

and be my Love

By PEGGY DERN

WNU RELEASE

THE STORY THUS FAR: Meg entered the house quietly, when she returned from riding Martha. Jim MacTavish awaited her, declaring she had been out with Tom Fallon. "You are in love with him," Jim again attempted to get her to sell the farm, but she refused angrily. The next day Larry came for lunch and afterward they walked together to the ridge. Larry told her that he knew she loved the old farm, for he loved it too. He told her he did not want her to sell the place, and declared he wanted to marry her whether they lived in Pleasant Grove or in the county seat. He kissed her lightly and laughed, "I can't say I blame you for not wanting to give all this up."

CHAPTER VIII

They went hand in hand up the path and to the flat rock that crowned the very top of the hill. Megan sat down and Laurence followed her to the rock. They sat close together for a moment, looking out over the scene spread below them.

Megan knew the thought that was in his mind, and she tried hard to marshal all her arguments so that he could understand; but when he turned his head and looked at her, and smiled, he said quietly, "I can't say I blame you for not being willing to give all this up! We are going to be very happy here."

Megan felt as though she had taken a step in the dark and plunged headlong into space. She could only stare at him, wide-eyed, her mouth open a little. Laurence laughed and leaned forward and kissed her.

"Did you think, darling, that I've known you almost your whole life and been in love with you since I was fifteen, and didn't know what your own land meant to you?" he asked her quietly. "I admit that I was fool enough to hope, for just a little while, that you loved me enough to be happy in Meadersville. But when you telephoned me in alarm because you had been offered what we both know is a very generous price for the land, and you didn't want to take it—well, I faced facts then and got busy to see about just what could be done. Because make no mistake about it, my love—you're going to marry me, whether we live in Meadersville or Pleasant Grove!"

There were quick tears in her eyes, but she smiled tremulously.

"Thank you for understanding, Larry," she told him huskily. "It's—a tremendous relief."

Laurence frowned as though not quite sure that he liked that.

"You mean you didn't think I would understand?" he protested. "Well, for Pete's sake, why not? After all, we've grown up together. These last years since your mother died, I've watched you fighting drouth and flood and hail, blue weevil and corn borer and bull mold and chinch bug—when it would have been so much easier to give up and sell out. Don't you suppose during those years, I've come to understand what the place means to you? And to be frank with you—I'm kind of fond of the old place myself! Never having owned a square foot of real estate in my life, having grown up on a sharecropper's place—the thought of becoming a landowner—in partnership, anyway—seems pretty swell!"

He grinned at her and said hastily, "Not of course that I want you to get the idea that I'm merely marrying you for your farm—perish the thought! I'd marry you if you didn't have a foot of land!"

She laughed and let him kiss her. And at first, that seemed quite satisfactory to Laurence; but after a little he let her go, and sat looking down at the rich dark earth, where his heel was absently digging a hole.

"Then you're not in love with me, after all," he said quietly, and there was a note in his voice that caught at her heart.

She stared at him, blinking in amazement.

"What in the world—why do you—?" she stammered.

"I'm not exactly a blind fool, Meggie," he said evenly. "I admit I don't know a heck of a lot about women; but I do know that when a girl is in love, she is not only kissed—but kisses, in return."

The color burned in Megan's face, but her eyes met his straightly.

"I—kissed you, Larry," she told him unsteadily.

He shook his head.

"You let me kiss you, Meggie," he returned. "There's a big difference."

There was a silence, and then she said unevenly, "I'm—sorry, dear."

"There's nothing for you to be sorry about, Meggie. If you don't love me, you don't, and it's plain that you don't." His voice sounded tired.

"I'm—very fond of you, Larry," Megan said quietly.

"I don't know anyone else," she pointed out.

"That's not quite flattering," he assured her, and now he seemed amused at her confusion and her bewilderment. "Never mind, darling. We'll let it go, for now. But I wouldn't want you to marry me, Meggie, unless you felt a little about me as I feel about you. I guess I don't quite expect you to be—well, as much in love with me as I am with you; the wise people who claim to know about such things claim that one person in every marriage cares more deeply than the other. I don't mind a bit if I love you more than you love me. Maybe that's the way it should be. I'm afraid I'm not wise enough to decide that. I only know that unless you're—more than just fond of me—it wouldn't work out."

Megan said faintly, "You mean you want to break off the engagement, Larry?"

