

winter.

were storing potatoes and cabbages

underground; repairing fences; pre-

paring frames for the early spring

planting; sorting seedlings. It had

been Roelf who had taught Selina to

gone with her on that first morning,

had started the fire, filled the water

pail, initiated her in the rites of corn-

cobs, kerosene, and dampers. A shy,

dark, silent boy. She set out delib-

"Roelf, I have a book called 'Ivan-

erately to woo him to friendship.

hoe.' Would you like to read it?"

"Well, I don't get much time."

called 'The Three Musketeers.' "

sensitive boy.

## (Continued from last week.)

## SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Introducing "So Big" (Dirk DeJong) in his infancy. And his mother, Selina DeJong, daughter of Simeon Peake, gambler and gentieman of fortune. Her life, to young woman-hood in Chicago in 1838, has been un-conventional, somewhat seamy, but generally enjoyable. At school her chum is Julie Hempel, daughter of August Hempel, butcher. Simeon is killed in a quarrel that is not his own, and Selina, nineteen years old and practically destitute, becomes a school-teacher.

CHAPTER II—Selina secures a posi-tion as teacher at the High Prairie school, in the outskirts of Chicago, living at the home of a truck farmer, Khass Pool. In Roelf, twelve years old, son of Klaas, Selina perceives a kindred spirit, a lover of beauty, like herself. herself.

Shivering and tempted though she was, Selina had set her will against it. "I won't go down," she said to herself, shaking with the cold. "I won't come down to dressing behind the kitchen stove like a-like a peasant in one of those dreadful Russian novels. . . . That sounds stuck up and horrid. . . . The Pools are good and kind and decent. . . But I won't come down to huddling behind the stove with a bundle of underwear in my arms. Oh, dear, this corset's like a casing of ice.

"But I won't dress behind the kitchen stove!" declared Selina, glaring meanwhile at that hollow pretense, the drum. She even stuck her tongue out at it (only nineteen, remember !). When she thought back, years later,

on that period of her High Frairie experience, stoves seemed to figure with absurd prominence in her mem-

ery. That might well be. A stove changed the whole course of her life. From the first, the schoolhouse stove was her bete noir. Out of the welter of that first year it stood, huge and menacing, a black tyrant. The High Prairie schoolhouse in which Secomprehending but companionable. 'You make fun, h'm?"

"Come in, Mrs. Pool. Sit down on my box and make fun, too. Here, you may have half the shawl."

"Og Heden! I got no time to sit down." She was off.

Roelf slid his plane slowly, more slowly, over the surface of satin-smooth Prairie. An ample woman, with a oak board. He stopped, twined a curl fine fair skin and a ripe red mouth; of shaving about his finger. "When I am a man, and earning, I am going to buy my mother a silk dress like I saw in a store in Chicago and she should put it on every day, not only for Sunday; and sit in a chair and make little fine stitches like Widow Paarlenberg." "What else are you going to do when you grow up?" She waited, certain that he would say something delightful.

"Drive the team to town alone to market."

"Oh, Roelf !"

"Sure. Already I have gone five times -twice with Jakob and three times with Pop. Pretty soon, when I am seventeen or eighteen, I can go alone. short legs worked vigorously. At the end of the week twenty High Prairie At five in the afternoon you start and parents sent protests by note or word at nine you are in the Haymarket. of mouth. Jan and Cornelius, Katrina There all night you sleep on the wagon. There are gas lights. The men play and Aggie went to school to learn dice and cards. At four in the mornreading and writing and numbers, not ing you are ready when they come, the to stand with open windows in the commission men and the peddlers and the grocery men. Oh, it's fine, I tell On the Pool farm the winter work

had set in. Klaas drove into Chicago you!' Roelf!" She was bitterly disapwith winter vegetables only once a pointed. week now. He and Jakob and Roelf

"Here. Look." He rummageù around in a dusty box in a corner and, suddenly shy again, laid before her a torn sheet of coarse brown paper on which he had sketched crudely, effectively, build the schoolhouse fire. He had a melee of great-haunched horses; wagons piled high with garden truck; men in overalls and corduroys; flaring gas torches. He had drawn it with a stub of pencil exactly as it looked to him. The result was as startling as that achieved by the present-day disciple of the impressionistic school.

Selina was enchanted.

