restored the mare to usefulness. Selina had made the bargain, and Pervus had scolded her roundly for it. Now he drove the mare to market, saw that she pulled more sturdily than the other horse, but had never retracted. It was no quality of meanness in him. Pervus merely was like that.

But the west sixteen! That had been Selina's most heroic achievement. Her plan, spoken of to Pervus in the first month of her marriage, had taken years to mature; even now was but a partial triumph. She had even descended to nagging.

"Why don't we put in asparagus?"

"Asparagus!" considered something of a luxury, and rarely included in the High Prairie truck farmer's products. "And wait three years for a crop!"

"Yes, but then we'd have it. And a plantation's good for ten years, once it's started. I've been reading up on it. The new way is to plant asparagus in rows, the way you would rhubarb or corn. Plant six feet apart, and four acres anyway."

He was not even sufficiently interested to be amused. "Yeh, four acres where? In the clay land, maybe." He did laugh then, if the short bitter sound he made could be construed as indicating mirth. "Out of a book."

"In the clay land," Selina urged, crisply. "And out of a book. That west sixteen isn't bringing you anything, no what difference does it make if I am wrong! Let me put my own money into it, I've thought it all out. Pervus, please. We'll underdrain the clay soil. Just five or six acres, to start. We'll manure it heavily—as much as we can afford—and then for two years we'll plant potatoes there. We'll put in our asparagus plants the third spring—one-year-old seedlings,

I'll promise to keep it wooded—Dirk and I. He'll be a big boy by that time. Let me try it, Pervus. Let me try it." In the end she had her way, partly because Pervus was too occupied with his own endless work to oppose her; and partly because he was, in his un-demonstrative way, still in love with his vivacious, nimble-witted, high-spirited wife, though to her frantic goadings and proddings he was as plegmatically oblivious as an elephant to a pin prick.

Though she worked as hard as any woman in High Prairie, had as little, dressed as badly, he still regarded her as a luxury; an exquisite toy which, in a moment of madness, he had taken for himself. "Little Lina"—tolerantly, fondly. You would have thought that he spoiled her, pampered her. Perhaps he even thought he did.

That was Pervus. Thrifty, like his kind, but unlike them in shrewdness. Penny wise, pound foolish; a characteristic that brought him his death.

September, usually a succession of golden days and hazy opalescent evenings on the Illinois prairie land, was disastrously cold and rainy that year. Pervus' great frame was racked by rheumatism. He was forty now, and over, still of magnificent physique, so that to see him suffering gave Selina the pangs of pity that one has at sight of the very strong or the very weak in pain. He drove the weary miles to market three times a week, for September was the last big month of the truck farmer's season. Selina would watch him drive off down the road in the creaking old market wagon, the green stuff protected by canvas, but Pervus wet before ever he climbed into the seat. There never seemed to be enough waterproof canvas for both.

"Pervus, take it off those sacks and put it over your shoulders."

"That's them white globe onions. The last of 'em. I can get a fancy price for them, but not if they're all wetted down."

"Don't sleep on the wagon tonight, Pervus. Sleep in. Be sure. It saves in the end. You know the last time you were laid up for a week."

"I'll clear. Breaking now over there in the west."

The clouds did break late in the afternoon; the false sun came out hot and bright. Pervus slept out in the Haymarket, for the night was close



"He—He's Breathing So—" She Could Not Bring Herself to Say, "So Terribly."

and humid. At midnight the lake wind sprang up, cold and treacherous, and with it came the rain again. Pervus was drenched by morning, chilled, thoroughly miserable. A hot cup of coffee at four and another at ten when the rush of trading was over stimulated him but little. When he reached home it was mid-afternoon. Selina put him to bed against his half-hearted protests. Banked him with hot water jars, a hot iron wrapped in flannel at his feet. But later came fever instead of the expected relief of perspiration. Ill though he was, he looked more ruddy and hale than most men in health; but suddenly Selina, startled, saw black lines like gauges, etched under his eyes, about his mouth, in his cheeks.

In a day when pneumonia was known as lung fever and in a locality that advised closed windows and hot air as a remedy, Pervus' battle was lost before the doctor's hooded buggy was seen standing in the yard for long hours through the night. Toward morning the doctor had Jan Steen stable the horse. It was a sultry night, with flashes of heat lightning in the west.

"I should think if you opened the windows," Selina said to the old High Prairie doctor over and over, emboldened by terror. "It would help him to breathe. He—he's breathing so—he's breathing so—." She could not bring herself to say, "so terribly." The sound of the words wrong her as did the sound of his terrible breathing.

