

With that he opened the door and started for the gate.

"Hey, where you going?" yelled Fat. "It's only about nine o'clock. Come on back and we'll go down to the creek and look for muskrat houses."

"Nope. Got to go home," returned his friend. "Got to get my work done this morning so as to help Dad this afternoon."

So home he went and the way he worked for the remainder of the morning made his mother wonder what the trouble was. Usually she had to speak to him several times about the empty wood box, but this morning he filled it to overflowing without a word. Next he split enough kindling wood to last a week, and finally even went so far as to clean the stable thoroughly, calipers and all, a job he had never been known to do unless his father commanded it. When that gentleman returned from town at noon, he noticed the results of the boy's labor and at dinner questioned him about it.

"Well, I was over to see Fat Harris this morning and he's got a heifer calf his father gave him for helping with the work this summer. It's all his, and if he wants to sell it and keep the money he can."

Him and me figured out this morning that if a fellow worked fourteen hours a week for a year at 10 cents an hour, he'd be earning over \$72. That's the way Fat's going to pay for his calf's feed. I thought maybe you'd let me have a calf and I could pay for what it eats the same way."

"So that's the trouble, is it? You don't want Fat to get ahead of you. What do you want with a heifer, anyway?"

"I want to get started in the dairy business. A lot of the other Hoard's Dairyman Juniors are doing it and I want to, too. Then, if my heifer would turn out to be a good cow I could keep her and keep all the good heifer calves from her, and after awhile I'd have a herd of my own."

"So you don't want to get a calf to sell. You must be figuring on being a farmer."

"Why, sure I am," returned the boy, as if that was the most natural thing in the world.

"Well, son, that's a pretty big proposition you've put up to me. I'll think it over and let you know in a day or two. Eat your dinner for we have some work to do this afternoon. Your mother's chicken house must be fixed up and then there's some wheat to be bagged."

With that the boy had to be content and as he helped his father during the short afternoon, he felt that since he had not been refused outright, there was a fairly good chance for him to get that calf. In fact, so confident was he that as he fed the calves that evening, he picked out the one that would be his. Five of the ten he fed were pure-breds and these he passed over as being too valuable for his father to let him have, but out of the others he picked a good one from the best grade cow in the barn. Perhaps the father knew what he was doing. Certain it is, that as he passed that way, he paused for a moment, then went on smiling to himself.

The next day was Sunday and as usual the Cameron family drove to church in the morning. They occupied their accustomed pew and from his point of vantage between his parents Jimmie could see the round head and short thick neck of Fat Harris. That worthy turned around once or twice and grimaced at his friend, but Father Harris soon put a stop to such demonstrations. It must be confessed that Jimmie did not hear much of that Christmas sermon. The sight of Fat suggested calves and he fell to dreaming of what he would do with his calf when he got it.

Presently the service ended and as the people were passing out, Fat managed to wedge his way through and catch up with his red haired chum.

"Say, Jimmie, got your calf yet?" he demanded.

"No, but I guess I am going to have one. Dad said he would think about it when I asked him."

"Huh, I'll bet you don't get as good a one as I've got," crowed the fat one. "Bet I do," retorted the other. "You just wait and see, Fat Harris. My calf will be bigger than yours and it'll be better, too."

"Well, you gotta show me. I wouldn't be surprised if you didn't get a calf at all."

By this time the two boys were outside

and the discussion was suddenly interrupted by the "honk" of the Cameron auto. Jimmie climbed in without replying to this last remark, but during the ride home he thought of it several times. Just suppose that Fat was right and his father refused to let him have a calf. Then his chum would crow over him. However, his father had not refused yet. Perhaps he could still make good his boast.

Christmas morning dawned bright and clear and the boy was awakened by his father's "Merry Christmas, son; time to get up." He sprang out of bed, dressed hurriedly, and ran out to the barn, eager to get his chores done, for in the Cameron family everyone's Christmas presents were found on the breakfast table. Work that morning was finished in a shorter time than usual and at seven o'clock the family were seated at the table. Three big packages and a small one lay beside Jimmie's plate. He looked them all over, picked each one up, weighed it in his hand, and wondered what it contained. How he did want to look inside. However, at his mother's bidding, he laid them aside and proceeded to eat his breakfast. He was through long before the others and waited impatiently for them to finish. When they did and his father gave the word, he lost no time in satisfying his curiosity. There was a big sweater from Aunt Kate, books from Uncle Will, skates from his mother, and a little watch from brother Fred who lived in another state—just what he wanted. He turned to thank his mother for the skates and stopped, his father had forgotten him. At that moment the father spoke:

"James," said he, "I've been thinking over that calf proposition and I guess you've earned one all right."

The clouds vanished in an instant. "Oh, Dad, can I have one of those calves?" exclaimed the delighted boy starting up.

"Yes, if you want it. But wait a minute before you pick it out. I've got a different offer to make. You can pick out any calf in the ten, grade or pure-bred, have her for your own, and earn her feed by helping me as you suggested. If you do that I'll get you that new rifle you wanted for a Christmas present. Or, if you'd rather, you can have that pure-bred heifer that's due to calve next week. That would be part Christmas present and part payment for what you did last summer. Which will you take?"

The boy hesitated only a second. "The heifer, Dad. Then I'll have a cow to start with and won't have to wait for one to grow up." Then his face fell. "But how am I going to pay for the feed she and her calf eat, 14 hours a week won't be enough."

"Well," said his father, "maybe it won't, but suppose you try and think of some other way."

"I could let you have the milk from my heifer. That would be fair, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, no doubt it would be more than fair, but that isn't what I want. If you're going to start in and be a farmer, you've got to make it a business. Now how can you tell what it costs to feed your heifer?"

"Why, by keeping track of what she gets."

"All right then, you do that, and after she freshens if the calf is good enough to keep, you do the same thing with it. Besides that, you can keep a record of how much milk that heifer gives and maybe later on you can test it. Now then, at the end of every month you'll owe me for the feed of the heifer and calf and I'll owe you for help and for the milk from your cow. If the time you spend helping me at 10 cents an hour isn't enough to pay for the keep of your stock, we'll take the rest out of your milk money."

"But, Dad, what becomes of the rest of that milk money if there is any? Is it mine?"

"It certainly is, but I'll expect you to make good use of it or else bank it."

"Oh, but that's good. Thank you, Dad. Now I guess Fat Harris won't think he is everything. Wait till I see him."

With that the excited boy grabbed his cap and, coatless as he was, went racing to the barn to view his property, as happy as if he owned the world.

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