

# The Smoking Flax

By ROBERT STEAD

Author of *The Cowpuncher*, *Neighbors*, etc.

(Continued from Last Week)

Cal blocked up the sagging corner of the water trough, so that it would not run over there before the other end was half full, and assumed the mud hole around the well with several wagon loads of gravel. He dismantled the wooden pig pen in the centre of the grounds and hauled it log by log beyond the boneyard, where he reassembled it, to the eminent satisfaction of the occupants, who showed their approval of green grass and fresh earth to root in with bassoonic grunts of happiness. He loaded the great "basket" racks, discarded until haying time, on to wagons and moved them out beyond the stables. He straightened up the log pile, and now set to work to carry the sawed wood from what should have been the lawn in front of the house around to the north end, where it could not be seen from "Beach Boulevard".

All these operations Gander and Crit observed with amused contempt. If Cal were fool enough to fill in his slack time with unnecessary work, let him. He would be wiser by far. But Hamilton lent a hand with the piling of the wood, and sometimes came and sat on Cal's cushion in front of the granary after supper, and asked shy little questions about the outside world, and what it was like to be in a university.

It was on Friday that the happiness of the great week dropped into a gulf, as one walking with his head in the clouds may step over a precipice. Cal was working about the yard when Reed returned from school, swinging his lunch bag at the end of a strap. The boy was tanned and brown and happy; as Cal looked fondly down at him he seemed to have grown years since their camp at the head of the lake, less than two weeks ago. And today his face was more radiant than ever, for his was the joy of the child who has great news to tell.

"Oh, Daddy X, do you know? There's a boy in school and he's a bad boy, and his mother's bad, too!"

"Why, Reed? That is a very serious thing, say. You mustn't say such things about boys, and especially about their mothers."

"But it's true, Daddy X! All the boys say so, and his mother's bad, too, and worse than he is."

"Reed, you mustn't! But why do they say it?"

"Well, he's got no father, and that's why, although I don't just see. A any rate, it's very bad, and today we chased him nearly all the way home, and some of the boys called him a bad name, at least I thought it was bad, but they say it's not bad when it's true, and he fought with one of them and got knocked down and it made his nose bleed and served him right, didn't it? And then he ran off home crying. You bet he was scared."

"And you took part in that?" It was the sternness of Cal's voice, rather than his words, that brought Reed up with a start. The child's face whitened a little; it was not often that Daddy X spoke to him like that.

"Yes—why?" he faltered.

"Because, in the first place, it's cowardly. A bunch of children can be as cruel as a pack of wolves. Young savages, every one of them! And you were cruel as well as cowardly. Why should I make you think of him, Daddy X?"

"But my mother is with the angels, Daddy X," the child reminded him. "The angels came for her, and she said that verse of mine—where you got my name—and went home with them."

Suddenly Cal knew himself to be a lower order than the child, and he could only nod in silent assent. That which to him remained a flicker of hope, not quite extinguished by the gusts of his practical learning, was to Reed a beacon of light, undimmed and unbounded.

There was a minute of close heart-to-heart conversation between them. Then—

"Daddy X, who was my father? You often tell me about my mother, but you never tell me about my father. Was he good, like my mother? Of course, I know you're my Daddy X, but you're not really my father, are you? Just my Daddy X?"

So it had come to this, and so soon. The pledge that he had given, that Reed should never know—how could he carry it, concealed, unguessed, through all his life? This at eight; Reed was only eight, and already he was fretting into his heart with this bitterest of all questions. Reed might now accept any answer in faith, but grown-ups could not be deceived. Perhaps he had already been discussed at length; he recalled how Annie Frawdie had checked up on the name. What were Gander and Crit conjecturing behind his back? How had the community—which took so minute and curious an interest in the affairs of every member of it—accounted for this boy? What conclusions had it drawn, and at whose expense? What old women's whisperings were going on about the queer people at Jackson Stake's? How long until Reed would be hunted home from school, bleeding and crying and pursued by rampant Virtue, as had been this other boy today?

