

SO BIG

By EDNA FERBER

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winter was to have been only an episode. Not her life! She looked at Maartje. Oh, she'd never be like that. That was stupid, unnecessary. Pink and blue dresses in the house, for her. Frills on the window curtains. Flowers in bowls.

Some of the pangs and terrors with which most prospective brides are assailed she confided to Mrs. Pool while that active lady was slamming about the kitchen.

"Did you ever feel scared and—sort of—scared when you thought about marry, Mrs. Pool?"

Maartje Pool's hands were in a great batch of bread dough which she pummeled and slapped and kneaded vigorously. She shook out a handful of flour on the baking board while she held the dough mass in the other hand, then plumped it down and again began to knead, both hands doubled into fists.

"She laughed a short little laugh. 'I ran away.'"

"You did! You mean you really ran—but why? Didn't you lo—like Klaas?"

Maartje Pool kneaded briskly, the color high in her cheeks, what with the vigorous pummeled and rolling, and something else that made her look strangely young for the moment—girlish, almost. "Sure I liked him. I liked him."

"But you ran away?"

"Not far. I came back. Nobody ever knew I ran, even. But I ran. I knew."

"Why did you come back?"

Maartje elucidated her philosophy without being in the least aware that it could be called by any such high-sounding name. "You can't run away far enough. Except you stop living you can't run away from life."

The girlish look had fled. She was world-old. Her strong arms ceased their pounding and thumping for a moment. On the steps outside Klaas and Jakob were scanning the weekly reports preparatory to going into the city late that afternoon.

Selina had the difficult task of winning Roelf to her all over again. He was like a trusting little animal, who, wounded by the hand he has trusted, is shy of it. Still, he could not withstand her long. Together they dug and planted flower beds in Pervus' dingy front yard. It was too late for tulips now. Pervus had brought her some seeds from town. They ranged all the way from poppies to asters; from purple iris to morning glories. The last named were to form the back porch vine, of course, because they grew quickly. Selina, city-bred, was ignorant of varieties, but insisted she wanted an old-fashioned garden—marigolds, pinks, mignonette, phlox. She and Roelf dug, spaded, planted.

Her trousseau was of the scantiest. Pervus' household was already equipped with such linens as they

lapped her slim waist; her slender little bosom did not fill out the generous width of the bodice; but the effect of the whole was amazingly quaint as well as pathetic.

They were married at the Pools'. Klaas and Maartje had insisted on furnishing the wedding supper—ham, chickens, sausages, cakes, pickles, beer. The Reverend Dekker married them, and all through the ceremony Selina chided herself because she could not keep her mind on his words in the fascination of watching his short, stubby beard as it wiggled with every motion of his jaw. Pervus looked stiff, solemn and uncomfortable in his wedding blacks—not at all the handsome glint of the everyday corduroys and blue shirt. In the midst of the ceremony Selina had her moment of panic when she actually saw herself running shrieking from this company, this man, this house, down the road, on, on toward—toward what? The feeling was so strong that she was surprised to find herself still standing there in the Dutch wedding gown answering "I do" in the proper place.

After the wedding they went straight to DeJong's house. In May the vegetable farmer cannot neglect his garden even for a day. The house had been made ready for them.

Throughout the supper Selina had had thoughts which were so foolish and detached as almost to alarm her.

"Now I am married. I am Mrs. Pervus DeJong. That's a pretty name. It would look quite distinguished on a calling card, very spidery and fine."

"MRS. PERVUS DE JONG At Home Fridays."

She recalled this later, grimly, when she was Mrs. Pervus DeJong, at home not only Fridays, but Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

"They drove down the road to DeJong's place. Selina thought, 'Now I am driving home with my husband. I feel his shoulder against mine. I wish he would talk. I wish he would say something. Still, I am not frightened.'"

Pervus' market wagon was standing in the yard, shafts down. He should have gone to market today; would certainly have to go tomorrow, starting early in the afternoon so as to get a good stand in the Haymarket. By the light of his lantern the wagon seemed to Selina to be a symbol. She had often seen it before, but now that it was to be a part of her life—this DeJong market wagon and she Mrs. DeJong—she saw clearly what a crazy, disreputable and poverty-proclaiming old vehicle it was, in contrast with the neat strong wagon in Klaas Pool's yard, smart with green paint and red lettering that announced, "Klaas Pool, Garden Produce." With the two sleek farm horses the turnout looked as prosperous and comfortable as Klaas himself.

