

Army and its futile efforts to push back the troops of Rupprecht on the Somme. Yet here on the actual outskirts of the German capital was a grim tribute to the machine that Great Britain had built up under the protection of her Navy.

In Berlin, at that moment, the afternoon editions were fluttering their daily headlines of victory to the crowds on the Linden and the Friedrichstrasse, but here the mammoth vans were moving slowly through the streets of Potsdam.

To the women who stood in the long lines waiting with the potato and butter tickets for food on the other side of the old stone bridge that spans the Havel they were merely ordinary cumbersome furniture wagons.

How were they to know that these tumbrils contained the bloody story of Contalmaison?

## The Dollar Chain

Contributions from Dec. 14 to Dec. 22: Mrs. E. E. Townsend, R. 2, Grand Valley, Ont., \$1.00; "U. S.," Alliston, Ont., \$1.50; "A Sympathizer," \$5.00; Geo. R. Mooney, Inverness, Que., \$2.00; "N. A. T.," Wilton Grove, Ont., \$5.00; Mrs. T. P. Westington, Port Hope, Ont., \$2.00; "Christmas Gift," \$10.00; Reader, Mt. Brydges, Ont., \$5.00; "For the Poor" (sent to Belgians) \$1.00; T. L. Lowe, Bear Brook, Ont., \$5.00; "X," \$5.00; Albert Cowan, Courtland, Ont., \$5.00; Mrs. M. Sanders, Courtland, Ont., \$5.00. Previously acknowledged.....\$3,223.75

Total to Dec. 22.....\$3,277.25

Kindly address contributions to The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine, London, Ont.

## OUR NEW SERIAL STORY

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# The Brown Mouse

### CHAPTER IX.

#### JENNIE ARRANGES A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

The great party magnates who made up the tickets from governor down to the lowest county office, doubtless regarded the little political plum shaken off into the apron of Miss Jennie Woodruff of the Woodruff District, as the very smallest and least bloomy of all the plums on the tree; but there is something which tends to puff one up in the mere fact of having received the votes of the people for any office, especially in a region of high average civilization, covering six hundred or seven hundred square miles of good American domain. Jennie was a sensible country girl. Being sensible, she tried to avoid uppishness. But she did feel some little sense of increased importance as she drove her father's little one-cylinder runabout over the smooth earth roads in the crisp December weather, just before Christmas.

The weather itself was stimulating, and she was making rapid progress in the management of the little car which her father had offered to lend her for use in visiting the one hundred or more rural schools soon to come under her supervision. She rather fancied the picture of herself, clothed in more or less authority and queening it over her little army of teachers.

Mr. Haakon Peterson was phlegmatically conscious that she made rather an agreeable picture, as she stopped her car alongside his top buggy to talk with him. She had bright blue eyes, fluffy brown hair, a complexion whipped pink by the breeze, and she smiled at him ingratiatingly.

"Don't you think father is lovely?" said she. "He is going to let me use the runabout when I visit the schools."

"That will be good," said Haakon. "It will save you lots of time. I hope you make the county pay for the gasoline."

"I haven't thought about that," said Jennie. "Everybody's been so nice to me—I want to give as well as receive."

"Why," said Haakon, "you will just begin to receive when your salary begins in January."

"Oh, no!" said Jennie. "I've received much more than that now! You don't know how proud I feel. So many nice men I never knew before, and all my old friends like you working for me in the convention and at the polls, just as if I amounted to something."

"And you don't know how proud I feel," said Haakon, "to have in county office a little girl I used to hold on my lap."

In early times, when Haakon was a flat-capped immigrant boy, he had earned the initial payment on his first eighty acres of prairie land as a hired man on Colonel Woodruff's farm. Now he was a rather richer man than the colonel, and not a little proud of his ascent to affluence. He was a mild-spoken, soft-voiced Scandinavian, quite completely Americanized, and possessed of that aptitude for local politics which makes so good a citizen

of the Norwegian and Swede. His influence was always worth fifty to sixty Scandinavian votes in any county election. He was a good party man and conscious of being entitled to his voice in party matters. This seemed to him an opportunity for exerting a bit of political influence.

"Yennie," said he, "this man Yim Irwin needs to be lined up."

"Lined up! What do you mean?"