At all costs he must save the child. He must find an explanation that would not outrage the righteousness of Plainville; if it reflected glory or sympathy upon Reed so much the better. He had it: "You had a father, all right," he said. "He went to the war—and he did not come back. It is very sad, and that is why I have not liked to talk to you about it." Lying did not come easily to Cal Beach. The words seemed to lacerate his throat and he pressed his fingers at his neck. "He was a good man," he added; "you must always be proud of him."

The child received this intelligence with a gravity beyond his years. "I am proud of him," he said. "But"—and again there was the leap of light in his eyes—"you don't know that he has been killed? Some day he may come back—then he will find me, though he has to search all the world over for me, like the good knights searching for the Holy Grail! Oh, Daddy X!"

For a moment the boy pondered great possibilities; then, satisfied, he ran off for his after-school sandwich with bread and jam, and Cal was left dazed, humiliated, caught in a hatred that swept down upon him, engulfing him. He had thought it would die out in time; he had hoped that that wound had healed forever, but now it was torn open afresh. Hatred seized him like an evil spirit; he was again the wild beast in the jungle.

"And on top of everything else," he muttered, as though confronting Celesta's betrayer face to face, "I've made of myself a liar—for you, I've called you a good man; I've told that innocent child to be proud of you; I've paid you the honor of a hero! God forgive me! If ever I lay hands on you I'll tear you limb from limb!"

The incident filled him with an overwhelming unhappiness, and he was silent and morose at the supper table. But later in the evening he heard the unwelcome sound of singing coming from the house. Before the open window he stopped, held by the picture which it disclosed. Mrs. Stake was sitting in the "room", the sacred precinct with the ancestral crayon enlargements, into which Cal had not yet been admitted; her old form settled into a low rocker, her head back, her glasses thrust up on her brow, her thinning gray hair drawn sharply into a dwindling knob that once had been her glory. And on her lap was the boy Reed, his legs dangling over the sharp ridge of her own; his body snuggled against hers, his right arm thrown upward and about her neck. But it was her eyes that held his attention; there was in them something of that same light that filled Reed's when they spoke of his mother. And as she rocked and held the boy she sang.

"Twilight is stealing over the sea, Shadows are falling dark on the lea, Borne on the night wind voices of yore Come from that far-off shore."

As Cal watched the singer and listened to her song he was held by a wonder of what voices from memory's far-off shore had touched again to love and romance the stern old heart of Mrs. Stake. He watched as her lean hands caressed the boy's legs; as they closed about his little body. He was stirred by this revelation, but stirred more poignantly still by something that defied analysis, that groped down into his being and held him with the clutch of a primal passion. For all his love for Reed his essential parental instinct had not yet been kindled, and it was that which now caught him, groping, smothering, somewhere in the uncharted mystery of existence. He drew quietly away as one who has chanced unwittingly upon a sacred privacy, but once more his heart was swept clean of the gust of hatred that had seized upon it.

A little later Reed joined him at their granary and they went to bed together, the boy saying his simple verse and then rolling his little frame into his protector's arms, for a chill night wind was creeping over the plains. But before he fell asleep he had a matter to settle.

"Mrs. Stake sang to me tonight, Daddy X," he said, "and she talked to me about her boy that is gone; her little Jackson, she called him. She says I make her think of him. Why should I make her think of him, Daddy X?"

"I don't know, Reed; I didn't even know she had lost a little boy."

"I didn't, either," reverently, "and she asked me if I would call her Grand-ma. May I, Daddy X?"

"If it pleases her, and you, you may."

And this weighty matter settled, they fell asleep.

### SCOTTS BAY

Mr. Jasper Steele, of Boston, arrived on Tuesday, Dec. 15th, to spend the winter. Mr. Steele has not been home for a couple of years.

Miss Ella May Osborne passed away on Dec. 14 at the age of 61. Miss Osborne was an invalid for many years. She leaves to mourn two sisters, Mrs. Jasper Steele and Mrs. George Parker, and one brother, Wilnot Osborne. Rev. Mr. Hiselet conducted the funeral. Burial was at Scotts Bay Cemetery.

