

OUR FARM HOMES



NOW when to speak, for many times it brings danger to give the best advice to kings.—Herrick.

A City Lad's Delusion

By Mrs. J. G. Eastman.
(From the Nebraska Farmer.)

"No he won't." Elmer's heart was light, for his Billie chum had proven true. "I'm going back home with you and tell your father how it happened. It wasn't any sin to use it; I used Harry Jennings' brace and bit one day when he wasn't in school and just because it didn't break doesn't make it any different."

After telling Mr. Linsey he wanted to go over to Fred's on an errand, and making many significant gestures to let his mystified cousin know it was something important, the boys set off. Mr. French, upon hearing their combined story, was inclined to punish Fred severely, but finally at Elmer's insistence agreed not to. However, he insisted on his son's paying for the broken square. Miss Davis, also, was brought round by Elmer who again declared it wasn't any worse to break a tool borrowed without leave than simply to use it. Then, too, Fred felt so badly about it, she wisely let Elmer have his way.

When Elmer started home from the French farm it was nearly noon and his stomach, a boy's never-failing timepiece, told him it was very near dinner-time, but he took time to run over to Billie's long enough to make known everything was well with them once more. Billie was in the pig pen raking coes to burn when Elmer stole up and gave the secret call. He brightened visibly.

"Hello, Elmer!" he called; "how are you? I wasn't looking for you over." "I can't stay but a moment; I've been over to Fred French's and I've got to be home for dinner, but I thought I'd remind you it's new moon Tuesday and we want to be looking for it."

As Elmer reached home Jean came rushing to meet him fairly bursting with news.

"O Elmer, Joe's home! He just came; aren't you glad?"

Elmer assured her he was glad, very glad; he was too happy over Billie's unbroken friendship to be otherwise. But why should Jean be so rejoiced over the return of a servant? To his city trained mind, an employee was only a servant and never an equal. He soon found he must alter his view, for Joe Blake and Mr. Linsey sat in the cozy sitting room chatting away while Baby Jack clambered all over the new comer and searched his pockets for "randy." Dorothy and Jean both called Elmer to admit the saashes Joe had brought them. Dorothy's was blue, and Jean's was pink.

"This is my cousin, Elmer Wade," said John as the boy entered the room. "For rose and took hands with him. 'I guess I owe you a vote of thanks for holding my job down.' He remarked pleasantly, 'a reward besides,' handing Elmer a small box.

Opening it, the wondering Elmer held a knife. It was not an ordinary one, either, but one containing blades for every purpose and a fork besides. "Why, it's a boy scout's knife!" he cried. "Just exactly what I wanted, but you don't mean it for me?"

"Yes, for you. Not knowing you, I wasn't sure what you'd like, but I was pretty sure anyone would like a knife

like that, even if you had one just like it." From that moment Elmer ceased to regard Joe Blake as a servant, but instead he was in the class of friendship next to Billie Lane who stood next to Cousin John, who was first of all. He wasn't sure where to place Cousin Beth, for to him she was above and apart from everyone else.

CHAPTER V. War's Shadow.

One evening some weeks later, Elmer found a letter waiting for him. It was from his mother. It was now the middle of April and farm work was getting under good headway. Joe was preparing the ground for planting corn and Elmer had been helping his cousin shell the selected seed after he came from school. In the letter was a bill not for \$10, as his mother had promised, but for \$5, and



"Why, what's this!" she exclaimed, picking up the package and reading the inscription: "This is to give Windy Hill a chance to show its patriotism." Still wondering, she opened the package and shook out to view a large, beautiful flag. The delighted children clapped their hands and one small girl cried out, "Oh, good?" Miss Davis, who you get it for us?"

"No indeed! I never saw it before," and looking back at the inscription, she added, "This is Elmer's writing, isn't it?" A glance at the blushing Elmer confirmed her suspicions. Thus cornered, Elmer blurted out, "I didn't mean for you to guess."

Cousin Elizabeth who had arrived early with the picnic basket saved the day by explaining: "Since Elmer is found out, I will explain that on the day war was declared he received some money and wished to use it in this way to have Windy Hill's patriotism made known to the world, the better Miss Davis say every school should have and display a flag."

"Instead of giving Elmer a vote of thanks," Miss Davis replied, "I want him to stand here and hold one side of this flag with me while we all sing 'America.' Everyone stand now and please sing as loudly and patriotically as you can."

