

The Spirit of the Soil.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

The leafless limbs of the old elms skirting the river bank threw steadily lengthening shadows over the meadow until they crept across the path of the tired team and plowboy that trudged down the long lane toward home and supper. It was one of those autumn evenings which to any one who has ever lived on a Canadian farm can scarcely fail to bring a sense of loneliness. One can see the dark woods in the distance with their long bared arms stretched up to heaven; between banks of gold and crimson in the west the sun peers for a moment and then is gone; a sharp tang in the air betokens a night of frost; the meadows are brown and bare, and the monotony of the stretches of yellow stubble is broken only by black, freshly-turned furrows of fall-plowing. One can anticipate again the plate of steaming potato-balls and the incomparable sensation of coming in and settling comfortably in one's accustomed place, waiting until father pronounces God's blessing on the food. The wood fire crackles cheerfully in the range and outside chilly darkness obliterates the world.

But no such appreciation of his surroundings apparently entered the mind of the young man who followed the slowly moving horses through the snaky shadows. Weary with the steady pull of the plow all day, they moved leisurely along the lane with heads low and harness swaying at every step. Something must be wrong. Big, strong, handsome of face and form, the driver was not the type who would be likely to allow a team to pursue their own inclinations all the way home from a day's work. Nor was he, for suddenly raising his head and sawing on the lines, he called them savagely to "move themselves." Then he fell back to the plodding gate in unison with that which "Prince and Minnie" resumed after a few brisk steps taken in recognition of their master's whim. A glance at the face upturned for a moment would have shown an expression of sullen resentment and fierce, hidden anger mingled in the usually frank and pleasant features of Dave Carrol.

It was quite dark when they reached the barnyard, but constant practice had made every buckle so familiar that in a few minutes the horses were drinking at the trough in the stable and the harness were hung on the proper pins behind the stalls. As he leaned over to unbuckle Minnie's collar, Dave gave vent to his thoughts.

"If only he could be the same old Bob! A lump arose in his throat and the remainder of the malediction refused to be uttered. The young husky thrust his hand among the strands of Minnie's mane and for a moment buried his face against his arm. Then he turned and driving the team to their stalls, fed them and went up the path leading to the well-lighted farmhouse. He hesitated a second at the door but walked in and, without asking for a light, washed the dust of the day's toil from his hands and face and stood at the door between the washroom and the living room, quietly surveying the scene there.

Everything seemed the embodiment of cheerfulness. The meal was ready and waiting but no one noticed the entrance of the plowman so engrossed were they in an exposition on the Spanish Influenza by a young man whose handsome face bore a striking resemblance to that of the man behind the stove, so that a casual glance would have revealed the fact that they were brothers. In contrast, though, with that of the latter, his face was free from tan, his hands were white and well groomed, and to some extent his whole appearance and manner betokened the "snob", fresh from the city and as self important as ordinary decency would allow. It was not that he seemed especially unbearable. On the contrary, his manners and speech were extremely pleasing, and he showed every consideration of his mother, father and young brother of about fourteen years who was watching him with admiring eyes. But in the glance which he occasionally threw the brother who had just appeared and the authoritative way in which he mentioned "symptoms" and "medical diagnosis", a listener might easily have detected a touch of the condescension which too often, it is to be feared, marks the member of a rural family who has been educated.

"Bob" Carrol, as he was still called, had chosen the path of knowledge which his father had placed before him and he felt a certain satisfaction in assuring himself that his wisdom and success at school should be sufficient reparation to his family for any efforts which they had put forth in order that at least one representative could have the advantages of a college education.

Any resentment which Dave Carrol nursed during the day immediately disappeared when he entered the dining room. Taking little part in the conversation over the meal, he acted as he was expected to act,—the interested listener. Only when no one was looking did a wistful expression creep into his dark blue orbs as he noted some fresh development in his brother's manner. Once they had been inseparable chums as well as brothers. Now, one was through college and was looking forward