The day school at Scotts Bay held their annual Christmas closing on Wednesday, Dec. 16. A good program was given. To the delight of all the school Santa Claus came to greet the children. A Christmas tree was filled to please all who were present, not forgetting that the children had been looking for him for a long time.

Miss Fader, of the teaching staff at Scotts Bay, left for her home in Chester on Friday afternoon.

### CHRISTMAS

It isn't wreaths in the windows, It isn't the shining tree, Or the children rapt and waiting, Brings Christmas to you and me.

It's the marvellous self-forgetting, It's the thought we are sending far, It's our hearts aglow, uplifted, It's a wonderful guiding star.



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### CANNING AND VICINITY

Miss Ruth Harris, Laurabel Bigelow, William H. Payzant, Bernell Eaton, and Bertram Newcomb, of Acadia College, are all at home enjoying their Christmas holidays.

Miss Lois Porter, of Acadia College, is spending her holidays at Dalhousie, guest of her parents.

We regret to hear that Setley Johnson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Johnson, is ill with pneumonia.

Miss Barry, of the teaching staff at Woodside, is spending her holidays in Kings county.

Miss Mary Lombard, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lombard, Medford, met with a painful accident while skating, tripping over a piece of wire and spraining her arm.

Mr. Arthur Ward has a slight attack of blood poison in his hand. Mr. Boyd, of the teaching staff at Blomidon, left for his home at Clark's Harbor to spend his Christmas holidays.

The Medford day school held their annual Christmas tree in the school room. A splendid program was provided by the teachers and scholars. Santa Claus arrived and presented each child with candy and oranges. The house was packed and the exercises pronounced a great success. Christmas entertainments were also held at Peregue and Blomidon schools.

The death occurred on Dec. 16th of Mr. Leonard Schofield at the Victoria General hospital, Halifax. Mr. Schofield went to the hospital only a few days previous for treatment, being around Canning looking after his business the day he left. He leaves to mourn his wife, five sons and one daughter living in the United States, George, Rupert, Joseph, Hibbert and Manson, all living in Kings county.

Frank Covert, of Dalhousie College, Halifax, is spending his Christmas holidays at his home in Canning.

Miss Lou Covert, eldest daughter of the late Hon. Dr. and Mrs. Covert, who is a patient at Westwood hospital, Wolfville, is convalescent and is looking forward to spending her Christmas with her mother and family.

Miss Ruth Bigelow, who is training in the Providence Rhode Island hospital and has been ill, is now able to return to her school again.

Miss Gladys Kennedy, of Halifax, returned on Friday to spend her Christmas holidays with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Kennedy.

Mr. and Mrs. Pilcher, of Canning, have gone to Newfoundland to spend a couple of months with relatives and friends.

The boys are training for hockey, hiking several miles each morning. They expect to have some good hockey for the winter.

The annual meeting of the Medford Institute was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Holmes. Business was discussed for the following year. Mrs. George Holmes was elected as president; vice-president, Mrs. R. S. Kinsman; Sec-treas, Miss Ethel Munro. Addresses on the subject, "Entertainment of Christmas in other lands", were thoroughly enjoyed.

Woodside school had a Christmas tree arranged in their school house on Tuesday evening, Dec. 15th. About thirty children and their parents went to see Santa Claus, who was at his post ready to make the children happy, and presented each one with a gift from the tree, also fruit and candies. The children were much excited over Santa Claus and in the twinkling of an eye the tree was all in a blaze, supposed to have caught from some sparklers which were used on the tree. No damage was done to the building as the fire was soon put out, but it gives warning to others during our Christmas festivities.

Word was received in Canning on Dec. 15 of the death of Mrs. Emma Burbridge Lockhart, widow of the late Jacob Lockhart, of Canning, and the daughter of the late Elisha and Mrs. Clark Burbridge, formerly of Hillsdale. Three sons survive, Charles, Eimer and Harry, all living in U. S. A., also one sister Alice, Mrs. Palmer, of Boston, and one brother Owen, of Church Street, Cornwallis. Mrs. Lockhart made her home in Canning until the past year, when her son Charles being of poor health, she went to Boston to reside with his family. The remains arrived in Canning on Friday evening, accompanied by her three sons. The funeral was held at the United Baptist church on Sunday afternoon. Burial was at Hillaton.