"Do you, Meggie?" he asked quietly.

"Why—why—no, Larry—of course not," she stammered, and put out a hand in a helpless gesture. "I—I



She shot Megan an oblique look and then came out frankly with what was on her mind.

think I've always expected that we'd be married some day. It's—well, I've sort of grown up with that thought. Maybe—could it be that that's the reason you don't think I love you enough?"

"It isn't that I think you don't love me, Meggie—I know you don't," he told her. "I've tried to kid myself that you did, and tried to hope that once we were actually engaged, you'd—well, warm up to me a little. But when you thought of setting a date for our marriage and realized that you couldn't give up the farm or the dogs and cats and cows and chickens, to make a new life with me somewhere—or anywhere—that was all I needed to convince me that you're not ready to marry me yet. If you loved me as I love you, Meggie, nothing in the world would be as important to you as being with me—anywhere, anyhow."

He broke off as though searching for words with which to make his thoughts clear to her.

"It isn't that I'd want you to make even the smallest sacrifice to be with me, Meggie," he pointed out. "It's just that if you loved me the only way I could want you to—you'd be willing to sacrifice anything and everything just so that we could be together. Do you understand, Meggie?"

She was still for a moment, and then reluctantly she nodded and said faintly, "Yes, darling—I understand."

"Then we'll leave it at that, for the present," said Laurence as he stood up and drew her to her feet. "And now Annie will be sending out a searching party for us if we don't hurry," he added, smiling, deliberately breaking the growing tension, struggling for a lighter tone.

Suddenly, a mist of tears in her eyes, Megan turned to him impulsively, put her hands on either side of his lean, pleasant brown face and stood on tiptoe to set her mouth, cool and fresh and sweet, on his. Involuntarily his arms went about her, holding her close and hard against him. His mouth on hers was urgent, demanding, seeking a response that, after a moment, he knew with a sick certainty, was not there. And then he released her, smiled at her, his face pale and set, and half under his breath he said huskily, "Thank you, darling."

Annie was just finishing the last preparations for the midday dinner when they reached the house, and Jim came in, well-groomed and debonair, quite as usual, as they were ready to sit down.

He greeted Laurence with an urbanity that was almost patronizing,

but after a few moments he said briskly, "Well, Larry, my boy, I hope you've been able to persuade this girl of mine to be sensible."

Laurence answered lightly, "I'm not sure I feel that she needs any persuasion along such lines. I've always considered Meggie a very sensible young woman!"

Jim tried to laugh, patting his crisply barbered gray mustache lightly with his napkin. "Sensible young woman? That hardly sounds as loverlike as I would have expected under the circumstances!"

"Oh, I'm a very sensible young man," Laurence assured him pleasantly. "And sensible young men don't go in for a lot of romantic nonsense, nowadays."

"Don't they, now?" Jim was elaborately surprised. "Well, of course, things have changed a lot since my day! But seriously, I feel that we have a splendid offer for this place, and since you and Meggie won't be able to run it yourselves, and a tenant is very unsatisfactory—"

"Megan seems to feel that it would be best for us not to be married for another year," Laurence said gently. "And therefore, she will want to run the place herself this year, at least."

"Another year, eh?" he said at last. "Sorry—thought you two were in love with each other and had been waiting several years for you to get a start so that you could get married!"

"As I said before, we are sensible young people, Meggie and I. Slow and sure is our motto," Laurence told him.

Jim's jaw set and he made a pretense of eating, but after a little he looked at his watch, thrust his chair back, and asked to be excused under the plea of an engagement. They heard the outer door close behind him with a bang that threatened its old-fashioned glass panel.

"I'm afraid he's upset," Laurence's words were wry with understatement. "He won't try to make things difficult for you?"

"Goodness, no—and if he does, it won't matter. I'm not in the least afraid of him!" She laughed at the very idea.

Laurence nodded. "But if there should ever be anything to—well, to make you feel you need help—you'll remember my telephone number?" he reminded her.

"Of course—didn't I yell for you the minute I thought Matthews was going to insist on that commission?"

In the next few weeks, life in Pleasant Grove, on the surface at least, was entirely normal.

The draft called up more and more young men for the armed services; several girls registered for the Cadet Nurses' Training Corps; Bud Harrison's oldest girl, twenty-year-old Marianna, joined the WAC; Preacher Martin, beloved and feared for his "straight talking" to evildoers and the like, fell on his front steps and broke his leg; the Jordans, over behind Turkey Bend, had another baby.