Once, early in December, Selina "You wouldn't have to hurry. Right went into town. The trip was born of there in the house. And there's another sudden revolt against her surroundings and a great wave of nostalgia for the dirt and clamor and crowds of He was trying not to appear pleased; Chicago. Early Saturday morning to appear stolid and Dutch, like the people from whom he had sprung. Klaas drove her to the railway station five miles distant. She was to stay Some Dutch sailor ancestor, Selina until Sunday. A letter had been writthought, or fisherman, must have touched at an Italian port or Spanish ten Julie Hempel ten days before, but and brought back a wife whose eyes there had been no answer. Once in town she went straight to the Hempel and skin and feeling for beauty had skipped layer on layer of placid Nethhouse. Mrs. Hempel, thin-lipped, met her in the hall and said that Julie was erlands to crop out now in this wistful out of town. She was visiting her friend Miss Arnold, in Kansas City. Selina had spoken to Pool about a Selina was not asked to stay to dinner. shelf for her books and her photo-She was not asked to sit down. When graphs. He had put up a rough bit of she left the house her great fine eyes board, very crude and ugly, but it had seemed larger and more deep-set than served. She had come home one snowy ever, and her jaw-line was set hard afternoon to find this shelf gone and in against the invasion of tears. Suddenits place a smooth and polished one. ly she hated this Chicago that wanted with brackets intricately carved. Roelf none of her; that brushed past her, had cut, planed, polished, and carved elhow and offering no

wooed him openly, notoriously, and spot of brick-red which imparted no glow to the face. Their foreheads were prominent and meaningless.

In the midst of this drab assemblage there entered late and rustlingly a tall, slow-moving woman in a citybought cloak and a bonnet quite unlike the vintage millinery of High a high firm bosom and great thighs that moved rhythmically, slowly. She had thick, insolent eyelids. Her hands, as she turned the leaves of her hymn book, were smooth and white. rustle throughout the congregation; a

craning of necks. "Who's that?" whispered Selina to Maartie. "Widow Paarlenberg. She is rich

like anything." "Yes?" Selina was fascinated.

"Look once how she makes eyes at him." "At him? Who? Who?"

"Pervus DeJong. By Gerrit Pon he is sitting with the blue shirt and sad looking so."

Selina craned, peered. "The-ohhe's very good looking, isn't he?" "Sure, Widow Paarlenberg is stuck

on him. See how she-Sh-sh-sh !--Reverend Dekker looks at us. I tell you after."

Selina decided she'd come to church oftener. The service went on, dull, heavy. It was in English and Dutch. She heard scarcely a word of it. The Widow Paarlenberg and this Pervus DeJong occupied her thoughts. She decided, without malice, that the widow resembled one of the sleekest of the pink porkers rooting in Klaas Pool's barnyard, waiting to be cut into Christmas meat.

The service ended, there was much talk of the weather, seedlings, stock, the approaching holiday season. Maartje, her Sunday dinner heavy on her mind, was elbowing her way up the aisle. Here and there she introduced Selina briefly to a woman friend. "Mrs. Vander Sijde, meet school teacher."

"Aggie's mother?" Selina would begin, primly, only to be swept along by Maartje on her way to the door. "Mrs. Von Mijncn, meet school teacher. Is Mrs. Von Mijnen." They regarded her with a grim gaze. Selina would smile and nod rather nervously, feeling young, frivolous, and somehow guilty.

When, with Maartje, she reached the church porch Pervus DeJong was unhitching the dejected horse that was harnessed to his battered and lopsided cart. The animal stood with four feet bunched together in a drooping and pathetic attitude and seemed inevitably meant for mating with this decrepit vehicle. DeJong untied the reins quickly, and was about to step into the sagging conveyance when the Widow Paarlenberg sailed down the

with a Dutch vehemence that would have swept another man off his feet. It was known that she sent him a weekly baking of cakes, pies and bread. She tricked, cajoled, or nagged him into eating her ample meals. She even asked his advice-that subtlest form of flattery. She esked him about sub-soiling, humus, rotation-she whose rich land yielded, under her shrewd management, more profitably to the single acre than to any ten of Pervus'.