Pervus swung her down from the seat of the buggy, his hand about her waist, and held her so for a moment, close. Selina said: "You must have that wagon painted, Pervus. And the seat-springs fixed and the sideboard mended."

He stared. "Wagon?"

"Yes. It looks a sight."

The house was tidy enough, but none too clean. Pervus lighted the lamps. There was a fire in the kitchen stove. It made the house seem stuffy on this mild May night. Selina thought that her own little bedroom at the Pools', no longer hers, must be deliciously cool and still with the breeze fanning fresh from the west. Pervus was putting the horse into the barn. The bedroom was off the sitting room. The window was shut. This last year had taught Selina to prepare the night before for next morning's rising, so as to lose the least possible time. She did this now, unconsciously. She brushed her hair, laid out tomorrow's garments, put on her high-necked, long-sleeved nightgown and got into this strange bed.

She heard Pervus DeJong shut the kitchen door; the latch clicked, the lock turned. Heavy quick footsteps across the bare kitchen floor. This man was coming into her room.

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

Next morning it was dark when he awakened her at four. She started up with a little cry and sat up, straining her ears, her eyes. "Is that you, father?" She was little Selina Peake again, and Simeon Peake had come in, gay, debonaire, from a night's gaming.

Pervus DeJong was already padding about the room in stocking feet. "What time is it? What's the matter, father? Why are you up? Haven't you gone to bed. . . ." Then she remembered.

Pervus DeJong laughed and came toward her. "Get up, little lazy bones. It's after four. All yesterday's work I've got to do, and all today's. Breakfast, little Lina, breakfast. You are a farmer's wife now."

Dirk DeJong was born in the bedroom off the sitting room on the fifteenth day of March, of a bewildered, somewhat resentful, but deeply interested mother; and a proud, foolish, and vainglorious father whose air of achievement, considering the really slight part he had played in the long, tedious, and racking business, was disproportionate. The name Dirk had sounded to Selina like something tall, straight, and slim. Pervus had chosen it. It had been his grandfather's name.

Sometimes, during those months, Selina would look back on her first winter in High Prairie—that winter of



"Farm Work Grand! Farm Work is Slave Work."

the icy bedroom, the chill black drum, the schoolhouse fire, the chilblains, the Pool pork—and it seemed a lovely dream; a time of ease, of freedom, of carelessness happiness.

Pervus DeJong loved his pretty young wife, and she him. But young love thrives on color, warmth, beauty. It becomes prosaic and inarticulate when forced to begin its day at four in the morning by reaching blindly, dazedly, for limp and obscure garments dangling from bedpost or chair, and to end that day at nine, numb and sodden with weariness, after seventeen hours of physical labor.

It was a wet summer. Pervus' choice tomato plants, so carefully set out in the hope of a dry season, became dragged gray specters in a waste of mire. Of fruit the field bore one tomato the size of a marble.

For the rest, the crops were moderately successful on the DeJong place. But the work necessary to make this so was heartbreaking. Selina had known, during her winter at the Pools', that Klaas, Roelf, and old Jakob worked early and late, but her months there had encompassed what is really the truck farmer's leisure period. She had arrived in November. She had married in May. From May until October it was necessary to tend the fields with a concentration amounting to fury. Selina had never dreamed that human beings toiled like that for sustenance. Toil was a thing she had never encountered until coming to High Prairie. Now she saw her husband wrenching a living out of the earth by sheer muscle, sweat, and pain. During June, July, August, and September the good black prairie soil for miles around was teeming, a hotbed of plenty. There was born in Selina at this time a feeling for the land that she was never to lose. Perhaps the child within her had something to do with this. She was aware of a feeling of kinship with the earth; an illusion of splendor, of fulfillment.

As cabbages had been cabbages, and no more, to Klaas Pool, so, to Pervus, these carrots, beets, onions, turnips, and radishes were just so much produce, to be planted, tended, gathered, marketed. But to Selina, during that summer, they became a vital part in the vast mechanism of a living world. Pervus, earth, sun, rain, all elemental forces that labored to produce the food for millions of humans. She thought of Chicago's children. If they had red cheeks, clear eyes, nimble brains it was because Pervus brought them the food that made them so. Something of this she tried to convey to Pervus. He only stared, his blue eyes wide and unresponsive.

