

SO BIG

By
EDNA FERBER(D. Doubleday, Page & Co.
New York Service)

Chapter VII

Dirk was eight; Little Solbig DeLong, in a suit made of beam-sacking sewed together by his mother. A brown blond boy with mosquito bites on his legs and his legs never still. Nothing of the DeLong about this lad. The one-room schoolhouse of Selma's day had been replaced by a two-story brick structure, very fine, of which High Prairie was vastly proud.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 destroyed by a cat's paw. 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 Selma fought savagely for his schooling, and won.

"Solbig isn't a truck farmer," "Well, he will be pretty soon. Time I was fifteen I was running my place." Veriloffy Selma did not combat this. But within her every fibre was gathering to fight it when the time should come. Her Solbig 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 fourteen 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.

Selma was a farm woman now, near thirty. The work rode her as it had ridden Marjorie Ford. In the DeLong yard there was always a daisy washing. Padded overalls, a shirt, socks, a boy's drawers grotesquely patched and mended, towels of rough sack. She, too, rose at four, snatched up shapeless garments, treated her self 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 also 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 Selma 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 Selma'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 DeLong vanished in a puff and in her place was the Selma Peake perched a-top on a soap box in Adam Ooms' hall while all High Prairie, openmouthed, looked on as the impecunious Pervus DeLong threw ten hard-earned dollars at her feet.

It would be gratifying to be able to record that in these eight or nine years Selma had been able to work wonders on the DeLong farm; that the house glittered, the crops thrived richly, the barn housed sleek cattle. But it could not be truthfully said. True, she had

believed some changes, but at the cost of terrific effort. A less industrious woman would have sunk into apathy years before. The house had a coat of paint—lead-gray, because it was cheapest. 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. Selma 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 equanimity in him. Pervus merely was like that.

But the west sixteen! That had been Selma'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 nuzzling.

"Why don't we put in asparagus?" "Asparagus?" considered something a luxury, and rarely included in the High Prairie truck farmer's products. "And wait three years for a crop?"

"Yes, but then we'll 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 put in asparagus in rows, the way you would run a broom. Plant six feet apart, and four acres anyway."

He was not even sufficiently interested to be amused. "Yeh, four acres. 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," Selma urged, eagerly. "And out of a book. That west sixteen isn't bringing you anything, so what difference does it make if I am wrong? Let me put my own money into it. I've thought it all out."

"Pervus, we'll underlain 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 in the third spring—the year-old seedlings. I'll promise to keep it weeded—Dirk and I. He'll be a big boy by that time. Let me try it, Pervus. Let me try."

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 undemonstrative way, still in love with his vivacious, nimble-witted, high-spirited wife, though for frantic pleadings and proddings he was as phlegmatically oblivious as an elephant to a pin prick.

Though she worked as hard as any woman in High Prairie, and a 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"—he called her 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 character 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 farm was racked by pneumonia. He was forty now, and over, still of magnificent physique, so that to see him suffering gave Selma the pang of pity that one has at sight of the very strong or the very weak in pain. It drove the weary miles to market three times a week, for September was the last big month of the truck farmer's season. Selma would watch him drive off 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 these socks and put it over your shoulders." "That's then white globe onions. The last of 'em. I can get a fancy price for them, but not if they're all wet and 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 don't know. 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 to the hayrack, for the night was close 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. Selma 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. All through he was, he looked more ruddy and hale than most men in health; but suddenly Selma, startled, saw black lines like ashes 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 called by terror. It was a sultry night, with flashes of heat lightning in the west.

"I should think if you opened the windows," Selma said to the old High Prairie doctor over his shoulder, "it would help him to breathe. He—he's breathing so—he's

breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

"He's breathing so—"

Rubber Crisis Threatens America;
Firestone Seeking New Sources of Supply

Left, Thomas A. Edison and Harvey S. Firestone watching a plantation expert tap a rubber tree on the Edison estate in Fort Myers, Fla. Right, Mr. Edison and Mr. Firestone, with a rubber plantation expert, examining a young rubber tree on the Henry Ford Farm near LaBelle, Fla.

