

Bessie's First Milking Lesson

Written specially for The Western Home Monthly.

The majority of his friends declared that Bob Foster had made a mistake in marrying a city girl.

"She is no wife for a young Western farmer just starting in life," they said, shaking their heads wisely. "A girl who has probably never seen a pig in her life, and scarcely knows the difference between a horse and a cow."

This was an exaggeration, no doubt, though pretty Bessie herself owned laughingly that she knew nothing of farm work and had never seen a cow milked in her life.

"Nevertheless, I intend to learn to milk just as soon as ever Bob has time to teach me," she cried, her little mouth set determinedly and her brown eyes dancing with eager anticipation.

City bred or not, everyone after seeing and talking with Bessie, was obliged to admit that she was one of the sweetest, prettiest and dearest girls in Canada. Bob,

declared Mrs. Bessie, nodding her bright head at him. "I don't want Mrs. Scott to say I'm a useless city girl, and that you had no business to marry me."

"All right, darling, you shall learn right away," he answered, soothingly.

"To-morrow?" eagerly.

"Well, yes, to-morrow, if I have time," he replied, somewhat doubtfully.

But there was so much to do on the morrow that neither had time, and many succeeding to-morrows found them still busy, with no time for a milking lesson with Daisy, the pretty white cow. Bob was busy seeding, and Bessie found the time slip away rapidly with her washing, baking and cooking, and the decorating of her home. Pretty white curtains went up at the windows, pictures were hung on the shelves, her books and his arranged on the shelves he had made her, her tea and dinnerware to be unpacked, and last but not least, her wedding presents to be set out on the

bit uncomfortable coming back with a load of oats behind us."

They both laughed, and Bessie replied, cheerfully—

"I shall be all right, dear. I have plenty to do to pass the time away. What about Daisy, if you are not back by six?"

"She can wait. I shall not be far behind milking time. I could ask Tom Scott to milk her out in the pasture, but it really is not necessary to trouble him."

"Now, are you not sorry that I cannot milk her?" cried Bessie, slyly, her eyes dancing with mischief. She watched him driving away, waving her hand to him until he was out of sight, and then turned away into the house to pass the afternoon as quickly as she could.

Six o'clock came, but no sign of Bob, so Bessie tied on her sunbonnet and ran down to the pasture where she found Daisy serenely browsing. She just caught sight of Tom Scott disappearing across his own pasture, a milking can in either hand.

"I suppose he has just finished milking! Well, I am just going to begin, but not here. No, sir, thank you, but in the stable all by myself."

She quickly tied Daisy up to her manger, threw in an armful of hay as she had seen her husband do, then drawing the milking

creature—she had never thought of that! There was a bucket of water near, so she lifted it close to the cow's head, and coaxed her to drink. But no, after one sniff lady Daisy turned from it indifferently.

"Perhaps it's my sunbonnet, she doesn't like," thought poor Bessie. "Bob doesn't wear one—what a stupid I was not to think of that before."

Off went the bonnet, and down sat Bessie as bravely as she could. The cow submitted to the little fingers for a few seconds, then, in a fine rage, brought her tail smartly across poor Bessie's face, and not only kicked the milking-pail flying as before, but also overturned the stool and Bessie.

With a cry of pain and terror, the poor little woman instinctively crept away out of reach of the cow's heels, and then buried her smarting face in the straw.

"Oh, the horrid, spiteful thing," she sobbed. "I'll never try to milk her any more. I'll get Bob to sell her and buy another one."

"Hallo! little woman; what on earth is the matter?"

She lifted a smarting, woe-begone face, and there was Bob standing at the door, amazed and concerned. In another instant she was in his arms, sobbing out her tale of woe upon his shoulder. He kissed and



"She and Daisy are the Best of Friends."

of course, said it was impossible for them to think otherwise, and one fine day in early spring proudly conveyed his young wife to the neat little home he had prepared for her with his own loving hands in the far Northwest.

"Oh, Bob, what a darling little place!" Bessie cried, delightedly, when her husband had carried her, sleepy and very weary, from the wagon and had set her down in the middle of the living-room. The wife of a near neighbor, when she saw the wagon in the distance, had run across and kindled a fire in the stove, and had also kindly laid the table for supper, so that everything looked very cosy and home-like to Bessie's tired eyes.

