



THE HERD ON THE MARCH.

David Harbest's Ambition.

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Appin.

"I am going to the post office, now, mother," said a bright young girl one day towards the last of May. "I can hardly stay in the house a minute, it is so lovely out." So, putting on her hat, May Blair started down the sunny street humming unconsciously to herself.

Five years ago Mrs. Blair had been left a widow by the death of the village doctor. She had been left neither wealthy nor poor. Her income enabled her to rent a pleasant little cottage in the village of Riverside and here she lived with her only daughter May, who had spent two years at the Ladies' College, Obane, but as both found the separation too painful, she again came to Riverside and enjoyed a quiet, happy life.

To-day the bright sun and all the signs of summer thrilled her through and through. She revelled in life and beauty. The world seemed wonderful to her to-day—life seemed so full of happiness and rich possibilities.

When she reached the post office there was the usual crowd waiting for their mail. They were talking in an animated way, but stopped when she entered. She nodded to all in her bright way, but they did not go on talking as before, and she thought she detected a pitying glance from the old grey-haired minister. However, it did not trouble her, as she got her mail and returned home.

She joined her mother in the small well-kept garden. "Nothing but the paper, mother mine," she said, "so come and sit down beside me and I'll read you the gossip tid-bits from Obane."

She read several items of news aloud in a clear, mellow voice, then stopped suddenly, and her face took on a deathly whiteness. She handed the paper to her mother, pointing to a special paragraph. Her mother read:

"The marriage of D. A. Harbest, son of Dr. Harbest, of Riverside, and Annette Watson, daughter of Judge Watson, of Obane, is announced for June."

There was a silence for a few moments; both were thinking too deeply for words.

They had known David Harbest for years. When home for his vacations

he had spent more than half his time at their cottage, where he was always a welcome visitor. He had spoken no word of marriage to May, but she knew well that he loved her; indeed, everybody knew. But at times she had vaguely felt that he was trying to fight against his love for her, and now she recalled his last talk when he had dropped in for a few minutes to tell her that he was going to Annandale to practice law and added that influence and good connections were all that were needed now for almost immediate success and wealth.

Mrs. Blair left her daughter for a while to fight it out alone, she meanwhile thinking of some plan to spare her daughter the comments of her village friends and turn her attention from her sorrow.

That evening mother and daughter had a long talk. They concluded to go with Mrs. Blair's sister to her summer house on the Hudson, and May finished by saying, "Now, mother, let neither of us by word or look show to our friends the pain and sorrow David's conduct has caused us."

David half suspected the pain he was giving to May by what he endured himself, and instead of coming home had his father and mother join him in Obane until the marriage should take place. He knew, too, that it was the best thing for himself, for he had to daily keep before his mind the advantages of an alliance with Annette Watson. He now looked forward to his wedding day to put an end to part of his misery at any rate, for he would then have taken the step which would bind his life with another woman and henceforth he would have to think of that woman, not of May Blair. Not a thought of the injury he was doing to the flighty, gay Annette Watson ever crossed his mind.

A few days before his marriage he saw by the evening paper that Mrs. and Miss Blair, of Riverside, were guests at the "Queen's," on their way to the summer home of Mrs. J. W. Cook, of New York.

He debated with himself for fully an hour whether he should go to see her or not. Could he risk the sight of her beautiful face once more? Any-

way, he could not resist the temptation of being near, if only once again, the girl he loved. "It is my right," he said, "for all I have to give up." He made all haste to the hotel, but found Mrs. Blair alone; she met him in a dignified and courteous way, but the old friendly interest was lacking. They talked for about half an hour, when May entered with a friend, Dr. Ore. She had more color in her face than she had had for the past two weeks and taking in the situation at a glance, she greeted David as she would have any other friend. After congratulating him very prettily (so well did she do it that he came to the conclusion that after all he had no claims on her heart), she entertained them all in a way altogether beyond her own and her mother's expectations. Dr. Ore was especially charmed and David returned to his hotel with the greatest pain at heart he had ever known. Little did the two gentlemen think of the pain endured by the girl almost the whole remainder of the night. The reaction had set in; it had been too much of a strain and now she suffered as only natures like hers can suffer.