Perhaps the most poignant and touching feature of the days that followed was not the sight of this stricken giant, lying majestic and aloof in his unwashed black; nor of the boy Dirk, mystified but elated, too, with the unaccustomed stir and excitement; nor of the shabby little farm that seemed to shrink and dwindle into further insignificance beneath the sudden publicity turned upon it. No; it was the sight of Selina, widowed, but having no time for decent tears. The farm was there; it must be tended. Illness, death, sorrow—the garden must be

tended, the vegetables pulled, hauled to market, sold. Upon the garden depended the boy's future, and hers.

For the first few days following the funeral one or another of the neighboring farmers drove the DeJong team to market, added the blundering Jan in the fields. But each had his hands full with his own farm work. On the fifth day Jan Steen had to take the garden truck to Chicago, though he without many misgivings on Selina's part, all of which were realized when he returned late next day with half the load still on his wagon and a sum of money representing exactly zero in profits.

Selina was standing in the kitchen doorway, Jan in the yard with the team. She turned her face toward the fields. An observant person (Jan Steen was not one of these) would have noted the singularly determined and clear-cut jaw line of this drably calicoed farm woman.

"I'll go myself Monday."

Jan stared. "Go? Go where, Monday?"

"To market."

At this seeming plesantry Jan Steen smiled uncertainly, shrugged his shoulders, and was off to the barn. She was always saying things that didn't make sense. His horror and unbelief were shared by the rest of High Prairie when on Monday Selina literally took the reins in her own slim work-scarred hands.

"To market!" argued Jan as excitedly as his phlegmatic nature would permit. "A woman she don't go to market. A woman—"

"This woman does." Selina had risen at three in the morning. Not only that, she had got Jan up, grumbling. Dirk had joined them in the fields at five. Together the three of them had pulled and bunched a wagon load.

"Size them," Selina ordered, as they started to bunch radishes, beets, turnips, carrots. "And don't leave them loose like that. Tie them tight at the heads, like this. Twice around with the string, and through. Make bouquets of them, not bunches. And we're going to scrub them."

Selina, scrubbing the carrots vigorously under the pump, thought they emerged from their unaccustomed bath looking like clustered spears of pure gold. Jan, by now, was sullen with bewilderment. He refused to believe that she actually intended to carry out her plan. A woman—a High Prairie farmer's wife—driving to market like a man! Alone at night in the market place—or at best in one of the cheap rowing houses! By Sunday somehow, mysteriously, the news had filtered through the district. A fine state of things, and she a widow of a week! High Prairie called at the DeJong farm on Sunday afternoon and was told that the widow was over in the west west sixteen, poking about with the boy Dirk at her heels.

By Monday afternoon the parlor curtains of every High Prairie farmhouse that faced the Halsted road were agitated as though by a brisk wind between the hours of three and five, when the market wagons were to be seen moving toward Chicago.

Selina, having loaded the wagon in the yard, surveyed it with more sparkle in her eye than High Prairie would have approved in a widow of little more than a week. They had picked and bunched only the best of the late crop. Selina stepped back and regarded the riot of crimson and green, of white and gold and purple.

"Aren't they beautiful! Dirk, aren't they beautiful!"

Dirk, capering in his excitement at the prospect of the trip before him, shook his head impatiently.

"I don't know what you mean. Let's go, mother. Aren't we going now? You said as soon as the load was on."

"Oh, Sobig, you're just exactly like you—." She stopped.

"Like my what?"

"We'll go now, son. There's cold meat for your supper, Jan, and potatoes all sliced for frying and half an apple pie left from noon. You ought to get in the rest of the squash and pumpkins by evening. Maybe I can sell the lot instead of taking them in by the load. I'll see a commission man. Take less, if I have to."

She had dressed the boy in his homemade suit cut down from one of his father's. He wore a wide-brimmed straw hat which he hated. Selina herself, in a full-skirted black-stuff dress, mounted the wagon agilely, took up the reins, looked down at the boy seated beside her, clucked to the horses. Jan Steen gave vent to a final outraged bellow.

"Never in my life did I hear of such a thing!"

Will Selina sell every vegetable at a high price? Or will she come home in despair?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

She Meant Well

A student brought his mother to the university and was showing her about. The dear old lady was anxious to make her boy think that she understood everything.

"Over there, mother," said the son, "are our wonderful polo fields."