Cousin John and Joe Blake came over in the automobile in time for the dinner and to participate in the ball game afterwards, and as they spun homeward in the early spring evening, Elmer reflected that he had never had such a happy day.

CHAPTER VI. Real Farming.

The following Monday Elmer followed Joe to the barn. It was a beautiful May morning; birds were twittering and singing as they do only in spring. The late apple trees were in full bloom and all together the fresh green world was as beautiful as possible. Mr. Linsey had taken

think how to use it and was still wondering when Cousin Beth gave a cheery call for "Supper!"

"Well, Joe," said Cousin John when they were all seated, "I see that our country has really declared war upon Germany. I'm not surprised. Still it hardly seems possible."

"Well," said Joe slowly, "that means 'go' for me sooner or later."

"Oh no, Joe!" Mrs. Linsey protested. "The government will not want the farmers to fight; every one will be needed to produce food. No doubt that will be our part in war to produce food for the other countries and not to take an actual part in battle."

"No," Joe answered, "I've been expecting this; I heard lots of talk around the mill and I read considerable evenings, and I've done some thinking. No matter what they say now, the working men on farms and in factories will be the ones to carry on the war—the ones like me as soldiers and those like Mr. Linsey will be called on for money to finance it."

"I guess you are right," assented Mr. Linsey. The government is all right and Germany needs a good lesson, but the men who are glad to-day because the war is declared won't do much to really win it. That rests with the farmers who will say little and be accused of lack of patriotism."

The talk went on but that much had decided Elmer as to what to do with his money if Cousin Beth approved.

A little more than a week later when the last day of school arrived at Windy Hill, Miss Davis found a rather bulky package on her desk. Visitors, the picnic dinner and the program had so filled her attention that she failed to notice it until she called school.

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the car and gone to the county on business, so Elmer looked to Joe for orders.

"What do you want me to do today?" Joe. Cousin John went so early I didn't think to ask him."

"Well," said Joe, "you can take the Neil and Bob and harness the horse patch and then you'll have it ready to sow to alfalfa."

"Gee! Can I have the team and harness the field myself, without you going along?"

"You sure can. I'm planning on these days, and Joe threw the harness across the back of freshly mowed Neil and Bob. And when I'm prepared you can run the drill, too. Go ahead and see if you can harness up alone."

Bursting with pride and importance Elmer went at this complicated task, kept on getting every strap and buckle exactly right. He had harnessed many times and had driven the horse and buggy to the barn and work in the pile field, so calmly because it was shaped into the piece of pie, was as though of pleasure!

"You see," continued Joe, as he began harnessing Black Dan, "it's this way: Elmer, you've heard about the registration line and all the men between twenty and thirty-one? Well, that takes me in. I'm twenty-three; I'm single and so on as I know I'm physically all right, so I'm pretty certain to go."

"Oh, Joe! You're going to be a soldier! Do you want to let me try in something?"

"I think I ought to be in," he began, "but I haven't any relatives living, nor anyone nearer than the army and navy. I'm hoping—but never mind that; hopes must wait. I'd volunteer now, but I believe I can do more good staying here until the harvest is in and the small grain can take my place here. You're fourteen now. I was just when I came here and I was doing a man's share. Things wasn't so hard either as they are now."

Elmer drew himself up to his full height and answered soberly, "I'll do what I can, Joe, and stay right the job until you get back." The with a sudden revulsion of feeling he cried, "But you may never get back! Joe, did you think about that?"

"If I don't you'll have to step into my shoes; with a good standing of machinery you can handle it. Maybe Mr. Linsey will get tractor to help out, too."

"Well, I'll stay," promised Elmer. "I'll be eighteen; then I can go to college. I'll be twenty when I'm out of that, but if it isn't, come on. I'm not be there to greet you except in spirit, but you'll think of me just the same."

They shook hands on their agreement.

CHAPTER VII. Summer Days.

Elmer's promise to Joe was new out of his mind, even though other things sometimes crowded it into a dark corner for a while. At first it was much like the college problem after laboring over it for some time. "Can you not render me some assistance?" I've harnessed this harness three times every time the harness came to the tall, slip. However, each day found Elmer more proficient and more sure of himself. When he first went to the field with the team and the horse and the horse to death at the very idea, though, of course, no one knew it, but by the last of June he was cultivating the sturdy young corn with the old-fashioned thought of fear because no one was near by to call upon if things went wrong.

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