Miss Gertrude Eaton leaves on Dec. 26 for Amherst, where she will take up her church work as deaconess.

Miss Pauline Eaton, of Boston, is spending her Christmas holidays with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. C. H. Eaton.

Miss Margaret Burbridge, of West Amherst, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leander Burbridge, will spend her Christmas vacation with her parents at Lower Canning.

Mr. Albert Eaton, of Lower Canning, is closing his house for the winter and will visit his son, Rev. Ross Eaton, of Prince Edward Island, and his daughter, Mrs. Hugh Eaton, of Canning.

We regret to hear of the death of Dr. Park Rockwell at his home in Maine on Dec. 5th. Dr. Rockwell leaves a wife, two sons and one daughter to mourn the loss of a kind husband and father. Dr. Rockwell was the second son of the late Judah Rockwell and Mrs. Belcher Rockwell, of Canning, and was born and educated at Upper Canning. Mrs. William Cox, of Upper Canning, a sister, is the only surviving member of the family.

Mr. Kenneth Eaton, son of Mr. Albert Eaton, of Lower Canning, who is taking his M.A. work at Acadia College, Wolfville, has had an invitation to go to British Columbia to teach on the staff of one of the schools. Mr. Eaton has taught two years in British Columbia and proved a very proficient teacher.

The Lower Canning Sabbath and day schools had a very pleasant evening in their hall on Friday evening. Supper was served to about 150 guests. A very fine program was prepared by the young people, including a play, "Evangeline", which was put on very creditably; readings and music. An address was given by the pastor, Rev. Mr. Hudson. The evening was much enjoyed by all present.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Chappell and son Jack, of Halifax, are spending their Christmas holidays with Mrs. Chappell's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Harris, Upper Canning.

The children and teachers of the Upper Canning day school held a Christmas tree in their school room on Friday morning. A nice program was prepared and presented to each one present. Miss Lowther and Miss Ruth Sheffield are to be congratulated upon such a success and parents are delighted with the interest the teachers are taking with their children.

Miss Lowther left on Saturday to spend her Christmas holidays with friends and her parents.

Santa Claus had a tree all dressed before the children and parents arrived on Thursday evening at the United church, Upper Canning. About 100 guests were present. The ladies of the church, thinking that Santa and children would be hungry and cold, prepared a delicious supper which they all enjoyed, watching for Santa with eager eyes and listening to every sound. The little ones were pleased when they heard a knock at the door and in walked Santa Claus in all his array of tinsel, with his long white beard. At shaking hands with the little ones Santa began to strip the tree, giving each child a present, fruit, and a bag of candy. The grown ups were not forgotten. Mrs. Clark Ross, the organist, was presented with a beautiful hymnal. Singing and games were the program and all went home happy and pleased.

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MURINE FOR YOUR EYES. Wholesome Cleansing Refreshing.

TOWN OF WOLFVILLE, N. S. TAX SALE

The following property will be sold, by the Town Clerk, for arrears of Taxes, interest, etc., under the authority and by virtue of the Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia of 1923, Chapter 86, Sections 141 and following sections on Monday, the 28th day of December, A.D. 1925, at the hour of 10 o'clock in the forenoon, at Public Auction, in the Town Hall, Wolfville, unless before said time the amounts due be respectively paid.

Any property sold may be redeemed at the time and in the manner provided in said Revised Statutes. The Mayor's warrant for the sale was executed the 26th day of November A.D. 1925. The arrears of taxes to December 31st, A.D. 1923, together with interest and expense, to date, are shown below.

Terms—Cash at time of sale. R. W. FORD, Town Clerk.

Properties of Charles F. Stewart. No. 1—Lot of land on South East side of Willow Avenue, containing six acres more or less. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$62.24. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 14.75. Legal and advertising expenses 15.45. \$92.44.

No. 2—4 Lots of land on Central Avenue, East side, each 60 ft X 120 ft. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$75.32. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 5.40. Legal and adv. expenses 20.80. \$101.52.

