

"The time to prepare for a rainy day
is when the weather is fine"

USE FORESIGHT

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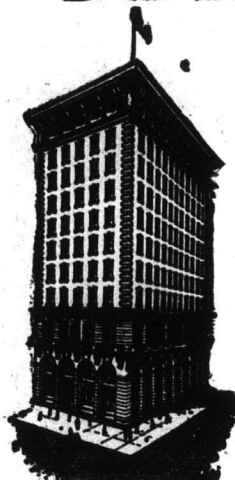
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The Summer Boarder

By E. G. Bayne

THE setting sun had dyed the western sky a deep carmine, which was gradually melting to rose, as a husky young prairie farmer, clad in milking togs and carrying a tin pail, made his way across a field of summer fallow to the "crick pasture."

He was in search of a runaway cow—so he told himself. So, too, he had told his hired man who was at this moment busy rounding up the rest of the herd, and fastening them into their stanchions.

But the real reason for John Ward's self-imposed walk away from the scene of his evening activities, the real, undeniable reason, was just emerging from a cornfield across the "crick," and it wore a pink sunbonnet.

It—or rather she, for of course it was a she—also carried a pail and was looking for a stray bovine. He saw the stirring in the tall young corn at the same moment that she caught the first glimpse of his big straw hat.

Both of them assumed great surprise. John, discarding his pail, negotiated the half-dry little creek in a single long jump, and was on his neighbor's land before one could count to ten.

The girl flung off her sunbonnet, disclosing a head of hair like the finest of corn silk, which hung in two thick braids down her back. Then very daintily she sat herself down on the mossy bank beside John.

"Dad's getting a summer boarder," she remarked, after they had exchanged views on various topics.

"That so?"

"A Mr. Fitzherbert. He's coming tomorrow."

John made no immediate reply. He reached forward and plucked a timothy head, and began to chew the stalk end of it.

"Make more work for you and your ma," he observed at length.

"Oh, we don't mind. If—if he's young he'll be good company."

"Huh," from John.

He removed his too-steady gaze from her face to the fading light in the west. Well did he know that he—John Ward—wasn't "good company" in the sense of being witty and conversational. Very suddenly now he became acutely conscious of his big brown hands. He stirred uneasily, shoved his hat to the back of his head, and made as if to rise. But the girl resumed:

"He must be awfully clever. In his letter he said he wanted a quiet retreat, where he could do a lot of writing. I'm sure he'll be—nice. He's a scientist or something."

She spoke dreamily, and with absent eyes gathered a spray of Indian grass and began to braid the strands together.

"Well, I must be hunting up old Red," said John, after a short silence. "Seen her up this way?"

"I heard her old tin rattle. I think she's in your upper meadow over there, John."

They rose and John Ward cast a hasty glance behind them, in the direction of the Carr homestead, which lay a quarter of a mile away.

"If your pa sees me here talking to you, Rosemary, he sure will throw a fit. I don't mind for myself, only he might light onto you like he did that time before."

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Your wheat's coming on fine, John," she said, desirous of changing an unpleasant subject.

"Isn't it now? I tell you I'm proud of that wheat!" The young man spoke from his heart. Such a lot depended on his crop this year, for if the grain measured up to his fondest hopes he intended to take a great big grip of his bashfulness and propose to Rosemary Carr. This was the proper juncture for him to give her at least an idea of his intentions. He tried, gulped twice, and—decided to wait. Poor John! He was a very plain fellow, and honest to the heart's core. He had no frills, no rhetoric. He was just as you saw him, every one said. But what he lacked in words he made up in deeds. Up in his bedroom at home, carefully concealed in the depths of a trunk, were two life-saving medals he had won. Somewhere else, also out of sight, was a gilded certificate which stated that one John Ward, of V—, aged twenty-three,

et cetera, was the winner of that season's inter-provincial plowing match.

John and Rosemary continued to gaze across the creek at the great, fenceless expanse of young wheat that represented the base and the substance of all the young man's hopes.

"Well, I must be going," observed the girl at length, and she sighed very softly and picked up her sunbonnet. Then she sent a furtive glance up at the broad shouldered brown young giant beside her.

"When Mr. Fitzherbert comes," she said, "you must come over, John. We'll have lots of good times."

"Your pa—"

"Oh, Dad's bark is worse than his bite. You haven't been over to the house for ages."

"I've been busy—and I guess maybe I'll be busier than ever now. Well—good-bye."

John crossed the little stream again, but not as before, in an eager leap. This time he walked thoughtfully over on the stepping stones. He found his missing cow and marshalled her home. Then, after his chores were done for the night, he flung himself into the old hammock by the porch and lay pondering upon the manner in which old Carr would probably view the possibility of himself, John Ward, becoming his son-in-law. His consent would likely be drawn from him like a sore tooth, if indeed it could be obtained at all, under present conditions.

But if the wheat was a bumper crop, as it now fairly promised to be, ah then—

And John gazed, enraptured at the shining planets overhead, wondering which was his own particular star, that he might be able to forecast to some extent the immediate future. If hail and drought and fire, the three great enemies of the prairie farmer, only kept off.

Rosemary was enthusiastic about the new boarder, the following evening when she and John met as usual on the edge of the Carr cornfield.

"I drove down to the village for him, myself," she said, "and he complimented me on the way I managed the roadster. He's really handsome—Mr. Fitzherbert I mean, of course—and I don't believe he's a day over thirty. He's got lovely eyes and a Charley Chaplin mustache, and he's slim and elegantly dressed, and—"

"I saw you driving him back," interjected John, anxious to cut short the description. "I was mending a culvert down there in my lower field, near the road, when you went past. You didn't see me."

"I guess we were too busy talking. He was telling me about places he has visited. Oh, he's such an interesting talker! He knows everything, I believe. He can tell you all about plants and minerals, and he's got a queer lot of instruments and things—a magnifying lens, a telescope, and tiny bottles full of acid or something. And he's awfully fussy about his things. He asked mother and me not to dust his room or move anything unless we told him first, so he could cover them up—"

"He sure must be a queer guy," said John, with ill-concealed impatience. "Ain't you going to sit down and chat a while, Rosemary?"

For she had continued to stand.

"I haven't got time to-night. I promised to play some accompaniments for him. He has a lovely tenor voice, and he said he would sing for us this evening. Will—you come over, John?"

"Thanks, I—I have to look up that red cow. She's off again somewhere."

John was staring at Rosemary's hair.

"How do you like the way I've got my crowning-glory up?" she demanded, preening herself before his gaze.

"I like it best the other way," replied John promptly.

"I put it up this way so's I wouldn't look like a rube from the tall grass," explained Rosemary, with a saucy air. "It's up on my head now for good."

"What! You put it up just on account of that—that—that—"

"Don't you call Mr. Fitzherbert names, now, John Ward! He's a perfect gentleman."

John was silent. He was whittling a poplar switch into the form of a flute.

"And, oh John," went on the girl, resuming her eager recital after a moment, "he's promised to teach me how to fox trot. Just think!"

John thought, all right! And a dull red