HARVEY S. FIRESTONE more than two years ago predicted a rubber shortage, and said the British rubber restriction act would cost the American people millions of dollars. The British colonial possessions in the Far East produce about 80 per cent of the world's supply of rubber, while American manufacturers consume about 75 per cent of the world's supply.

Mr. Firestone has just returned to Akron, Ohio, after making a survey of possibilities of growing rubber in Florida, where he was accompanied by rubber plantation experts. On one of the tours of Florida he was accompanied by Thomas A. Edison, who made some important suggestions relative to new methods of extracting the latex or sap from rubber trees, plants and shrubs.

Rubber trees growing on the Edison estate in Fort Myers were examined, as well as those on the Ford estate in Fort Myers and the Ford farm near LaBelle, Fla. A great deal of time was spent on the Henry Ford Experimental Farm near Coconut Grove, Fla., where many varieties of rubber

trees are being grown. Some of these appear to be very promising.

"Rubber is of vital importance to highway transportation," said Mr. Firestone, "and is largely responsible for our business prosperity. The British restriction act now limits production and exportation to one-half of normal production. Rubber today is about 200 per cent higher than it was when the restriction act went into effect. Rubber restriction this year will cost American car owners at least \$100,000,000, and very likely \$300,000,000. Every ten-cent advance in the price of crude rubber means an additional burden of about \$15,000,000 to the car owners of the United States."

Mr. Firestone was instrumental in having Congress appropriate a half million dollars for the investigation of new sources of rubber supply, and he sent out several expeditions at his own expense to visit rubber producing countries, including the Philippines, Central America, Mexico and Africa, and has been today in Liberia, off the west coast of Africa; a complete organization operating a plantation and making plans to produce rubber on an extensive scale.

WEDDING NIGHT

Across her casement still she leans Above the smoky haze which screens The crowding houses, set arow, — Above the mist as glowing dim, The river with its measured flow, Not there she ponders on her woes The nightfall with the falling breeze, Her soul, remote, walks nunnike ways; Her spirit bows itself and prays.

Yet one—how bold!—disturbs her there; A strange foot climbs the virgin stair; One leads her forth and none knows where. What happens when a woman goes Wallie-veiled and garlanded with rose Along the church aisle's narrow close To yield her dreams for ecstasy? On what high thoughts turns she the key To swing the door on mystery?

Ah, often when the dusk is still, My seeking eye will scan her still, Above the mist as glowing dim, Firelight and scarlet at the rim, Outlines her windows curtained square And shows that casement lone and bare.

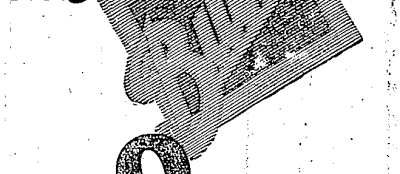
How often shall I question: Where In she who used to linger there? To breathe her nunnike twilight prayer? Along what strange road does she fare? —New York Sun.

Progress of the Race

Time changes. The man who had an ax to grind now has a valve—St. Joseph News-Press.

When Better Automobiles Are Built, Buick Will Build Them

No. 3



Question: Why are motor car dealers glad to see you when you have a Buick to trade in?

Answer: They know that if they get it, they can sell it quickly—at a good price. Buick reliability has made Buick a first choice in the used car market.

Plymouth Buick Sales Co. PLYMOUTH, MICH.

Phone 236

When better automobiles are built, Buick will build them

This Label Protects You

GUARANTEED

Used cars

It's the logical thing to do

—to buy your Used Ford Car from Your Nearest

Authorized Ford Dealer

This Label is your Guarantee of Value

FORD SALES & SERVICE FARMINGTON, MICH.

CASH For Dental Gold, Platinum, Silver, Diamonds, magneto points, false teeth, jewelry, any valuables. Mail today. Cash by return mail. Hoke S. & R. Co., Osego, Mich.

Imitators Get Nowhere

An ounce of wit that is bought is worth a pound that is taught.—Benjamin Franklin.

(TO BE CONTINUED)