But there were currents underneath that popped above the surface now and then, and to no one's very keen surprise, Alicia Stevenson seemed to have a large part in them. Her malicious tongue, her sly little smile that hinted at so much she did not say, the way she had of always being in the very middle of any untoward event, filled people with angry unease.

"It's got so a body ain't safe in their own home nights, with that woman snoopin' around," Mrs. Stuart complained to Megan one afternoon as they sat sewing before the fire that the chill rain made very welcome. She shot Megan an oblique look and then came out frankly with what was in her mind. "I can't imagine what your paw sees in her, anyhow."

Megan dropped the tablecloth she was mending and stared at Mrs. Stuart.

"My father?" she gasped incredulously.

Mrs. Stuart sniffed and set an unusually sharp stitch in the duster she was hemming for the newest "Jordan youngun."

"Well, if you don't know that the way your paw's runnin' after that Stevenson woman is the talk of the town, it's high time you was finding out, I say," she snapped belligerently. "They're always ridin' around in that car o' hers—and where she gets the gas, nobody seems to know, but folks say it's 'black market' and she gets all she can pay fer—or what your paw can pay fer."

Megan said curtly, "My father does not patronize 'black markets' for gasoline or anything else. And I doubt very much whether he has seen Mrs. Stevenson more than half a dozen times—"

"Half a dozen times would be a plenty, with some folks," Mrs. Stuart cut in as curtly.

Later, when Mrs. Stuart had gone, Megan got up and went out to the kitchen. She thought Annie looked at her covertly, but she couldn't be sure until suddenly, as though she could no longer keep her words to herself, Annie said, "Miz' Stuart's right, Miss Meggie—folks is talkin' about Miz' Jim an' dat Miz' Stevenson—"

"That will do, Annie," said Megan sharply.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

SUNDAY SCHOOL—11.5 EMS
By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D.
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Lesson for September 1

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JESUS AND RIGHT USE OF PROPERTY

LESSON TEXT—Exodus 20:15; Proverbs 30:7-9; Matthew 5:25-33
MEMORY SELECTION—But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:20-21).

Labor Day tomorrow! And much in the thinking of all America will be the right division of the fruits of investment of time and money. Property rights are fundamental. God's Word teaches us the proper attitude toward our own rights and the rights of others; namely, honesty, yes, just plain old-fashioned honesty.

In such a time, the believer in Christ needs to be doubly vigilant lest he accommodate his own standards of honesty to those of the world.

I. Honest in Purpose (Exod. 20:15). We cannot tolerate anything in word or deed that can be regarded as stealing what belongs to another. The very commandment against stealing implies that men have a right to that which they have made, earned or saved.

If no one had any property rights there could be no stealing. Some of our modern political and socialisms deny such rights, but their reasoning is clearly not biblical or Christian.

"Thou shalt not steal," forbids every kind of theft, and this includes more than robbery or ordinary stealing (see Lev. 19:11-13).

It relates to every kind of false dealing with another, such as oppression or the withholding of just wages. That, too, is stealing in God's sight.

Perhaps we ought to be more specific and apply the truth to our own day. Stealing includes such things as looting on one's job, borrowing money from the cash drawer, taking goods from the stock with which one is working, stealing another man's sermon and preaching it as one's own, lifting material out of another man's book without credit, contracting debts which one can never pay, using false weights and measures, adulterating food or other material, "watering" milk for sale, selling worthless stock, dodging taxes or lying to the tax assessor, or using a slug instead of a nickel in the telephone to escape proper payment.

One might add gambling (which is taking another man's property by skill or by chance), making an unduly large profit on the labor of another, making money out of the sorrows and failures of others, etc. To be honest means to be fair, and that has broad implications.

II. Humble in Practice (Prov. 30:7-9). It may sound a little odd to hear this man pray that he should be delivered from prosperity. To ask to be kept from poverty is certainly to make a wise request, but to be delivered from riches, why that's certainly not sensible. So reasons the world, but as usual, it is entirely wrong.

Experience has demonstrated that the man who has an abundance of good things usually becomes self-satisfied, assuming that he deserves the credit for his affluence, he forgets God, and what had been a good and useful life is soon destroyed.