"Oh," sighed the old lady, "what is there that is nicer than fields of waving polo?"

Unlucky

"I heard tell this afternoon," said Mrs. Johnson, upon her return from a neighborhood call, "that Missus Gigger cut her foot powerful bad whilst chopping up stovewood. Ain't that just too bad?"

"I shore is," replied Gap Johnson of Rumpus Ridge. "Pore Gabe won't have no wife to support him for a couple of months."—Kansas City Star.

The KITCHEN CABINET

(© 1925, Western Newspaper Union.) True social feeling, true warmth and cordiality naturally expresses itself in words and is strengthened by the expression.

EVERYBODY LIKES CANDY

Homemade candy is enjoyed by the most of folks, and being prepared at home, is more wholesome and less expensive.

Peanut Candy.—Take a pound of unshelled peanuts, shell them, remove the brown skins and roll with a rolling pin

on a bread board until they are like coarse crumbs. To two pounds of brown sugar take six ounces or twelve tablespoonsful of butter, put over the heat and stir while melting. When the first boiling begins count the time, stirring to keep the mixture from burning on. After seven minutes of cooking stir in the peanuts and pour into a greased dripping pan to cool.

Sea Foam.—Take two cupfuls of sugar, three-fourths of a cupful of corn syrup, one-fourth cupful of boiling water. Cook until the mixture makes a hard ball in water or hairs from the spoon; add one teaspoonful of vanilla and one-half cupful of nuts and pour over the well-beaten whites of two eggs. Beat until firm enough to drop by spoonfuls on a buttered baking sheet.

After-Dinner Mints.—Take three cupfuls of granulated sugar, one-fourth of a teaspoonful of cream of tartar, one-half cupful of boiling water, one-half tablespoonful of vinegar. Boil until the sirup becomes brittle in water. Pull when cool enough and add two drops of the oil of peppermint while pulling. Cut into small pieces and put into a tight glass jar. Let stand for several days.

Cracker Jack.—This is the children's favorite: Take one cupful of brown sugar and honey; boil until it hardens in cold water. Remove from the fire and add one-half teaspoonful of soda. Stir in all the popcorn or puffed rice with a few peanuts that the sirup will take. Spread in a greased pan to cool, then mark off into squares.

Molasses Candy.—Take three cupfuls of molasses, one cupful of butter and flavor to taste. Boil until it makes a hard ball in water. Add any desired flavoring just as it is poured into the cooling pan. Pull when cool; if liked, a few drops of peppermint may be added to the candy when pulling.

Summer Dishes. Green vegetables are especially good for us during the spring and early summer, they should be served often.

Peas in Aspic Jelly.—A pint of shelled peas will make six individual molds. Cook the peas in just enough water to keep them from burning, adding a teaspoonful of sugar and a slice of onion; when tender, drain and cool. Soak one tablespoonful of gelatin in two tablespoonfuls of water, then add one and one-half cupfuls of nicely seasoned meat stock, boiling hot. Stir until the gelatin is dissolved, then strain and chill; add the peas and a tablespoonful of chopped red pepper, stirring until the jelly begins to thicken. Pour into molds, wet with cold water and place on ice. Serve, turned on sliced cucumbers dipped in French dressing or on water cream. Garnish with roses of mayonnaise.

Mousse of Peas.—Cook a pint of peas until tender, then put through a sieve. Add one cupful of thick white sauce, one tablespoonful of gelatin softened with cold water, one beaten egg, paprika and white pepper to taste. When cool fold in one cupful of whipped cream and pour into small ramekins to chill. When serving, garnish with a point of whipped cream topped with minced parsley.

String Beans With Sour Sauce.—Cook a quart of string beans cut into halves then slit once lengthwise. Cook in boiling salted water until tender. Drain and rinse in cold water. Shred a small car of pimentos and mix with the beans, then add one-half cupful of cream beaten with two tablespoonfuls of vinegar, half a teaspoonful of salt, and a dash of pepper. Serve with sliced corned beef or ham.

Macarons.—Take one cupful each of corn flakes, sugar and coconut. Beat two egg whites until stiff; add the sugar, then two tablespoonfuls of flour, the other ingredients, a little salt and a teaspoonful of vanilla. This makes two dozen. Drop by spoonfuls on baking sheet.