"The way he is doing in school," said Haakon, "is all wrong. If you can't line him up, he will make you trouble. We must look ahead. Everybody has his friends, and Yim Irwin has his friends. If you have trouble with him, his friends will be against you when we want to nominate you for a second term. The county is getting close. If we go to convention without your home delegation it would weaken you, and if we nominate you, every piece of trouble like this cuts down your vote. You ought to line him up and have him do right."

"But he is so funny," said Jennie.

"He likes you," said Haakon. "You can line him up."

Jennie blushed, and to conceal her slight embarrassment, got out for the purpose of cranking her machine.

"But if I can not line him up?" said she.

"I tank," said Haakon, "if you can't line him up, you will have a chance to rework his certificate when you take office."

So Jim Irwin was to be crushed like an insect. The little local gearing of the big party machine was to crush him. Jennie dimly sensed the tragedy of it, but very dimly. Mainly she thought of Mr. Peterson's suggestion as to "lining up" Jim Irwin as so thoroughly sensible that she gave it a good deal of thought that day. She could not help feeling a little resentment at Jim for following his own fads and fancies so far. We always resent the necessity of crushing any weak creature which must needs be wiped out. The idea that there could be anything fundamentally sane in his over-turning of the old and tried school methods, under which both he and she had been educated, was absurd to Jennie. To be sure, everybody had always favored "more practical education," and Jim's farm arithmetic, farm physiology, farm reading and writing, cow-testing exercises, seed analysis, corn clubs and the tomato, poultry and pig clubs he proposed to have in operation the next summer, seemed highly practical; but to Jennie's mind, the fact that they introduced dissension in the neighborhood and promised to make her official life vexatious, seemed ample proof that Jim's work was visionary and impractical. Poor Jennie was not aware of the fact that new truth always comes bringing, not peace to mankind, but a sword.

"Father," said she that night, "let's have a little Christmas party."

"All right," said the colonel.

"Whom shall we invite?"

"Don't laugh," said she. "I want

to invite Jim Irwin and his mother, and nobody else."

"All right," reiterated the colonel.

"But why?"

"Oh," said Jennie, "I want to see whether I can talk Jim out of some of his foolishness."

"You want to line him up, do you?" said the colonel. "Well, that's good politics, and incidentally, you may get some good ideas out of Jim."

"Rather unlikely," said Jennie.

"I don't know about that," said the colonel, smiling. "I begin to think that Jim's a Brown Mouse. I've told you about the Brown Mouse, haven't I?"

"Yes," said Jennie. "You've told me. But Professor Darbshire's brown mice were simply wild and incorrigible creatures. Just because it happens to emerge suddenly from the forests of heredity, it doesn't prove that the Brown Mouse is any good."

"Justin Morgan was a Brown Mouse," said the colonel. "And he founded the greatest breed of horses in the world."

"You say that," said Jennie, "because you're a lover of the Morgan horse."

"Napoleon Bonaparte was a Brown Mouse," said the colonel. "So was George Washington, and so was Peter the Great. Whenever a Brown Mouse appears he changes things in a little way or a big way."

"For the better, always?" asked Jennie.

"No," said the colonel. "The Brown Mouse may throw back to slant-headed savagery. But Jim . . . sometimes I think Jim is the kind of mendelian segregation out of which we get Franklins and Edisons and their sort. You may get some good ideas out of Jim. Let us have them here for Christmas, by all means."

In due time Jennie's invitation reached Jim and his mother, like an explosive shell fired from a distance into their humble dwelling—quite upsetting things. Twenty-five years constitute rather a long wait for social recognition, and Mrs. Irwin had long since regarded herself quite outside society. To be sure, for something like half of this period, she had been of society if not in it. She had done the family washings, scrubbing and cleanings, had made the family clothes and been a woman of all work, passing from household to household, in an orbit determined by the exigencies of threshing, harvesting, illness and child-bearing. At such times she sat at the family table and participated in the neighborhood gossip, in quite the manner of a visiting aunt or other female relative; but in spite of the democracy of rural life, there is and always has been a social difference between a hired woman and an invited guest. And when Jim, having absorbed everything which the Woodruff school could give him in the way of education, found his first job at "making a hand," Mrs. Irwin, at her son's urgent request, ceased going out to work for a while, until she could get back her strength. This she had never succeeded in doing, and for a dozen years or more had never entered a single one of the houses in which she had formerly served.

"I can't go, James," said she; "I can't possibly go."

