

The Brown Mouse

By HERBERT QUICK
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"JIMMINY, BE GAME!"

SYNOPSIS—Jennie Woodruff refuses to marry Jim Irwin, young farm hand, because of his financial condition and poor prospects. He is intellectually above his station, and has advanced ideas concerning the possibilities of school teaching and farming, for which he is ridiculed by many. In short, Jim is an off ox. He flunks by himself and reads books and has a philosophy of his own. But there are latent powers in him unsuspected even by himself. Opportunity comes knocking at his door.

CHAPTER I—Continued.

Jim picked it up and showed him the nodules on its roots—little white knobs, smaller than pinheads. "Ever hear of the use of nitrates to enrich the soil?" "Ain't that the stuff the old man used on the lawn last spring?" "Yes," said Jim, "your father used some on his lawn. We don't put it on our fields in Iowa—not yet; but if it weren't for those white specks on the clover-roots, we should be obliged to do so—as they do back east."

"How do them white specks keep us from needin' nitrates?" "It's a long story," said Jim. "You see, before there were any plants big enough to be visible—if there had been any one to see them—the world was full of little plants so small that there may be billions of them in one of those little white specks. They knew how to take the nitrates from the air—"

"Air!" ejaculated Newton. "Nitrates in the air! You're crazy!" "No," said Jim. "There are tons of nitrogen in the air that press down on your head—but the big plants can't get it through their leaves, or their roots. They never had to learn, because the little plants—bacteria—located on those roots and tapped them for the sap they needed—began to get their board and lodgings off the big plants. And in payment for their hotel bills, the little plants took nitrogen out of the air for both themselves and their hosts."

"What d'ye mean by 'hosts'?" "Their hotel-keepers—the big plants. And now the plants that have the hotel roots for the bacteria furnish nitrogen not only for themselves, but for the crops that follow. Corn can't get nitrogen out of the air; but clover can—and that's why we ought to plow down clover before a crop of corn."

"Gee!" said Newt. "If you could get to teach our school, I'd go again." "It would interfere with your pool playing." "What business is that o' yours?" interrogated Newt defiantly. "Well, get busy with that shovel," suggested Jim, who had been working steadily, driving out upon the fill occasionally to unload. On his return from dumping the next load, Newton seemed, in a superior way, quite amiably disposed toward his work-fellow—rather the habitual thing in the neighborhood.

"I'll work my old man to vote for you for teacher," said he. "Those school directors," replied Jim, "have become so bullheaded that they'll never vote for any one except the applicants they've been voting for." "The old man says he will have Prue Foster again, or he'll give the school a darned long vacation, unless Peterson and Bonner join on some one else. That would beat Prue, of course."

"And Con Bonner won't vote for any one but Maggie Gilmartin," added Jim. "And," supplied Newton, "Haakon Peterson says he'll stick to Hermann Paulson until the Hot Springs freeze over."

"And there you are," said Jim. "You tell your father for me that I think he's a mere mule—and that the whole district thinks the same."

"All right," said Newt. "I'll tell him that while I'm working him to vote for you."

Jim smiled grimly. He had remained a peasant because the American rural teacher is placed economically lower than the peasant. He gave Newton's chatter no consideration. But when, in the afternoon, he ditched his team with others to the big road grader, and the gang became concentrated within talking distance, he found that the project of heckling and chaffing him about his eminent fitness for a scholastic position was to be the real entertainment of the occasion.

"Jim's the candidate to bust the deadlock," said Columbus Brown, with a wink. "Just like Garfield in that Republican convention he was nominated in—eh, Con?"

"Con" was Cornelius Bonner, an Irishman, one of the deadlocked school board, and the captain of the road grader. He winked back at the path-master.

"Jim's the gray-eyed man o' destiny," he replied, "if he gets two votes in that board."

"You'd vote for me, wouldn't you, Con?" asked Jim.

"You're a reasonable board of public servants," said Jim ironically. "I'd like to tell the whole board what I think of them."