"Farm work grand! Farm work is slave work. Yesterday, from the load of carrots in town I didn't make enough to bring you the goods for the child so when it comes you should have clothes for it. It's better I feed them to the live stock."

Do Selina and her husband "live happily ever afterward"? It is obvious that there is potential tragedy in the situation.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Cruel Old Custom

There was a time when "laughing" faces were actually manufactured to meet the demand of those who wished to be amused. Up to the end of the reign of James II, human "sculpture" work was carried out by roving tribes of gypsies called Comprachios, who were of Spanish origin. They bought and even kidnapped children, and practiced a science or art of human disfigurement.

Children thus treated grew up with an immovable and fantastic grin. They were an attraction at all successful traveling booths and entertainments until the custom was repressed by William III.

NOOK FOR BREAKFAST IN FARM KITCHEN



Breakfast Nook in Virginia Farm Home.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.) In many modern houses a space is especially set apart, either in a corner of the kitchen or between the kitchen and dining room, for what has come to be known as a "breakfast alcove." The fashion has been to have a painted stationary table in this alcove, and built-in benches or seats to match. When painted in gay colors these little alcoves are cheerful and attractive, and as they are so close to the source of supplies and so easily kept clean they save the housewife considerable labor.

A farm woman in Chesterfield county, Virginia, who found it convenient to serve breakfast in her kitchen decided that even if she had no space or materials for building a "breakfast alcove" she could apply the idea to her own needs and the furniture she had already. So she set one end of the kitchen apart for a "breakfast nook" and made it as gay and cheerful as she could with little corner shelves, a bowl of flowers on the table, a fresh table runner, and a bright homemade rug on the floor. Two windows let in the sunshine, and the old table and chairs were given a coat of varnish and polished to make them fit into the general scheme. Except for the varnish no money was spent. The picture was taken by the United States Department of Agriculture.

LAUNDRY METHODS HELP HOUSEWIFE

Much Drudgery Can Be Removed in Ironing.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.) Clothes should be sorted according to the kind of garment and the amount of soil, the United States Department of Agriculture advises. Stains should be removed, and the clothes should be soaked in cool water one-half, or if convenient, soap badly soiled parts, roll up, just cover with water and let stand overnight.

A soap solution makes suds more quickly than soap in the cake. It also cleans more evenly, with less wear to the material, than soap rubbed on. A quantity for use as needed can be made up at one time by dissolving one cake of white soap or two cups of soap flakes, chips or scraps, in three quarts of hot water. For blankets add two tablespoonfuls of borax and one-fourth cupful ammonia.

The clothes may be washed either in clean, hot, soapy water or in cold water and naphtha soap. After rubbing, put in boiler of cold soapy water and boil five minutes. Boiling helps to sterilize and whiten the clothes. Rinse until no dirt or soap comes out into the water. Use warm water in the first rinsing so the soap will not harden.

If clothes are dried in open air and sunshine, bluing should not usually be necessary; but if white clothes have become very yellow or if they must be dried indoors, bluing may be used in



Have Irons Clean and Hot.

the final water. It is better to make a dark bluing water and then add enough to the final rinsing water to bring the desired shade. Stir well. Use less bluing for fine, soft materials and linens and more for coarse thick materials. Some bluing contains a compound of iron which will cause rust spots if it comes in contact with soap. Therefore it is necessary to rinse out all soap before bluing.

The rolls of the wringer should be set tight for cotton materials and loose for linen, or linen can be squeezed out in the hands. Hard wringing creases it badly. Fold buttons in flat to prevent tearing in the wringer. Soft water is necessary for easy laundry work. Soften either by boiling or by chemicals carefully measured and thoroughly dissolved in the wash water before putting in the clothes. To each gallon of water add one-half tablespoonful of washing

HOUSEHOLD NOTES

Cheesecloth makes pretty and inexpensive curtains. Bright colors are appropriate for north rooms, but those with plenty of sunlight should have light tones of gray or green. Oil of lavender is a great freshener. A few drops on the book shelves will overcome the musty smell that may arise in long spells of wet-weather.

soda, or else teaspoonful of lye for ordinary white cotton and linen materials and one tablespoonful of borax for other fabrics.

