

The BROWN MOUSE

By HERBERT QUICK

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(Continued from page 3)

stammered.

"The fact is," said Columbus, "I know that Woodruff district job ain't big enough for you any more; but we can make it bigger. If you'll stay, I believe we can pull off a deal to consolidate some of them districts, and make you boss of the whole shooting match."

"I appreciate this, Clumb," said Jim, "but I don't believe you can do it."

"Well, think of it," said Columbus. "And don't do anything till you talk with me and a few of the other boys."

"Think of it" again!

A fine home-coming it was for Jim, with the colonel waiting at the station with a double sleigh, and the chance to ride into the snowy country in the same seat with Jennie—a chance which was blighted by the colonel's placing Bettina and Nils Hansen in the broad rear seat, and Jim in front with himself. The colonel would not allow him to get out and walk when he could really

have reached home more quickly by doing so; no, he set the Hansens down at their door, took Jennie home, and then drove the lightened sleigh merrily to the humble cabin of the rather excited young schoolmaster.

"Did you make any deal with those people down in the western part of the state?" asked the colonel. "Jennie wrote me that you've got an offer."

"No," said Jim, and he told the colonel about the proposal of Mr. Hofmyer.

"Well," said the colonel, "in my capacity of wild-eyed reformer, I've made up my mind that the first four miles in the trip is to make the rural teacher's job a bigger job. It's got to be a man's size, woman's size job, or we can't get real men and real women to stay in the work."

"I think that's a statesmanlike formulation of it," said Jim.

"Well," said the colonel, "don't turn down the Pottawatomie county job, until we have a chance to see what we can do. I'll get some kind of a meeting together, and what I want you to do is to use this offer as a club over this helpless school district. What we need is to be held up. Do the Jesse James act, Jim!"

"I can't, Colonel!"

"Yes, you can, too. Will you try it?" "I want to treat everybody fairly," said Jim, "including Mr. Hofmyer. I don't know what to do, hardly."

"Well, I'll get the meeting together," said the colonel, "and in the meantime, think of what I've said."

Another thing to think of—Jim rushed into the house and surprised his mother, who had expected him to arrive after a slow walk from town through the snow. Jim caught her in his arms, from which she was released a moment later, quite flustered and blushing.

"Why, James," said she, "you seem excited. What's happened?"

"Nothing, mother," he replied, "except that I believe there's just a possibility of my being a success in the world."

"My boy, my boy!" said she, laying her hand on his arm, "if you were to die tonight, you'd die the greatest success any boy ever was—if your mother is any judge."

Jim kissed her, and went up to his attic to change his clothes. Inside the waistcoat was a worn envelope, which he carefully opened, and took from it a letter much creased from many foldings. It was the old letter from Jennie, written when the comical mistake had been made of making him the teacher of the Woodruff school. He read only the sentence in which Jennie had told of her father's interest in Jim's success, ending with the underscored words, "I'm for you, too."

"I wonder," said Jim, as he went out to do the evening's tasks, "I wonder if she is for me!"

CHAPTER XVIII

Old Man Simms Speaks.
Young McGeehee Simms was loitering along the snowy way to the schoolhouse, bearing a brightly scoured tin pail two-thirds full of water. He had been allowed to act as water superintendent of the Woodruff school as a reward of merit—said merit being an essay on which he received credit in both language and geography on "Harvesting Wheat in the Tennessee Mountains." This had been of vast interest to the school in view of the fact that the Simmses were the only pupils in the school who had ever seen in use that supposedly-obsolete harvesting implement, the cradle. Buddy's essay had been passed over to the class in United States history as the evidence of an eyewitness concerning farming conditions in our grandfa-

thers' times.

The surnameless Pete, Colonel Woodruff's hired man, halted Buddy at the door.

"Mr. Simms, I believe?" he said. "I reckon you must be lookin' for my brother, Raymond, suh," said Buddy.

"I am a-lookin'," said Pete impressively, "for Mr. McGeehee Simms."

"That's me," said Buddy, "but I ain't been doin' nothin' wrong, suh!"

"I have a message here," said Pete, "for Professor James E. Irwin. He's what-ho within, there, ain't he?"

"He's inside, I reckon," said Buddy.

"Then will you be so kind and condescendin' as to stoop so low as to jump so high as to give him this letter?" asked Pete.

Buddy took the letter and was considering of his reply to this remarkable speech, when Pete, gravely saluting, passed on, rather congratulating himself on having staged a very good burlesque of the dignified manners of those queer mountaineers, the Simmses.

The note was from the colonel:

"Please come to the meeting tonight, and when you come, come prepared to hold the district up. If we can't meet the Pottawatomie county standard of wages, we ought to lose you. Everybody in the district will be there. Come late, so you won't hear yourself talked about—I should recommend nine-thirty and war-paint."

It was a crisis, no doubt of that; and the responsibility of the situation rather sickened Jim of the task of teaching. Only one thing kept him from dodging the whole issue and remaining at home—the colonel's matter-of-fact assumption that Jim had become master of the situation. How could he flee, when this old soldier was fighting so valiantly for him in the trenches? So Jim went to the meeting.