Ristorie Rice.—Cut three slices of bacon into small squares and cook with a cupful of shredded cabbage, well covered for an hour. Bring a cupful of rice to a boil in a quart of boiling water, then rinse in cold water and add to the cabbage with salt, pepper and a cupful of hot real broth. Cook until the rice is tender, adding more broth as needed. Turn into a hot serving dish, add a spoonful of butter to the center, sprinkle generously with cheese and paprika and serve.

Grape Sherbet.—Take a pint of cream, a cupful of sweetened grape juice, one-half cupful of sugar, and the juice of half a lemon. Freeze.

Nellie Maxwell

AFTER HER BABY CAME

Mrs. Hollister Unable To Do Her Work for Six Months

Tells How Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Restored Her Health



MRS. HENRY HOLLISTER
WYANDOTTE, MICHIGAN

Wyandotte, Michigan.—"After my baby was born I did not do my own work for six months and could hardly take care of my own baby. I always had a pain in my right side and it was so bad I was getting round shoulders. I would feel well one day and then feel so bad for three or four days that I would be in bed. One Sunday my mother came to see how I was, and she said a friend told her to let me try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. So the next day I got a bottle and before it was half taken I

got relief. After I was well again I went to the doctor and he asked me how I was getting along. I told him I was taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and he said it did not hurt any one to take it. I am always recommending the Vegetable Compound to others and I always have a bottle of it on hand."—Mrs. HENRY HOLLISTER, R. F. D. No. 1, Box 7, Wyandotte, Michigan.

Another Woman's Case

St. Paul, Minnesota.—"I have a little girl three years old and ever since her birth I have suffered with my back as if it were breaking in two, and bearing-down pains all the time. I also had dizzy spells. I had read several letters of women in the newspapers, and the druggist recommended Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to my husband for me. As a result of taking it my back has stopped aching and the awful bearing-down feeling is gone. I feel stronger and do all of my housework and tend to my little girl. I have also taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Liver Pills for constipation. I have recommended these medicines to some of my friends and you may use this letter as a testimonial if you wish. I will be pleased to answer letters of other women if I can help them by telling them what this medicine has done for me."—Mrs. PRICE, 147 West Summit Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Skunk Frozen to Track

F. L. Rice, a member of the section crew at Woolwich, Maine, reported one day last winter that as the men started over the track in the morning they saw a skunk on the track ahead of them. Drawing near, they discovered that it had been caught there by its fur being frozen to the frosty rail. Rice killed the skunk, and then it was quite a pull to free its carcass from the rail.

A Pessimist in New Bedford

Teacher—Tell me, Johnny, how many mills make a cent?
Johnny—Not a one of them.—Boston Post.

Queen Mary's China

Queen Mary is a great collector of china, especially Wedgwood and old Chelsea. Her majesty has been gradually sorting and rearranging the china at Windsor, where the special cabinets containing it are lit up from inside at night.

Indigestion produces disagreeable and sometimes alarming symptoms. Wright's Indian Vegetable Pills remove symptoms and restore digestion. 375 Pearl St. N. Y. Adv.

Awful Girls

"Gee, there's an awful lot of girls stuck on me."
"Yeah. They must be an awful lot."
—Minnesota Sklu Mah.

CHILDREN CRY FOR

Fletcher's CASTORIA

MOTHER—Fletcher's Castoria is a pleasant, harmless Substitute for Castor Oil, Paregoric, Teething Drops and Soothing Syrups, especially prepared for Infants in arms and Children all ages.

To avoid imitations, always look for the signature of *Chas. H. Fletcher*. Proven directions on each package. Physicians everywhere recommend it.

Be again as healthy as You used to be

The health and vigor you had in your youth can be yours again. Rheumatism, lumbago, Bright's disease, and kindred ailments, are the result of weak, sluggish, impure blood, and the reason your blood becomes like this is because it lacks the iron which is essential to enable it to throw the poisons out of your system. It keeps on circulating these impurities through your body and these ailments steadily grow worse. They finally become dangerous.

The most amazing tonic ever discovered, to give your blood the iron it needs, is Acid Iron Mineral, bottled just as Nature herself produced it. Physicians and scientists have never been able to duplicate A. I. M. It is the only mineral iron which can be taken up directly by the blood corpuscles. This is why it purifies and strengthens your blood and so quickly gives you back that energy, appetite and vigorous health Nature intended you should have.

For more than thirty years, this remarkable, natural blood tonic, has been bringing suffering men and women back to strength and health. It will do this for you.

Go to your druggist today and get a bottle of Acid Iron Mineral. Also get a box of A. I. M. pills.

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SALEM, VIRGINIA