

THE INHERITANCE OF JEAN TROUVE

Copyright 1925 By The Bobb-Merrill Company Indianapolis-New York, U. S. A. BY NEVIL HENSHAW Author of 'Allies of the Grand Woods,' etc. BOOK THREE.—BOIS BERARD CHAPTER I. BOIS BERARD

Bois Berard—a brief thread of wooden structures strung along the leafy edge of the forest—seemed quite imposing after the stark desolation of the marsh. It was a small place, even for a settlement, yet its scattered rough buildings were so widely spaced, that it conveyed the impression of being twice as populous as it really was.

Coming in from the prairie along a grassy woodland road, one first encountered the store of N. Bonnemaison, a truly wonderful emporium which was said to contain a stock unmatched between St. Pierre and the bay. The store building was wide and deep, with a high slanting roof, and a spacious front porch.

Next to his business, which was founded upon long years of square dealing, Monsieur Bonnemaison was proudest of his home. Always in going to and from his store he paused for a final glance at it.

"You are surprised?" he would exult when strangers came to view the marvel. "Well, it would be the same with me were I in your place."

And he always ended with the joke that had become a legend in that section. "You see, I am good-house himself," he would chuckle. "Even though I am in the woods I must live up to my name."

Beyond the store straggled a line of small cabins. In them dwelt the inhabitants of Bois Berard, wood-folk who followed no special calling, tending their small gardens, hunting, or gathering moss in the forest, turning their hands to such odd bits of work as came along.

They were a cheery lot, indolent and care-free, keenly alive to all forms of amusement. Seldom was there a ball, a horse race or a cock fight upon the prairie that did not boast of at least one representative from Bois Berard.

Following the cabins came the home of Madame Alcide, a modest structure in comparison with that of Monsieur Bonnemaison, yet one far better suited to its environment. Dignified by age, weather-beaten to a uniform, silvery gray, its squat single story ramblled into all sorts of unexpected and out-of-the-way corners.

As a house it had no definite design, nor indeed had such a thing been considered in its leisurely, haphazard construction.

In the days of Madame Alcide's prosperity, her husband had often found it necessary to visit this portion of his holdings. Accordingly he had built a rough shelter to serve him when overtaken by night. Finding good hunting at this particular spot, he had added rooms to the original hut that his friends might share in the sport.

Later, when this edge of the forest had been given his name, he had shown his appreciation by adding still more, often coming to the woods for weeks at a time. Valued by Alcide Berard solely through reasons of sentiment, this forest retreat had proved a most welcome refuge to his widow upon his death and the melting away of his estate.

Before the house stretched a broad ragged lawn, shaded by two enormous live oaks, and other smaller trees. At the back was a huddle of outbuildings together with the prim green rows of Madame Alcide's kitchen garden.

Inside the house was merely a succession of rooms that opened upon the wide galleries flanking the front and rear.

Reaching away from the farther limits of Madame Alcide's yard was a pasture, its outer edge indented by a sagging stretch of barbed-wire fence. Inside the enclosure thus made stood a two-roomed out-house to which had been added a small lean-to.

This outhouse, though dilapidated and sadly in need of whitewash, had about it an air of immaculate cleanliness, and to one of its pairs of doors was nailed a neatly printed sign that read, "Charles Aristide Poussard" "Docteur En Medecin."

Upon the door of the lean-to was a second sign, its letters larger and more straggly as became its humbler announcement. This time was proclaimed, "C. A. Poussard" "Manufacturer of Mattresses."

As for the Doctor himself, he was the sole mystery amid the frank simple life of Bois Berard. Years before he had drifted in from somewhere out in the world, small, brown, dingy, exactly as he had remained ever since. Of his history little was known beyond a word dropped by him here and there upon his arrival. In France he had been a surgeon in the army. Then some

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"Ma said to tell you she'd stop for you tonight," Ethel swung busily on the edge of the desk as she poured the words out rapidly. Her seatmate had a similar invitation for the popular young teacher and Ethel was afraid she'd get ahead of her.

Dot thanked her suitably, but her mind was still athrill from her book. The gleaming lights of the far-off city, the music that sent life racing in a whirl of happiness, seemed to her very real. The amazing genius of the girl, Lolande, was instantly discovered by the musicians, ever alert for new talent.

The girl's magically-wielded bow gave her entrance to the most exclusive homes and Lolande found herself entering fairlyland—Dot's resume of the exciting chapter about the simple country girl with her red cheeks and interrupted by two red-checked matrons who had come to visit the school.

"I can't so long since you were a little fat yourself, Dot," chuckled fat Aunt Betsy as she accepted the spring-book preparatory to grilling the class.

Dot's face crimsoned, as an affectionate titter ran around the crowded, stove-heated room. "I wish folks would remember that I'm grown up," she thought resentfully. But when her guests rose to go, she was still further embarrassed by the gift of a bag of home-made doughnuts.

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"Dependable!" thought Dot, as she mechanically reproved Willy Grimes for pulling a yellow pigtail that hung temptingly in front of him, "dependable" is the greatest compliment given around these parts—but all through the sunny morning her thoughts circled about the green-eyed heroine of the best-seller.

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Teacher, the fire's nearly out. May I put in some wood?" A sharp-faced lad with canny black eyes rubbed his chapped hands together significantly as he stood beside her desk. She wrenched her thoughts back from the mythical butler with some difficulty, and with a wink at the attentive room the boy emitted a hollow cough.

"Yes, put in some," she said wearily, with a glance at the big white-faced clock. Would the day never end?

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