"Oh, yes, you can! Why not?" said Jim. "Why not?"

"You know I don't go anywhere," urged Mrs. Irwin.

"That's no reason," said her son. "I haven't a thing to wear," said Mrs. Irwin.

"Nothing to wear!"

I wonder if any ordinary person can understand the shock with which Jim Irwin heard those words from his mother's lips. He was approaching thirty, and the association of the ideas of Mother and Costume was foreign to his mind. Other women had surfaces different from hers, to be sure—but his mother was not as other women. She was just Mother, always at work in the house or in the garden, always doing for him those inevitable things which made up her part in life, always clothed in the browns, grays, gray-blues, neutral stripes and checks which were cheap and common and easily made. Clothes! They were in the Irwin family no more than things by which the rules of decency were complied with and the cold of winter turned back—but as for their appearance! Jim had never given the thing

a thought further than to wear out his Sunday best in the schoolroom, to wonder where the next suit of Sunday best was to come from, and to buy for his mother the cheap and common fabrics which she fashioned into the garments in which alone, it seemed to him, she would seem like Mother. A boy who lives until he is nearly thirty in intimate companionship with Carlyle, Thoreau, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Emerson, Professor Henry, Liberty H. Bailey, Cyril Hopkins, Dean Davenport and the great obscurities of the experiment stations, may be excused if his views regarding clothes are derived in a transcendental manner from Sartor Resartus and the agricultural college tests as to the relation between Shelter and Feeding.

"Why, mother," said he, "I think it would be pretty hard to explain to the Woodruffs that you stayed away because of clothes. They have seen you in the clothes you wear pretty often for the last thirty years!"

Was a woman ever quite without a costume?

Mrs. Irwin gazed at vacancy for a while, and went to the old bureau. From the bottom drawer she took an old, old black alpaca dress—a dress which Jim had never seen. She spread it out on her bed in the alcove off the combined kitchen, parlor and dining-room in which they lived, and smoothed out the wrinkles. It was almost whole, save for the places where her body, once so much fuller than now, had drawn the threads apart—under the arms, and at some of the seams—and she handled it as one deals with something very precious.

"I never thought I'd wear it again," said she, "but once. I've been saving it for my last dress. But I guess it won't hurt to wear it once for the benefit of the living."

Jim kissed his mother—a rare thing, save as the caress was called for by the established custom between them.

"Don't think of that, mother," said he, "for years and years yet!"

### CHAPTER X.

#### HOW JIM WAS LINED UP.

There is no doubt that Jennie Woodruff was justified in thinking that they were a queer couple. They weren't like the Woodruffs, at all. They were of a different pattern. To be sure, Jim's clothes were not especially noteworthy, being just shiny, and frayed at cuffs and instep, and short of sleeve and leg, and ill-fitting and cheap. They betrayed poverty, and the inability of a New York sweat-shop to anticipate the prodigality of Nature in the matter of length of leg and arm, and wealth of bones and joints which she had lavished upon Jim Irwin. But the Woodruff table had often enjoyed Jim's presence, and the standards prevailing there as to clothes were only those of plain people who eat with their hired men, buy their clothes at a county seat town, and live simply and sensibly on the fat of the land. Jim's queer-ness lay not so much in his clothes as in his personality.

On the other hand, Jennie could not help thinking that Mrs. Irwin's queer-ness was to be found almost solely in her clothes. The black alpaca looked undeniably respectable, especially when it was helped out by a curious old brooch of goldstone, bordered with flowers in blue and white and red and green—tiny blossoms of little stones which looked like the flowers which grow at the snow line on Pike's Peak. Jennie felt that it must be a cheap affair, but it was decorative, and she wondered where Mrs. Irwin got it. She guessed it must have a story—a story in which the stooped, rusty, somber old lady looked like a character drawn to harmonize with the period just after the war. For the black alpaca dress looked more like a costume for a masquerade than a present-day garment, and Mrs. Irwin was so oppressed with doubt as to whether she was presentable, with knowledge that her dress didn't fit, and with the difficulty of behaving naturally—like a convict just discharged from prison, after a ten years' term—that she took on a stiffness of deportment quite in keeping with the idea that she was

a female R. I. awake. But that if Mrs. Irwin became a R. I. looking old to divine v. invested a h. of tailors' other spec. and could blot out field-hand, her a distin. Not handso people look

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