"Come down tonight," said Bonner jeeringly. "We're going to have a board meeting at the schoolhouse and ballot a few more times. Come down, and be the Garfield of the convention. We've lacked brains on the board, that's clear. They ain't a man on the board that ever studied algebra, or that knows more about farmin' than their imp'yers. Come down to the schoolhouse, and we'll have a field-hand address the school board—and begosh, I'll move yer illection meself! Come, now, Jiminy, me bye, be game. I'll vary the program, anyhow."

The entire gang grinned. Jim flushed, and then reconquered his calmness of spirit.

"All right, Con," said he. "I'll come and tell you a few things—and you can do as you like about making the motion."

CHAPTER II

Reversed Unanimity.

The great blade of the grading machine, running diagonally across the road and pulling the earth toward its median line, had made several trips, and much persiflage about Jim Irwin's forthcoming appearance before the board had been addressed to Jim and exchanged by others for his benefit.

To Newton Bronson was given the task of leveling and distributing the earth rolled into the road by the grader—a labor which in the interests of fitting a muzzle on his big mongrel dog he deserted whenever the machine moved away from him. That there was some mystery about the muzzle was evident from Newton's pains to make a secret of it. Its wires were curled into a ring directly over the dog's nose, and into this ring Newton had fitted a cork, through which he had thrust a large needle which protruded, an inch-long bayonet, in front of Ponto's nose.

As the grader moved along one side of the highway, a high-powered automobile approached on the other, making rather bad weather of the newly repaired road. A pile of loose soil that Newton had allowed to lie just across the path made a certain maintenance of speed desirable. Newton planted himself in the path of the laboring



Jim Countered With an Awkward Upper Cut.

car, and waved its driver a command to halt. The car came to a standstill with its front wheels in the edge of the loose earth, and the chauffeur fuming at the possibility of stalling—a contingency upon which Newton had confidently reckoned.

"What d'ye want?" he demanded. "What d'ye mean by stopping me in this kind of place?"

"I want to ask you," said Newton with mock politeness, "if you have the correct time."

The chauffeur sought words appropriate to his feelings. Ponto and his muzzle saved him the trouble. A pretty pointer leaped from the car, and attracted by the evident friendliness of Ponto's greeting, pricked up its ears, and sought, in a spirit of canine brotherhood, to touch noses with him. The needle in Ponto's muzzle did its work to the agony and horror of the pointer, which leaped back with a yelp, and turned tail. Ponto, in an effort to apologize, followed, and finding itself bayoneted at every contact with this demon dog, the pointer definitely took flight, howling, leaving Ponto in a state of wonder and humiliation at the sudden end of what had promised to be a very friendly acquaintance. The pointer's master watched its strange flight, and swore. His eye turned to the boy who had caused all this, and he alighted pale with anger.

"I've got time," said he, remembering Newton's impudent question, "to give you what you deserve."

Newton grinned and dodged, but the bank of loose earth was his undoing, and while he stumbled, the chauffeur caught and held him by the collar. Again Ponto intervened, for as the chauffeur stood holding Newton, the dog, evidently regarding the stranger as his master's friend, thrust his nose into the chauffeur's palm. The chauffeur behaved much as his pointer had done, except that the pointer did not swear.

The grading gang laughed. Newton grinned even while in the fell clutch of circumstance. Ponto tried to smell the chauffeur's trousers, and what had been a laugh became a roar. Caution and mercy departed from the chauffeur's mood; he drew back his fist to strike the boy—and found it

caught by the hard hand of Jim Irwin.

"You're too angry to punish this boy," said Jim gently, "even if you had the right to punish him at all!"

The chauffeur, however, unhesitatingly released Newton, and furiously delivered a blow meant for Jim's jaw, which miscarried by a foot. In reply, Jim countered with an awkward swinging uppercut. It landed fairly on the point of the jaw. The chauffeur staggered and slowly toppled over into the soft earth which had caused so much of the rumpus.

"Oh, cut it out," said a fat man in the rear of the car, who had hitherto manifested small interest in anything save Ponto. "Get in, and let's be on our way!"

