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Helen's Harvesters

By S. G. Mosher

BOB SCOTT was whistling as he returned to the house. He had gone as far as the road with the departing guests, since the collapsible wire gate of the ranch was hard for city people to manipulate.

"It has been a pleasant day," he remarked, as he entered the living room. "It was fine to see the folks again. Why, what is the matter?"

Helen Scott raised her flushed face from a pile of crumpled sofa pillows. She looked at the uncleared supper table, and through the open door to the table in the kitchen, piled high with unwashed dishes.

"It is nearly nine o'clock; I am so tired I can scarcely stand, and there are all those dishes to be washed."

"Let the dishes go until morning," said Bob, with masculine optimism.

"I suppose you will want your breakfast at half-past six, as usual. I shall have to bake biscuits in the morning, too, for there is no bread left. Yet people call Sunday a day of rest."

Bob opened his mouth to speak, thought better of it, and in silence began to clear the table. Then he started a fire, and put water on to heat. By that time his wife was ashamed of her outburst.

"I am sorry I was so cross, Bob, but to-day was the last straw," she said. "All summer our friends have been coming out from the city, every Sunday and every holiday, as if we kept a hotel. But to descend on us in harvest time is too much. I mentioned that we could not get a hired man, and that I was helping to stook all day yesterday, but did Fanny or her sister offer to help with supper or to wash the dishes? Not they!"

"Probably they don't realize how much work there is on a farm," Bob pleaded.

"Some of them will find that out for themselves one of these days," prophesied Helen darkly. "I would not mind so much if there were any reciprocity about it, but none of them ever seem to remember that we might like a day in the city."

"But we couldn't leave the farm; cows have to be milked and pigs fed on holidays the same as on other days."

"The farm is going to look after itself next Sunday," Helen said. "Right after breakfast you will harness old Dan to the buggy, and we'll drive over to Pine Ridge for the morning service. We haven't had a chance to attend church for ages. We will take a lunch along, and some books, and spend the afternoon by the lake. I'm not coming back here until after sunset."

"I wish you didn't have to stook, but it doesn't seem possible to get help for love or money," her husband said. "The paper says that the mayor of the city has started a campaign to get business men to go out harvesting Saturday afternoon instead of playing golf, but we are too far out to expect help from that source."

"Thank goodness," Helen said, as she wound the clock and put the cat out.

Suddenly an idea darted into her mind, and she turned it over and over before she went to sleep. "I'll do it, if I get a chance," she decided at last. "But I can't put them to work in the field on Sundays, and there isn't another holiday until Thanksgiving."

Helen was up at five next morning. With the elasticity of youth she had recovered from her fatigue, and as she baked and washed dishes she found herself recalling almost with pleasure the visit of the day before. After all, it was nice to see friends sometimes, if only they would not come in the busiest seasons. She recalled that the winter before, weeks had gone by without a visit from their city friends. Of course, the country was pleasanter in the summer than in the cold weather, but, unfortunately, the pleasantest time of year was also the busiest for farmers.

At dinner Bob announced that he had stopped cutting for the day, and meant to spend the afternoon stooking. "But,

Bob, the wheat is all more than ready to cut, and the oats are ready too," Helen remarked.

"It is no use cutting faster than I can stook," Bob rejoined, as he helped himself to another piece of raisin pie.

"I am coming out to help this afternoon."

"But there are nearly forty acres cut. I stopped a crowd of half-breeds from the Ridge on their way to the lake to shoot ducks, and offered them five dollars a day if they would help me out, but they laughed. Said they didn't need to work as long as the duck season lasted."

"Oh, I had forgotten that the shooting season had opened. You remember last year Walter Hunter brought some of his friends out for a day's shooting. You don't suppose—"

"That was on Labor day, which has already gone by this year. Walter can't get away except on a holiday."

"Bob, how would it do to hire some women to stook?"

"Where would you find them?"

"Some of those half-breed women from the Ridge. I haven't noticed any of them going duck shooting, and last winter they seemed glad to earn a little money by making moccasins."

"Good idea," Bob agreed. "Better drive over there this afternoon."

"No, we must get that wheat all stooked first. I suppose that will take us most of to-morrow. I'll go to the Ridge on Wednesday."

All that day and the next they worked feverishly. They feared that the fine weather might not last, and were anxious to get the grain safely stooked. After breakfast on Wednesday, Helen hurried through her household duties, intent on getting to the Ridge and back before it was time to start dinner. She was just about to harness up when she heard the honk of an auto horn, and ran to the window. A car full of people was coming up the driveway. Bob, on the binder at the back of the field, had heard the honk, too, and waved his hand in response to the friendly wave of the driver. He thought he recognised Walter Hunter, and hoped Helen would not be rude to him.

Helen was on the verandah when the car stopped, and Eve Hunter sprang out. "I haven't seen you for an age, Helen," she said. "How thin you are getting. You know Nan Crosby, and this is my cousin, Ellinor Torrey."

"And of course you remember George Perry and Arthur Fuller, who were out shooting with me last year?" Walter remarked. "The mayor proclaimed to-day a civic holiday, so we thought—"

What he thought was never known, for Helen interrupted. "Oh, yes, we read that the mayor was asking people to go out into the country and help with the harvest. Wasn't it fine of him to proclaim a holiday? I'm glad so many of you came; we have been at our wit's end to get help. How sensible you men were to wear corduroys and heavy shoes; stooking is hard on good clothes."

Walter looked hesitatingly at the two young men. As a matter of fact he had promised them a good day's shooting at the ranch, and warned them to wear suitable clothes. But before he could speak, Helen went on, "But you girls can't harvest in those clothes—and those French heels, Eve. Didn't you bring anything more sensible?"

Nan Crosby stuck out her foot, encased in snug walking boots. "Are these all right, Mrs. Scott? You know I never wear high heels. Surely you can lend us some working clothes; fortunately we are all about the same size."

"Come on, fellows," said Walter, hastily taking Nan's hint, and throwing the lap robe over the guns in the bottom of the car. "What is the programme, Helen?"

"Can any of you drive a team?" Perry admitted that he had been brought up on a farm.

"Then you can drive a binder. We have two, but haven't been able to get a man to run the second one. The black team is in the stable. You will find their



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