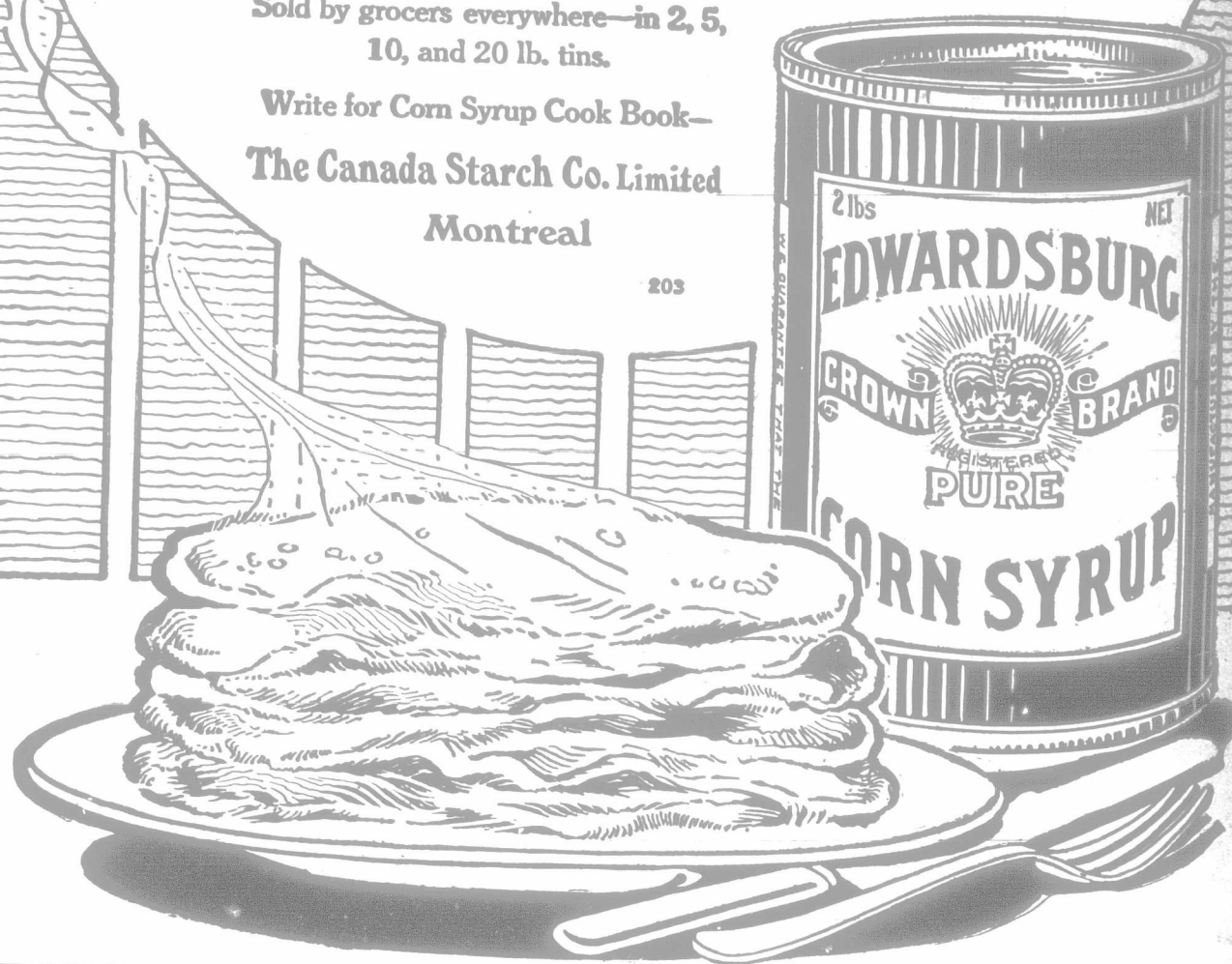
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to a brilliant professional career; the other was one of the thousands of farmers who, even yet to some of the world's parasites merely live, work and die. In fairness to the college boy, let it be known that he had no such conscious conception of his brother and his profession. Bob still admired Dave's steadiness of purpose and bigness of character just as the farmer admired and was proud of his student brother's cleverness. Nevertheless, there was an inexplicable barrier between them and how the farmer winced as he saw his glance by which Bob noticed him using his knife and fork to eat his potatoes. His heart rebelled within him as he wondered if Bob thought he didn't know as much about etiquette and especially regarding true gentlemanliness as he did. He was too stubborn, however, to change his method then and determined to show the other that at least he was free to do as

he pleased in such matters. Moreover, all this was climaxed by an incident which had happened the night before, the remembrance of which had been torturing his heart and brain all that day.

To get the drift we go back some three weeks of time when Dave had encountered the big experience of his life and during which time he had felt,—well, to cut short a long story of nightly thrills and experiences which in themselves Dave fully believed, would fill a book, he had become helplessly, passionately, madly in love with a piece of femininity whom fate had chanced to make the niece of a neighbor and whom the same kind being had prompted to pay a dutiful visit to her aunt and uncle. Of course she was black eyed, raven haired, rosy lipped and a goddess in form; and her name was Dolly Drew. Those three weeks had been spent in one grand series of visits from one farm house to the other. Nothing

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