Colonel Woodruff, waving toward him in his runaway, held up by the traffic blockade, asked what was going on here, and the chauffeur, rising groggily, climbed into the car; and the meeting dissolved.

"Good work, Jim," said Cornelius Bonner. "I didn't think 'twas in ye!"

"It's beastly," said Jim, reddening. "I didn't know either."

Colonel Woodruff looked at his hired man sharply, gave him some instructions for the next day and drove on. The road gang dispersed for the afternoon, Newton Bronson carefully secreted the magic muzzle, and chuckled at what had been perhaps the most picturesquely successful bit of deviltry in his varied record. Jim Irwin put out his team, got his supper and went to the meeting of the school board.

The deadlocked members of the board had been so long at loggerheads that their relations had swayed back to something like amity. Jim had scarcely entered when Con Bonner addressed the chair.

"Mr. President," said he, "we have wid us 't'night, a young man who makes no introduction to an audience in this place, Mr. Jim Irwin. He thinks we're bullheaded mules, and that all the schools are bad. At the proper time I shall move that we hire him fr teacher; and p'nding that motion, I move that he be given the floor. Ye've all heard of Mr. Irwin's ability as a white hope, and I know he'll be listened to wid respect!"

Much laughter from the board and the spectators, as Jim arose. He looked upon it as ridicule of himself, while Con Bonner regarded it as a tribute to his successful speech.

"Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board," said Jim, "I'm not going to tell you anything that you don't know about yourselves. You are simply making a farce of the matter of hiring a teacher for this school. You know, and I know, that even if your silly deadlock is broken by employing a new candidate, the school will be the same old story. It will still be the school it was when I came into it a little ragged boy—here Jim's voice grew a little husky—"and when I left it, a bigger boy, but still as ragged as ever."

There was a slight sensation in the audience, as if, as Con Bonner said about the knock-down, they hadn't thought Jim Irwin could do it.

"Well," said Con, "you've done well to hold your own."

"In all the years I attended this school," Jim went on, "I never did a bit of work in school which was economically useful. No other pupil ever did any real work of the sort farmers' boys and girls should do. We copied city schools—and the schools we copied are poor schools. We made bad copies of them, too. If any of you three men were making a fight for what the Country Life commission called a 'new kind of rural school,' I'd say fight. But you aren't. You're just making individual fights for your favorite teachers."

Jim Irwin made a somewhat lengthy speech after the awkwardness wore off. He adjured Bronson, Bonner and Peterson to study his plan of a new kind of country school—in which the work of the school should be correlated with the life of the home and the farm—a school which would be in the highest degree cultural by being consciously useful and obviously practical.

Sharp spats of applause from the useless hands of Newton Bronson gave the final touch of absurdity to a situation which Jim had felt to be ridiculous all through. Had it not been for Jennie Woodruff's "Humph!" stinging him, had it not been for the absurd notion that perhaps, after they had heard his speech, they would place him in charge of the school, and that he might be able to do something really important in it, he would not have been there. As he sat down, he knew himself a dreamer. The nodding board of directors, the secretary, actually snoring, the bored audience restored the field-hand to a sense of his proper place.

"We have had the privilege of his 't'ning," said Con Bonner, rising, "to a great speech, Mr. President. Makin' a good speech is one thing, and teachin' a good school is another, but in order to bring this matter before the board, I nominate Mr. James E. Irwin the Boy Orator of the Woodruff district, and the new white hope, fr the job of teacher of this school, and I move that when he shall have received a majority of the votes of this board, the secretary and president be instructed to enter into a contract with him fr the comin' year."

"What do you mean, pa," scoffed Jennie—"a Brown Mouse!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The wise guy who knows it all usually the first to get stung.

Knitted Togs for Kiddies;

School Hats Are Jaunty

SINCE "comfort first" is baby's plea, small wonder is it that the softest and daintiest of knitted garments occupy the place of honor in childhood's realm. It is generally conceded that for baby's tender skin there is nothing so "comfy" as knitted wool, lacking, as it does, the irritating qualities of the harder woven fabrics. Then, too, with knitted art responding so generously to childhood's needs, one readily appreciates why doting moth-

ers, others with storm collar which can be worn down or up. Both ribbed and brushed effects continue in favor, while plain coats with brushed trimmings are greatly featured.