The wedding came off with great splendor and the bridal couple left for Europe for a six months' honeymoon.

II.

Four years have passed away since the events of the last chapter. May Blair is now a wife and mother. Two years after David's marriage she plighted her troth with a man endowed with all the qualities she, in all the glamour

of her first love, imagined David to have.

Harold Lyall was a noble character; in every respect well worthy of the love of his beautiful wife. He was also rich in worldly goods and when he, at his wife's suggestion, took up his residence in Obane, he became one of the leading men of the city, not so much on account of his wealth as his upright, honest character and influence.

But how had time dealt with David Harbest? For the first year or so all went well; they had a magnificent home and entertained a great deal. Of course it was beyond David's means, but when he, through the influence of his father-in-law, would attain the position for which he had so long attained and given up so much it would be all satisfactorily arranged. But he never got the success that he craved for, and, at the end of four years, he was a disappointed man. His wife had discovered long before the reason of his marrying her and it embittered her so that instead of healing the breach she widened it and now their only bond of sympathy was their two children. With his usual selfishness he partly blamed her; if he had married May Blair he would at least have been free of debt. But the crash came too soon. He had appropriated thousands of dollars which did not belong to him and invested that he felt sure would get him out of debt, but it failed. What could he do? He had no friend to help him at this crisis. Could he endure the consequences of his crime? Anything but that—he would leave all. They would surely have some mercy on his wife and children and when he had retrieved his fortunes in the Western States he would send for his family.

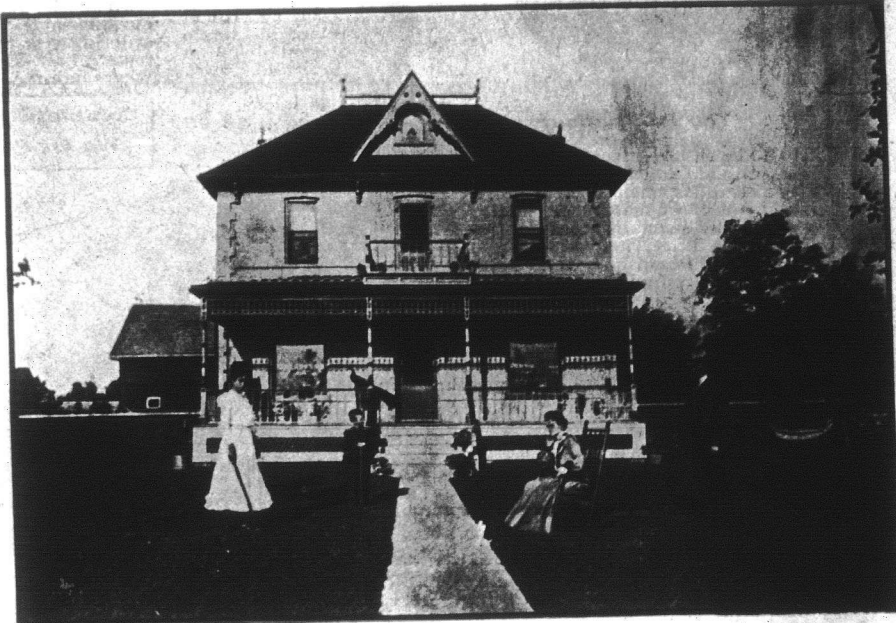
That evening Mrs. Harbest waited for her husband in vain. The next morning she received a double blow—they were ruined and her husband had deserted her. Before her relatives could reach her she was virtually turned into the street with her two helpless children. She was removed to her old home as soon as possible, but when, a month later, a baby boy was born to a name of shame, she gave up the struggle and was glad to find rest and quietness under the sod.

Four more years have passed away. In a large town in the Western States David Harbest is gradually winning wealth. But, oh! the load of crime he has been compelled to carry all those years. The restless longing for the scenes of his boyhood which he would never see again—the remorse for every step he had taken since he gave up May Blair. His children joined him in his new home and in them he found his only rest.

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