

The Smoking Flax

By ROBERT STEAD

Author of *The Cowpuncher*, *Neighbors*, etc.

CHAPTER ONE

Long vistas of undulating prairies checked in black, moist fields. Here and there a grove of green poplars; here and there a farmhouse, white and peaceful in their shadows. Grass, green and moist, with asparagus carpeting of ferns. Water, shining from many tiny lakes. Coves of white clouds, like tufted swans, afloat in an infinite sky.

A long road, running straight on forever. Up and down the sweeping vistas of prairie-land; by the checked black fields breathing deep the still sunshine of early May; through an interminable lane bordered with barbed wire fences. A popper by the roadside, bolt upright and whistling. Fresh, damp earth from a badger hole mounded on the trail. The hum of telephone wires. Water gurgling through a culvert. A crow silent upon a neighboring post.

Over the ridge to the eastward an arm suddenly appears where the road leaps out of the sky. It grows rapidly, flashing a heliograph in the sunlight as it approaches. Presently it defines itself as that most familiar of all objects on the prairie trail, ouster of horse and saddle and buckboard and prairie schooner—a Ford automobile. Another hum, and it proclaims itself an old Ford automobile, sagging and rumbling and flapping its fenders like a spaniel's ears.

A man and a boy occupy the front seat, the man at the steering wheel. The boy is not more than eight or nine years, and his keen little face, upturned to his companion, is flushed with interest and childish enthusiasm. The two are deep in discussion, and, as we are to travel with them through the pages of this narrative, let us stop them here and climb aboard.

brought his car to a stop. For a full minute the two companions gazed in silence at the scene outspread before them. The prairie levels broke abruptly into a deep valley, blazoned on its higher slopes with vivid patches of light green poplars and balsam-gleams; on its lower reaches with the darker hues of stately elms. Between the broad banks, and filling all the bed of the valley, lay the lake, its surface shining like a mirror of quicksilver.

"This must be the lake shown on our map," said Calvin Beach. "See, there, at the western end, is the deep green of the marshes. Beyond those marshes, according to the map, the road swings across the valley, and there is a bridge; over the river that feeds the lake."

"And we are to camp there tonight, aren't we, Daddy X?"

"That is the intention, if Ante-lope only continues faithful to the end."

Along the crest of the northern shore of the lake they skirted, the boy silent in wonder at the great cloud reflections floating far below, the driver busy with his car and with thoughts which, even in this peaceful setting, may have had in them something of cloud and shadow, too. The shades of evening trailed farther and farther behind; the sunlight blazed more squarely in their faces; the road unwound itself like an endless belt beneath their flying wheels.

At length they began to drop down a steep and winding road into the valley, and the car demanded the undivided attention of the man at the wheel. Reed had come to know such moments by instinct, and noted in silence how, on the steep pitches, the brakes gripped and the gravel flew from the tires as the wheels dragged on the stony road. But it always was a delightful experience, and the steeper the hill the more he liked it. He had a child's faith, unmeasured and immeasurable, in "Daddy X."

Presently they reached the valley levels. Cal released the brakes and the car floated forward with its pent-up momentum. Here they turned to the south, and a tall shadow-car, with funny oval wheels and a very top-heavy body, glided silently on their left until they plunged into a grove of ancient elms.

"Oh, Daddy X!" the boy cried, clapping his hands. "We've won! See, it was racing, Ante-ante-lope, and watching us instead of the road, and it ran right into the elms!"

"A driver always should watch the road," said Cal.

"Yes," the boy agreed. "There might be a high culvert."

The young man made a feint of having received a blow in a vital part of his anatomy. "That's one to you, Reed," he admitted. "But watch out—"

For what he was to watch Cal did not say, and the boy did not ask. He had become engrossed in the bars of yellow sunlight which, streaming through aisles between the trees, flicked his face in rapid succession of light and shadow.

"It's like that funny band you used to wear on your hat," he explained to Daddy X.

Suddenly the winding road, as though by a wisp of its great backbone, straightened out before them. It led along a well-graded turnpike to the yawning arches of a steel bridge, but off to the side, almost buried in a growth of grass and infant poplars, a side trail led down to an old ford where the settlers had braved the river for a score of years before the building of the bridge.

"This should be a good place to camp what say you, Ante-lope?"

Cal bounced up and down in his seat until the car nodded her nose. "Very good," you say. A fellow felling, I suppose: Ford for ford. Well, we'll turn down here," and he guided it along the deserted trail. Down by the river there widened out a gravelly shelf. Against its pebbly shore the blue-brown water of the stream confided strange things whisperingly on its way to the marshes and the lake.

They climbed out and stretched their

limbs. "To the big stump and back!" Reed suddenly challenged and was off like the wind, while his companion dallied for a moment to make a race of it at the finish. Panting, they came up together, but it was the boy's hand that touched the dog-eared fender first.

Reed brought the "grub box" out of the car as Cal started a fire with a few twigs on the gravel. Presently sausages were sizzling in the frying-pan and the smell of steaming tea went up like sweet incense from their little altar. A hot sausage, split and laid between two stout slabs of bread, and supper was served.