How could he impose conditions on the whole school district? How could the colonel expect such a thing of him? And how could anyone look for anything but scorn for the upstart field-hand from these men who had for so

many years made him the butt of their good-natured but none the less contemptuous ridicule? Who was he, anyway, to lay down rules for these substantial and successful men—he who had been for all the years of his life at their command, subservient to their demands for labor—their underling?

The season was nearing spring, and it was a mild thawing night. The windows of the schoolhouse were filled with heads, evidencing the presence of a crowd of almost unprecedented size, and the sashes had been thrown up for ventilation and coolness. As Jim climbed the back fence of the schoolyard, he heard a burst of applause, from which he judged that some speaker had just finished his remarks. There was silence when he came alongside the window at the right of the chairman's desk, a silence broken by the voice of Old Man Simms, saying "Mistah Chairman!"

"The chair," said the voice of Ezra Bronson, "recognizes Mr. Simms."

Jim halted in indecision. He was not expected while the debate was in progress. There is no rule of manners or morals, however, forbidding eavesdropping during the proceedings of a public meeting. Therefore he listened to the first and last public speech of Old Man Simms.

"Ah ain't no speaker," said Old Man Simms, "but Ah caln't set here and be quiet an' go home an' face my ole woman an' my boys an' gyuhls withouten sayin' a word fo' the best friend any family evah had, Mr. Jim Irwin." (Applause.) Maybe Ah'll be thought farrad to speak hyah, beln' as Ah ain't no learnin' an' some may think Ah don't pay no taxes; but veel'n' as how we've took the Blanchard farm, a hundred an' sixty acres, for five years, an' move in a week from Sat'day, we pay taxes in our rent, Ah reckon, an' howsomefer that may be, Ah've come to feel that you-all won't think hard of me if Ah speak what we-uns feel so strong about Mr. Jim Irwin?"

Old Man Simms finished this exordium with the rising inflection, which denoted a direct question as to his status in the meeting. "Go on!" "You've got as good a right as any one!" "You're all right, old man!" Such exclamations as these came to Jim's ears with scarcely less gratefulness than to those of Old Man Simms—who stammered and went on.

"Ah thank you-all kindly, Gentlemen an' ladies, when Mr. Jim Irwin found us, we was scandalous pore, an' we was wuss'n pore—we was low-down." (Cries of "No—No!")

"Yes, we was, becuz when a man gets in a new place, he's got to lift himse'f up to what folks does where he's come to, or he'll make a place fer himse'f lower'n anybody else. In the mountings we was good people, becuz we done the best we could an' the best any one done; but hyah, we was low-down people becuz we hated the people that had mo' learnin', mo' land, mo' money, an' mo' friends than what we had. My little gyuhls wasn't respectable in their clothes—My children was lgerant, an' friffin', but I was the most triffin' of all. Ah'll leave it to Colonel Woodruff if I was good fer a plug of terbacker, or a bakin' of flour at any sto' in the county. Was I, Colonel? Wasn't I perfectly wuthless an' triffin'?"

There was a ripple of laughter, in the midst of which the colonel's voice was heard saying, "I guess you were, Mr. Simms, I guess you were, but—"

"Thankee," said Old Man Simms, as if the colonel had given a really valuable testimonial to his character. "I sho' was! Thankee kindly! An' now, what am I good fer? Can't I get anything I want at the stores? Can't I

git a little money at the bank, if I got to have it?"

"You're just as good as any man in the district," said the colonel. "You don't ask for more than you can pay, and you can get all you ask."

"Thankee," said Mr. Simms gravely.

"What Ah tell you-all is right, ladies



"We Owe It All to Jim Irwin."

and gentlemen. An' what has made the change in we-uns, ladies and gentlemen? It's the wuk of Mr. Jim Irwin with my boy Raymond, the best boy any man evah hed, and my gyuhl, Calista, an' Buddy, an' Jinnie, an' with me an' my ole woman.

"He showed us how to get a toe-holt into this new kentry. He teached the children what orto be did by a rentin' farmer in Iowa. He done lifted us up, an' made people of us. He done showed us that you-all is good people, an' not what we thought you was. Outen what he learned in school, my boy Raymond an' me made as good crops as we could last summer, an' done right much wuk outside. We got the lame of beln' good farmers an' good wukkers, an' when Mr. Blanchard moved to town, he said he was glad to give us his fine farm for five years."

"Now, see what Mr. Jim Irwin has

done for a pack o' outlaws and outcasts. Insid' o' hidin' out from the Hobdays that was laywayin' us in the mountings, we'll be livin' in a house with two chimleyns an' a swimmin' tub made outen crock-ryware. We'll be in debt a whole lot—an' we owe it to Mr. Jim Irwin that we got the credit to git in debt with, an' the courage to go on and git out agin!" (Applause.) "Ah could affo'd to pay Mr. Jim Irwin's salary myse'f, if Ah could. An' there's enough men hyah tonight that say they've been money-he'ped by his teachin' the school to make up mo' than his wages. Let's not let Mr. Jim Irwin go, neighbors! Let's not let him go!"