Feeling that the entire community As she entered there was a little was urging him toward this profitable match with the plump, rich, red-lipped widow, Pervus set his will like a stubborn steer and would have none of her. He was uncomfortable in his untidy house; he was lonely, he was unhappy. But he would have none of her. Vanity. pride, resentment were all mixed up in it. The very first time that Pervus De-

Jong met Selina he had a chance to protect her. With such a start, the end was inevitable. Then, too, Selina had on the wine-colored cashmere and was trying hard to keep the tears back in full view of the whole of High Prairie. Urged by Maartje (and rather fancying the idea) Selina had attended the great meeting and dance at Adom Ooms' hali above the general

r the High Prairie station. stor families for miles around Far were there. The new church organ -that time-hallowed pretext for sociability-was the excuse for this gathering. There was a small admission charge. Adam Ooms had given them the hall. The three musicians were playing without fee. The women were to bring supper packed in boxes or baskets, these to be raffled off to the highest bidder whose privilege it then was to sup with the fair whose basket he had bought. Hot coffee could be had at so much the cup. All the proceeds were to be devoted to the organ. Maartje had packed her own basket at noon and had driven off at four with Klaas and the children. She was to serve on one of those bustling committees whose duties ranged from coffee making to dish washing. Klaas and Roelf were to be pressed into service. Jakob Hoogendunk would convey Selina to the festivities when his chores were done. Selina's lunch basket was to her fright at what she had done. be a separate and distinct affair, offered at auction with those of the Katrinas and Linas and Sophias of my lunch box up there-such as High Prairie. Not a little apprehensive, she was to pack this basket herself. Maartje, departing, had left coplous but disjointed instructions.

Maartje's own basket was of gigantic Her sandwiches were cubic blocks; her pickles clubs of cucumber; her pies vast plateaus.

The basket provided for Selina, while not quite so large, still was of church steps with admirable speed for appalling size as Selina contemplated



"What Am I Bid! Thirty Cents" Shame on You, Gentlemen!"

round pink faces of the sleeping Kuyper twins, aged six months. Oh, dear !: In desperation Selina placed her bundle on the floor in a corner, smoothed down the red cashmere, snatched up her lunch box and made for the doorway with the childish eagerness of one out of the crowd to be in it. She wondered where Maartje and Klaas Pool were in this close-packed roomful; and Roelf. In the doorway she found that broad black-coated backs shut off sight and ingress. She had written her name neatly on her lunch box. Now she was at a loss to find a way to reach Adam Ooms. She eyed the great-shouldered expanse just ahead of her. Ina desperation she decided to dig into it with a corner of her box. She dug, viciously. The back winced. Its owner turned. "Here! What-"

Selina looked up into the wrathful: face of Pervus DeJong. Pervus De-Jong looked down into the startled eyes of Selina Peake. Large enough eyes at any time; enormous now in

"I'm sorry! I'm-sorry. I thought if I could-there's no way of getting: crowd-"

A slim, appealing, lovely little figurein the wine-red cashmere, amidst all those buxom bosoms, and over-heated bodies, and flushed faces. His gazeproportions and staggering content. left her reluctantly, settled on the lunch box, became, if possible, more bewildered. "That? Lunch box?"

"Yes. For the raffle. I'm the school teacher. Selina Peake." He nodded. "I saw you in church.