On the other hand, it is true that extreme poverty tends to break down a man's morale. Watching his family starve is not conducive to honesty if a man can lay his hands on something to save them, whether it be his or not. We do not justify stealing at any time, but we can well understand that starvation can turn the mind of a normal man into abnormal channels.

III. Heavenly in Principle (Matt. 6:25-28). The Bible is concerned almost entirely with life on this earth. It tells us very little about heaven except how to go there. But (and here is the important point for us just now) it does give us laws from heaven for life on earth. Our life here, our attitude toward property, is to be heavenly in principle.

We are not to be anxious (the correct translation of "take no thought," vv. 25, 27, 31) about our life, about food, raiment and other necessary things. Proper forethought is all right, but worry? Never!

How shall these things be provided? God will provide. Consider the birds. Do they have nervous breakdowns about where their food and shelter are to come from? They cannot even pray and they are not able to work, and yet God feeds them.

Consider the glory of the flowers of the field, for not even a king can dress as they. The Lord does it. "Are ye not much better than they?"

What about the future? It is in God's hands, and even if it were in our hands what could we do with it? Even tomorrow with its needs, its blessings, its joys and its sorrows is not here yet, and when it does come there will come with it God's precious provision (v. 34).

The Home Town Reporter
in WASHINGTON
By Walter Sheed
WNU Correspondent

U. N.'s Food Organization Discusses World Problems

FARM leaders, agricultural experts and government officials interested in agriculture are placing great stress on the outcome of the meeting of the food and agricultural organization of United Nations, which opened its fourth session in Copenhagen on September 2. The session likely will last approximately two weeks.

Organized in the United States, the FAO has held three organizational meetings, one in Mexico City, another in South America and the third in Canada. This fourth meeting is in Denmark.

Each of the national farm organizations has one representative at the meeting to press for the production and distribution plans which were the result of the recent international agricultural meeting in London. The state department, as this is written, has not announced names of the American official delegates, but the department of agriculture already has designated several men who will become, along with farm organization leaders, a part of the American advisory group. These include Under Secretary of Agriculture Dodd, production and marketing administration's Shields, Wells of the bureau of agricultural economics, Bowles (not Chester) of the foreign agricultural relations department, Lambert of agricultural research and Stiebeling of home economics.

This meeting of FAO will hatch the first long range program for world agriculture, based upon a worldwide survey, which has just been completed and which includes 70 countries.

John Orr of Scotland, director general of FAO, will present the proposals for this food program which, if adopted, will be laid before the meeting of United Nations at its scheduled meeting in October.

Many Smaller Meetings

This program is the result of exploration into the reasons for surpluses and shortages in world food supply, and is expected to contain provisions for preventing the recurrence of such conditions. In the meantime, committees of the organization have been holding meetings in various European cities on such questions as diet, nutritional goal, possible changes in production to meet the goal, a current appraisal of the food situation in all the countries of the world, economics and statistics, forestry and agricultural production and research. Reports on these various phases of the agricultural picture will be presented to the meeting for rejection, adoption or modification.

Farm leaders here are convinced that the future of American agriculture is closely bound with world agriculture, and that never again can the United States draw within her shell with a policy of isolation.

Our own agricultural market is so sensitive that it will be governed largely by world agricultural production, prices and distribution. No longer can our expanded production depend upon the domestic market for consumption.

Seventy countries are now members of the FAO and two new countries, Italy and Switzerland, are expected to apply for membership at the Copenhagen meeting.

In connection with the economics and statistics report, it might be well to consider the recent report of the bureau of economics of the agriculture department, supplemented by findings of the Federal Reserve board, to the effect that some 32 million families in this country still are earning less than \$3,000 per year. If that figure is true in this country, and it undoubtedly is, think what the meager income must be of untold millions of families of the rest of the world.

Most People Have Little

Despite the fact that the American people have savings of something like 81 billion dollars in bank deposits, currency and government bonds . . . yet 70 per cent of the American people have little or nothing saved for the inevitable rainy day . . . the saving being concentrated in the upper income brackets . . . the people who take in \$10,000 or more a year, and who were well off before the war.

So the war, which poured hundreds of billions of dollars into the pockets of the American people, still left the country with the income divided just about as it was before the war. What then must be the plight of European and Asiatic countries?

So distribution, surplus and price too, at this important meeting of FAO will be one of the major factors to be discussed in any long range agricultural program in which feeding of the world's population is the most essential job before the organization.

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