Combining utility with good looks, the new styles in school hats have made their appearance and it should be a simple matter, considering their variety, to choose a smart and becoming model for every little miss who must return to the classroom with the



Knitted Things for Children.

ers acquired the habit of planning their little one's outfits along the lines of the myriads of pretty things created from supple yarns and zephyrs. For babies' wear, white naturally holds sway with pink or blue trimmings. An attractive yoke distinguished from the ordinary, the little crocheted sacque here pictured and the fact that it is a dainty pastel shade with lower ripple flare in pure white, adds to its loveliness. Contrary to expectation this adorable little garment fastens in the back with two pearl buttons, while a little pink (or blue if occasion demands) bow adorns the front. The cap is crocheted in astrakhan stitch and, in the language of baby fashion lore, this looplike

beginning of September. School hats, of course, should be severely plain and the hats shown in this group demonstrate that they may be designed with this idea in mind and still have a jaunty charm that is all their own.

For the high school girl the hat shown at the top is made of braided ribbon with a ribbon trimming in the form of rosette and cascade at the right side. Below at the left is shown a little model of picot-edged ribbon sewed row on row and trimmed with a flat rosette of the same ribbon in a lighter tone.

The two hats shown at the right and below reflect the popularity of knitted goods in junior outfits. These are of knitted brushed wool in contrasting



Practical School Hats.

stitch is particularly the mode this season.

Proof against wind and weather are the cunning knitted suits which shield little five-year-olds, perhaps older, perhaps younger, from head to foot. Just as this picture sets forth. The lovable little "Snow Sprite" of our illustration is clad in a particularly handsome white wool knitted infant's set.

The leginettes have a slip cord at the waist, with tassels. The sweater coat boasts belt and collar and, pride of prizes, two patch pockets. There are plenteous pearl buttons, two of them finding their way to the cap, posed one on each side flap.

One may take choice of double-breasted and single-breasted coats in these sets, some with turn-down col-

ors and provide the ideal headwear for use with the sweater and skirt combinations that are at present so popular, or they may be had in hat and scarf sets to be worn with school frocks or suits. The hat shown below combines the knitted crown with a brim of angora.

Materials used in making hats for very little girls include camels hair fabric, beauvette, broadcloth and fine chinchilla. It is quite the last word to have the hat match the coat in material, color and trimming.

Julia Bottomley

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WRIGLEYS

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THE FLAVOR LASTS

Copied Monarch in Wearing Wig. It was in the Seventeenth century that the wig found its maximum development in the peruke. The Abbe La Riviere, it appears, started it all by attending the court of Louis XIII in a wig. The king, who was prematurely bald, thought it an excellent idea, and, in adopting it for himself, made it obligatory among discreet courtiers.

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SEEKING KIND HUSBANDS

Young Women of Holland Understand That Americans Treat Their Wives Well.

Thirty-five young women from Holland stopped foot on American shores the other day admitting they are seeking "kind husbands" because they heard that American men are good to their wives. Some American wives may be inclined to enjoy a silent laugh over this innocence displayed by the Hollanders, but after the first humorous aspect of the situation has passed, most of those who have enjoyed the comedy will be inclined to believe after all that there is much merit in what these foreign women say about the husbands of America, observes the Bangor Commercial.

When one sits down and considers the lot of women in many countries of Europe, and reflects upon the limited opportunities which they possess for enjoying life, it ought to be a source of mutual satisfaction both to husbands and wives in America that they are living in a country where a higher standard of marital relationship obtains than in many foreign nations.

Why Glove Is Removed. Taking off the glove when shaking hands is a link with the time when this was done to show that no knife was concealed.

Lines to Be Remembered. Honor honorable people, respect the rights of all and do not bend the knee to anyone.—Japanese Maxim.

Misfortunes often put us wise to our own carelessness.

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How can Grape-Nuts be other than a wonderfully appetizing, healthful food?

"There's a Reason"