"It was kind of Mrs. Scott, but she said she would," Bob said, in answer to his wife's comment. "I think you will like her, she is older than you and will be able to teach you lots of things."

Bessie made a little grimace, and sometime afterwards when they were having supper—

"I suppose Mrs. Scott understands about poultry and pigs and—things, and she can milk?"

"Oh, yes," smiled back Bob, amused at Bessie's earnest face and puckered brow. "I have been married quite a long time now, so she has had plenty of practice."

"I shall learn, too, Bob, at once,"

sideboard and occasional tables. It was a tired but supremely happy little bride who laid her head on the pretty frilled pillows every night, but at last a day came when Bessie found she had not much to do, and her thoughts flew to the milking lesson. She fed the fowls regularly now and had given them all names; the pigs she had also ceased to be afraid of, and though every evening she closely watched her husband milk Daisy, the process was still a mystery. She still urged for the promised lesson, but her husband was always too tired or too busy.

"I am sure I could do it; please let me try," she would coax, but it was always the same answer—

"Another time, little woman; see what a lovely evening it is—don't let us waste it here," and so they would go down to the creek for a stroll or across to the Scott's house for a gossip, and again the milking lesson was put off. But Bessie was quite as determined as ever to master the art of milking, and though she said no more to Bob about it, she waited an opportunity to try alone and unaided. One day at dinner-time Bob announced his intention of driving into the town, some six or eight miles distant, for a load of oats.

"I suppose I should have started this morning, but anyhow I shall be back before dark," he said. "I wish you could come with me, dearie, but it would be a

stool close to the cow, sat down in a business-like way. Her color was high, her eyes bright, and her heart beat like a hammer, but she set her little teeth and determined to milk that cow or die. She steadied her trembling fingers and went to work vigorously but without apparent result.

"I suppose she knows I am a stranger and won't let it down," as Bob says," she murmured, growing hotter and hotter as she pulled away for dear life. She worked hard for another ten minutes, still without any result, until her stock of patience was exhausted.

"Oh, if I was a man I'd beat you," she cried, viciously, "you obstinate creature, you!"

She brought her little hand down smartly on the cow's flank as she spoke, and this Mistress Daisy objected to; evidently her patience was exhausted also. With a wicked swish of her tail that sent Bessie's sunbonnet over her eyes, she lifted her leg and sent the empty milk-pail flying across the stable. Bessie rose hastily, overturning the stool, and made for the door, where she stood, frightened and angry. What should she do? Should she give it up, or try again?

She was not physically brave, but she possessed pluck and spirit, and the thought of Mrs. Scott and Bob decided it; she would try again. Perhaps Daisy was thirsty, poor

creature—she had never thought of that! There was a bucket of water near, so she lifted it close to the cow's head, and coaxed her to drink. But no, after one sniff lady Daisy turned from it indifferently.

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soothed her, his voice sounding queer and muffled even to Bessie's excited ears. Suddenly she raised her head and looked into his face, and he was nearly killing himself with laughing.

"Bob, you wretch, you are laughing at me!"

"Forgive me, darling, but I really couldn't help it; it's too funny," he gasped.

"Funny!" she echoed, indignantly. To be nearly blinded by an old cow, not much!"

"No, no, dear; I'm awfully sorry she hurt you, only don't you see, it really wasn't poor Daisy's fault; she couldn't help getting mad—because she has been milked already by Tom Scott."

"Oh, Bob!"—and then Bessie laughed and cried until she was on the verge of hysterics, and just then Tom Scott appeared at the door with a pail of milk.

"Sorry I couldn't bring it before, Mrs. Foster, but I was that busy, and I thought you wouldn't be particular to an hour."

"Certainly not, Mr. Scott. It was very good of you, I am sure," replied Bessie, busily tying her shady bonnet under her chin. You can tell Mrs. Scott that I have had my first milking lesson to-day, and got on fine. I am to have another one to-morrow—her bright eyes darting a challenge at her husband.

She did, too, and to-day not even Mrs. Scott can beat her at milking, whilst she and Daisy are the best of friends.