For silks, woolsens, and colored materials use lukewarm water with no change of temperature between the washing and rinsing. A soap solution is much better than soap rubbed on with these materials rather than rubbing. Silks should be put through a wringer with very loose rollers.

Much of the drudgery is taken out of the ironing of white cotton and linen materials if the clothes are evenly dampened and the irons are clean and hot. Iron with the thread of the goods, preferably with the lengthwise threads, until thoroughly dry. Iron as large a space at one time as possible and iron first the parts which hang off the board when finished, and which would dry out quickly.

WATERGLASS KEEPS EGGS MANY MONTHS

Surplus Product Should Be Preserved.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.) If you have chickens it is quite probable that from the beginning of April to the end of June you will have a good many more eggs than your family ordinarily needs. Why not save these surplus eggs for use in the fall and winter months, when the hens do not lay so well, and prices in the market for supplementary eggs are very high? Eggs preserved in waterglass solution will be good for all purposes for the table and for cookery after six or even ten months if properly put down. Three simple points must be observed: The eggs must be absolutely fresh when they go into the preserving solution—right off the nest, or one day old is best; never more than two days old. Every egg should be examined by candling for minute cracks which might cause spoilage. Every egg should at all times be completely immersed in the solution, at least two inches below the surface.

Get several large stone crocks—three or five gallon size, according to your needs—and put them in the cellar or other cool, dry place where they can remain undisturbed until all the eggs are used. If a jar is moved after the eggs are in it some of the eggs may crack and spoil, which would affect the entire crock.

Thoroughly clean the crock you are ready to use, scald it and allow it to dry. To prepare the waterglass solution add nine parts of water that has been boiled and cooled to one part of waterglass (sodium silicate), which can usually be purchased at drug stores. Stir well and fill the crock with the solution. Put the eggs down into the crock very carefully, from day to day, as they are gathered. If any of the solution evaporates more should be mixed in the same proportion, and added. Very little evaporation will occur, however, if the jar is covered with a tight lid or waxed paper.

Many housekeepers who buy all their eggs arrange in the spring to have a few extra dozen of guaranteed freshness delivered for putting down in waterglass solution. When the retail rate is going up they will have excellent eggs on hand, bought at the season's lowest prices. Even when the family prefers freshly laid eggs for the table, a supply of eggs put down in waterglass will be found both economical and convenient for use in cakes, puddings and other cookery.

Try serving orange fritters to accompany fried ham.

Turn a steak by passing a knife under it, and never put a fork into it.

If water and soap won't clean your oil mop, try hot water, ammonia and a little washing powder.

Boiled puddings should never be turned out as soon as done, as they are liable to break. Let stand a half-hour or so.



Her Cheek Knew the Harsh Cool Feel of a Man's Cheek.

would need. The question of a wedding gown troubled her until Maartje suggested that she be married in the old Dutch wedding dress that lay in the bride's chest in Selina's bedroom.

Income Tax Has Never Had Great Popularity

Imaginative persons seem never to tire of conjecturing as to which of modern man's accomplishments would most astound our ancestors.

The motorcar or the airplane is usually the favorite, but if one could select a chosen few, comprising many of the kings of England along with their counselors, probably the achievement which would bulk largest in their eyes would be the collection of the income tax.

Starting with Edward III, who distinguished himself by collecting \$130,000 by a graduated capital levy in 1321 without causing a revolution, the history of the efforts of the rulers of our race to yoke us with this burden is interesting. Edward III's levy was very modest, says A. G. D. in the Winthrop Free Press. It ranged from \$30 to 8 cents, according to the position of the taxpayer.

Richard II—his ill-starred grandson—almost lost his throne before he had got firmly seated on it, because he

levied a still more modest tax, ranging from \$5 to 8 cents. Wat Tyler, before he was murdered, so convinced the rulers of Britain that an income tax was not a practical form of taxation that it was more than 200 years before such a levy was again attempted.

All Fixed Up

Tony was being examined in the civil service commissioner's room for a laborer's position. He was fluent in most of his answers, and it appeared he would pass without any difficulty. But his downfall came when they asked if he had been naturalized.

He seemed a bit puzzled, but at last his face lighted up and he said: "Ah, I know what you mean. Scratch du arpa. Yes, lasta week."—Kansas City Star.

If one finds he can deceive without half trying, the temptation is fearful.

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