When they had put away the remnants of their meal and scoured their utensils in the sand, the boy stood down by the water and skipped stones across the stream. He amused himself at this until the yellow bars of light faded out between the trees and the reflection of the steel bridge died in the darkness. Once or twice the sharp whistle of a wild duck's flight broke upon his ear, and his quick eye located the speedy traveler just as he faded into the grey of heaven; once a muskrat ventured forth from the opposite bank and dived, silent and graceful, at the challenge of Reed's stone; once a team and wagon rumbled over the bridge; otherwise all was silence save the low murmur of the water and the skip and chuckle of the stones which he threw upon it.

"All right, Reed," said a voice behind him. "Almost time to turn in."

"Oh, aren't we to have a fire and a story, Daddy X?"

"The fire is ready for starting, and the story, too, I think," said Cal. "What shall it be?"

"The few, the few—what was it, between the oak and the elm?"

"I didn't say it was quite a feud, did I? Well, let us start a fire, and then we shall hear."

Cal gathered some branches into a little heap, and now, kneeling beside the pile, he struck a match. The glow lit up his face, very brown and friendly in its ruddy light; a moment more and the dry limbs were writhing as the flame curled about their knotted wrists and fingers. Reed and Cal rolled an old tree trunk near to the fire and sat down together.

"The quarrel between the oak and the elm was over the spruce," Cal began. "Both the oak and the elm were in love with the beautiful spruce. The oak wooed her in midday, when the sun poured its hot brilliance through the still boughs and wove on the grass beneath a carpet of light and shadow. It was then the oak would lean gently toward his evergreen companion and whisper in her ear, 'Spruce, I love you, dear, but the spruce—'

"Oh, Daddy X, you are making poetry! You said, 'Whisper in her ear, Spruce, I love you, dear—'

"Well, well, so I did! But poetry is the language of love, and no doubt the oak made poetry with the gentle rustle of his leaves in the sunlight. But the spruce only bowed her head, bashfully.

"In the evening the elm, which also stood near the spruce, would tremble toward her and say, 'Look at me, Spruce! Am I not beautiful? See my straight trunk; see my shapely limbs! See how all my branches reach to the same height and make a green umbrella in the sky. Think of that when you are tempted to look upon the knotty, knarled, twisted oak. Will you not come under that umbrella, dear Spruce, and let me shelter you when the winds blow and the snow falls and the world is white and still in the cold grip of winter?' But the spruce only bowed her head, bashfully.

"Then the oak said, gruffly: 'Elm, why do you make love to Spruce? She has been my companion since childhood. I have watched her grow from a tiny Christmas-tree to a beautiful maiden with lovely symmetrical green arms that stretch toward me, and with green hair that trembles in the wind, but never grows ruffled or fuzzy and never falls to the ground like yours and mine. Spruce belongs to me, I tell you,' said the oak, gruffly. 'Leave her alone!'

"Then the elm answered in his big, sighing voice, which came down from among his stately limbs: 'Oak, you shall not interfere in my love for Spruce. It is I who have grown beside her all these years; it is I who have pointed her skyward while you were tempting her down to the musty earth. Leave her to me.'

"But the oak said gruffly, 'She is mine, I tell you. I will not leave her to you!'

To be continued.

A tea your grocer recommends is usually good tea

RED ROSE TEA "is good tea"

And most grocers recommend it.

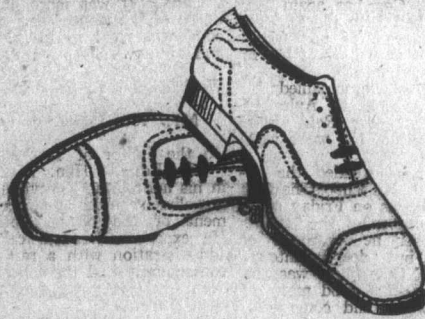
WOODMAN & COMPANY

FURNITURE - BEDS - BEDDING

CARPET SQUARES

LINOLEUMS - OILCLOTHS

PHONE 46 - 11



Setting the Pace In Men's Smart Fall Oxfords

Not only in authentic style, but in wearing qualities and value, these smart-looking and long-wearing new Fall Oxfords are setting the pace.

15 different styles to choose from

Note these items, representing the best values to be found in Kings County.

"Astoria" Oxfords

In Plain and Brogue styles. Black and Brown.

\$7.00

Other Good Makes

In Tan and Black. Priced from

\$4.50 to \$6.50

G. D. Jefferson

Cash Shoe Store

Wolfville

PROFESSIONAL CARDS

M. R. Elliott, M. D.

(Harvard)

Office Hours:

1.30 to 3.30 P. M. 7 to 8 P. M.

G. K. Smith, M.D., C.M.

Grand Pre, N. S.

Office in residence of H. P. KINNEY

Hours: 1.30 to 3.30 P. M.