No. 3—Lot of land on Starr Street, South side and directly East from property of Frank W. Murphy and abutting on said property. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$10.05. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 1.44. Legal and adv. expenses 6.65. \$18.14.

No. 4—Lot of land on Starr Street, South side and directly East from property of Frank W. Murphy and abutting on said property. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$10.05. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 1.44. Legal and adv. expenses 6.65. \$18.14.

No. 5—Lot of land on Starr Street, South side and directly East from property of Frank W. Murphy and abutting on said property. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$10.05. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 1.44. Legal and adv. expenses 6.65. \$18.14.

No. 6—Lot of land on Starr Street, South side and directly East from property of Frank W. Murphy and abutting on said property. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$10.05. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 1.44. Legal and adv. expenses 6.65. \$18.14.

No. 7—Lot of land on Starr Street, South side and directly East from property of Frank W. Murphy and abutting on said property. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$10.05. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 1.44. Legal and adv. expenses 6.65. \$18.14.

No. 8—Lot of land on Starr Street, South side and directly East from property of Frank W. Murphy and abutting on said property. Taxes due at Dec. 31, 1923 \$10.05. Interest due at Nov. 27, 1925 1.44. Legal and adv. expenses 6.65. \$18.14.

### Woolen Costumes for Young Canad's Wear



For a little girl there is no more attractive dress than an ensemble with short knickers banded at the knee. It has a V neck and is worn with a white linen collar; or if one prefers, a collar knitted of white wool, with the white repeated in a few narrow rows around the skirt and in the knicker bands. The knickers fasten above the knee and the dress is still shorter for little girls' dresses are worn very short this season. The yoke is knit plain, and the lower part is so knit as to appear to be pleated. The sleeves are full length, with ribbed cuffs.

Boys and girls dress so much alike now-a-days, that it is hard to tell which is brother and which is sister. But there is really something distinctive about a boy's knitted suit. He wears really and truly knitted pants with a crease in the leg and buttons up the side at the knees.

For the little boy the jumper has a high neck with a turn-over collar, opened a few inches over the chest, and he has two playful little bunnies worked in cross-stitch over his tummy. The panties and socks don't pretend to meet over his knees, but this makes him all the smarter looking. Heather or buff are both good substantial colors for this suit.

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### PROFESSIONAL CARDS

M. R. Elliott, M. D. (Harvard) Office Hours: 1.30 to 3.30 P. M. 7 to 8 P. M.

G. K. Smith, M.D., C.M. Hantsport, N. S. Late Office of Dr. Shankel Hours: 1.30 to 3.30 P. M. 7 to 8 P. M. Phone 28

ALLAN R. MORTON M.D., C.M. Main St., Wolfville Phone 348 Office Hours: 1 to 2, 6.30 to 7.30

Dr. Grace M. Curry OSTEOPATH Boston College of Osteopathy P.G. University of Cambridge, Mass. Will treat Patients at Wolfville and vicinity, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, weekly. For information telephone Wolfville 93-4.

EYESIGHT SPECIALIST Hours: (9-12 A.M. Telephone 20) (2-5 P.M.) Paul G. Webster, R.O. Optometrist Webster Street Kentville, N. S. Graduate of Rochester School of Optometry, Rochester, New York

G. C. NOWLAN, LL. B. Barrister and Solicitor Money to Loan Orpheum Bldg. WOLFVILLE Phone 240 Box 134

W. D. Withrow, LL. B. BARRISTER, SOLICITOR NOTARY PUBLIC Money to Loan on Real Estate. Eaton Block - Wolfville. Phone 284. Box 218.

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D. A. R. Time-table The Train Service as it Affects Wolfville

No. 96 From Kentville arrives 8.41 a.m. No. 95 From Halifax arrives 10.10 a.m. No. 98 From Yarmouth, arrives 3.12 p.m. No. 97 From Halifax, arrives 6.12 p.m. No. 99 From Halifax (Mon., Thurs., Sat.) arrives 11.48 a.m. No. 100 From Yarmouth (Mon. Wed., Sat.), arrives 4.13 a.m.

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