Jim's heart warmed. "There isn't a man in that meeting," said he to himself, as he walked to the schoolhouse door, "possessed of the greatness of spirit of Old Man Simms. If he's a fair sample of the people of the mountains, they are of the stuff of which great nations are made—if they only are given a chance."

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Daddy's Evening Fairy Tale

By MARY GRAHAM BONNER

WALRUS WAYS

"We'll tell of our ways," said Mother Walrus. "Yes, we'll let them know about us."

Billie Brownie was wearing his warm, warm coat which Old Man Winter had given him. It was made out of the same material that Old Man Winter had his wardrobe made of, for no matter how cold it is, it is never, too cold for Old Man Winter.

He is protected from the cold by his regular winter clothing! But he won't tell anyone just how it is made!

And Billie was wearing the shoes and the cap and the earmuffs Old Man Winter had given him, too.

"There are many of us about, as you can see," said Mother Walrus. "But, though we love to go about in big groups, we have a nice family life and are devoted to our own."

"We are great, huge creatures, aren't we?"

"Enormous," said Billie Brownie.

"If it wouldn't be rude," he added, after a moment, "I would like to know how much you weigh."

"Not rude at all, Billie Brownie," said Mother Walrus. "Not rude at all. Now my Mr. Walrus is one of the grandest and most superb of creatures."

"He's a Walrus after my own heart and, of course, why wouldn't he be?"

Mother Walrus laughed a great, deep laugh.

"Of course," she repeated, "why wouldn't he be, considering he is the Walrus of my own heart?"

"He weighs three thousand pounds, and I weigh two thousand pounds."

"Ah, Mr. Walrus isn't one of your skinny gentlemen. No, he is fat, good and fat, and full of wrinkles, for the fat all wrinkles up, as there is so much of it."

"There is plenty of fat to spare, you see, and it just folds up and wrinkles up and lets you know that there is nothing stingy about the fatness—it's all there—plenty of it!"

"His two ivory tusks are the most beautiful I have ever seen."

"We are slow creatures when we go over the ice, but we're good swimmers."

"Gracious," said Billie Brownie. "To think of weighing three thousand pounds."

"It's a majestic thought, isn't it?"

Billie Brownie smiled.

"Ah, yes," she continued, "we're not small or dainty. We go in for size and little else."

"We have so much fat that there isn't much room for brains. We're not very bright. In fact, we might almost be considered stupid."

"But we're as sociable as sociable can be, and we're all very friendly with one another."

"And, as I said before, though we are so friendly with one another, our own family always comes first."

"I'm not much of a fighter. I will do no one any harm."

"But—if any one should come after my baby—then, it is very different! I should be so excited then, to protect my big little one, that I'd be afraid of no one and I'd fight, fight, fight."

"The Mother Walruses will fight for their young. They are afraid of nothing, nothing, nothing if their young are in danger."

"Such are the ways of the Walrus creatures," ended Mother Walrus, as she bellowed a good-by to Billie Brownie.

RIDDLES

What has no mouth, yet can whistle? The wind.

What is most like a cat's tail? A kitten's tail.

What has three feet but no legs? A yardstick.

What is the best land for young children? Lapland.

Why is a clock so bashful? Because it always has its hands over its face.

If a bear went into a dry goods store what would he want? Muzzlin' (mushlin).

When may a man be considered to be over head and ears in debt? When he owes for his wig.

Which is bigger, Mr. Bigger or Mr. Bigger's baby? The baby is a little bigger (a little Bigger).

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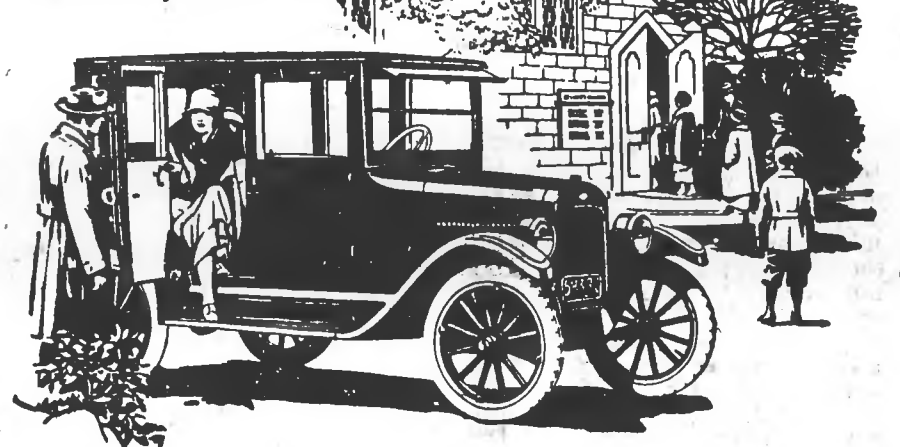
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