7 to 8 P. M. Phone 311

ALLAN R. MORTON

M.D., C.M.

Main St., Wolfville Phone 344

Office Hours: 1 to 2, 6.30 to 7.30

Eaton Brothers

Dentists

Dr. Leslie Eaton, D.D.S. University of Pennsylvania
Dr. Eugene Eaton, D.D.S. Pennsylvania
Tel. No. 45

EYESIGHT SPECIALIST Hours: (9-12 A.M.)
Telephone 20 (2-5 P.M.)

Paul G. Webster, R.O.
Optometrist

Webster Street, Kentville, N. S.
Graduate of Rochester School of Optometry, Rochester, New York

G. C. NOWLAN, LL. B.

Barrister and Solicitor

Money to Loan

Orpheum Bldg. WOLFVILLE
Phone 240 Box 134

W. D. Withrow, LL. B.

BARRISTER, SOLICITOR
NOTARY PUBLIC

Money to Loan on Real Estate.

Eaton Block, Wolfville
Phone 264 Box 216

S. W. CROWELL

A.M. E.I.C.

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER

(Civil)

Provincial Land Surveyor (N.S.)
Office—Webster St., Kentville, N. S.
Phone at Residence.

H. E. GATES

ARCHITECT

HALIFAX, N. S.

Established 1900

D. A. R. Time-table

The Train Service as it Affects Wolfville

No. 96 From Kentville arrives 8.41 a.m.
No. 95 From Halifax arrives 10.10 a.m.
No. 98 From Yarmouth, arrives 3.12 p.m.
No. 97 From Halifax, arrives 6.12 p.m.
No. 99 From Halifax (Mon., Thurs., Sat.) arrives 11.48 p.m.
No. 100 From Yarmouth (Mon., Wed., Sat.), arrives 4.13 a.m.

Plumbing and Furnace Work

JOBGING PROMPTLY DONE

H. E. FRASER

Phone 75

BREAD!

Our bread has been reduced to 12 Cents per loaf

Our bread is mixed with up-to-date machinery and wrapped before leaving bakery.

W. O. Pulsifer and F. W. Bartheaux both sell our bread at this price.

A. M. YOUNG

- COAL -

Inverness, Springhill Bay View, Acadia Nut Acadia Stove, Acadia Lump, Old Sydney, Welsh Coal

A. M. WHEATON

PHONE 15

Homes Wanted!

For children from 6 months to 16 years of age, boys and girls. Apply to H. STAIRS, Wolfville Agent Children's Aid Society

Special Announcement!

I have the pleasure of announcing the opening of my new Gift Studio next Monday, Oct. 5th, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I am planning to handle the following lines:

Artistic gifts for all occasions—Birthday, Wedding, etc., and Bridge Prizes.

Bridge Supplies.

Candlesticks.



Parchment Lamp Shades to order.

Small Portable Lamps.

Hand Decorated Wooden Toys.

European Novelties and Hand painted gifts.

Greeting Cards, Place Cards, Tally Cards, etc. of all kinds. Orders taken for furniture, including breakfast suites, chairs, Tip-top Tables, Mirrors and attractive Bookcases, decorated at my studio in any color scheme you may desire. This is a special service, not obtainable elsewhere.

Orders taken for "Imperial Art" Personal Greeting Cards and Calendars. From now to Christmas, a truly beautiful selection at very moderate prices. Gifts and Novelties ranging in price from 50c. to \$25.00.

I shall be delighted to help you solve your gift problems.

Studio Hours—10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Other evenings by appointment only.)

Mail Orders

A Specialty

FRY'S STUDIO

Prices cheerfully quoted on all Art Goods

Where you can buy

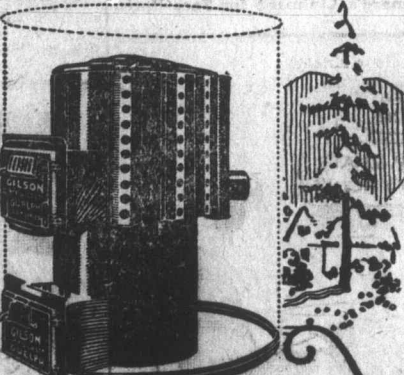
WOLFVILLE

"Distinctive Gifts For Distinctly Less"

NOVA SCOTIA.

\$24.50

BALANCE IN TWELVE SMALL MONTHLY PAYMENTS



I'll save the last half of your coal bill

THE New Gilson "Magic" Tungsten Plate Furnace brings coal economy so startling as to be unbelievable—until you have seen the many remarkable improvements on this sensational new heating system.

Let me show them to you.

For a small cash payment you can have this efficient heating system installed in your home. It will pay for itself by the coal it saves over stoves or other furnaces. And I'll guarantee to give you comfort and health that come from warm, pure, circulating air, such as you have never enjoyed before. See me at once.

GILSON "MAGIC"

The ONE PIECE Furnace Built of Tungsten Plate

F. B. WESTCOTT, Gaspereau, N. S.

Telephone Wolfville 340-22