Sunday." "You did! I didn't think you. "Wait here. I'll come back. Wait here." He took the shoe box. She waited. She was a little nervous about the He plowed his way through the crowde like a Juggernaut, reached Adams Ooms' platform and placed the box inconspicuously next a colossal hamper that was one of a dozen grouped await-She resolved to fill it after her own ing Adam's attention. When he had made his way back to Selina he again said, "Wait," and plunged down the wooden stairway. Selina waited. She had ceased to feel distressed at her inability to find the Pools in the crowd,. a-tiptoe though she was. When presently he came back he had in his hand an empty wooden soap box. This he up-ended in the doorway just behinds the crowd stationed there. Selina: mounted it: found her head a little above the level of his. She could survey the room from end to end. There were the Pools. She waved to Maartje: smiled at Roelf. He made as. though to come toward her; did comepart way, and was restrained by Maartje catching at his coat tail. Adam Ooms' gavel (a wooden potatomasher) crashed for silence. "Ladies!"" (Crash) "And gents!" (Crash) !! "Gents! Look what basket we've got here!" Look indeed. A great hamper, grown so plethoric that it could no. longer wear its cover. Its contents: bellied into a mound smoothly covered with a fine white cloth whose glistening surface proclaimed it damof ribbon atop the box. She stepped ask. A Himalaya among hampers.. You knew that under that snowy crust lay gold that was fowl done crisply, succulently; emeralds in the form of gherkins; rubies that melted into strawberry preserves; cakes frosted Selina, balancing her box carefully, like diamonds; to say nothing of such opened the door that led to the wooden semi-precious jewels as potato salad; cheeses; sour cream to be spread on floor. The clamor that struck her rye bread and butter; coffee cakes; Crash! "The Widow Paarlenberg's had been any means of returning to the basket, ladies-and gents; The Widow Pool farm, short of walking five miles Paarlenberg! I don't know what's in in the snow, she would have taken it. it. You don't know what's in it. We Up the stairs and into the din. Evi- don't have to know what's in it. Whodently the auctioning of supper baskets has eaten Widow Paarlenberg's chicken was even now in progress. The auc once don't have to know. Who has eaten Widow Paarlenberg's cake once don't have to know. What am I bid on teacher. A fox-faced little man, bald, Widow Paarlenberg's basket! What falsetto, the village clown with a solid am I bid! WhatmIbidwhatmIbidwhatmIbid!" (Crash)! The widow herself, very handsome in black silk, her gold neck chain rising High and shrill came his voice and falling richly with the little flurry "What am I bid! What am I bid! that now agitated her broad bosom, was seated in a chair against the wall not five feet from the auctioneer's stand. She bridled now, blushed, cast down her eyes, cast up her eyes, succeeded in looking as unconscious as a complaisant Turkish slave girl on the

lina taught was a little more than a mile up the road beyond the Pool farm. She came to know that road in all its moods-ice-locked, drifted such tools and implements as he could with snow, wallowing in mud. School began at half-past eight. After her first week Selina had the mathematics of her early morning reduced to the least common denominator. Up at six. A plunge into the frigid garments: breakfast of bread, cheese, sometimes bacon, always rye coffee without cream or sugar. On with the cloak, muffler, hood, mittens, galoshes. The lunch box in bad weather. Up the road to the schoolhouse, battling the prairie wind that whipped the tears into the eyes, plowing the drifts, slipping on the hard ruts and icy ridges in dry weather. Excellent at nineteen. As she flew down the road in sun or rain, in wind or snow, her mind's eye was fixed on the stove. The schoolhouse reached, her numbed fingers wrestled with the rusty lock. The door opened, there smote her the schoolroom smell-a mingling of dead ashes, kerosene, unwashed bodies, dust, mice, chalk, stove-wood, lunch crumbs, mold, slate that has been washed with saliva. Into this Selina rushed, untying her muffler as she enstered. In the little vestibule there was a box piled with chunks of stovewood and another heaped with dried corn-cobs. Alongside this a can of kerosene. The cobs served as kindling. A dozen or more of these you soaked with kerosene and stuffed into the maw of the rusty iron potbellied stove. A match. Up flared the corn-cobs. Now was the moment for a small stick of wood; another to keep it company. Shut the door. Draughts. Dampers. Smoke. Suspense. A blaze, then a crackle. The wood has caught. In with a chunk now. A wait. Another chunk. Slam the door. The schoolhouse fire is started for the day. As the room thawed gradually Selina removed layers of outer garments. By the time the children arrived the room was livable.

Selina had seen herself, dignified, yet gentle, instructing a roomful of Dutch cherubs in the simpler elements of learning. But it is difficult to be dignified and gracious when you are suffering from chilblains. Selina fell victim to this sordid discomfort, as did every child in the room. She sat at the battered pine desk or moved about, a little ice-wool shawl around her shoulders when the wind was wrong and the stove balky. Her white little face seemed whiter in contrast with the black folds of this somber garment. Her slim hands were rough and chapped. The oldest child in the room was thirteen, the youngest four and a half.

Early in the winter Selina had had the unfortunate idea of opening the ice-locked windows at intervals and giving the children five minutes of exercise while the fresh cold air cleared brains and room at once. Arms waved wildly, heads wobbled, rolled apron and smiling at them, un-

it in many hours of work in the cold there a workshop of sorts, fitted with devise. He did man's work on the farm, yet often at night Selina could faintly hear the rasp of his handsaw after she had gone to bed. This sort of thing was looked upon by Klaas Pool as foolishness. Roelf's real work in the shed was the making and mending of coldframes and hotbeds for the early spring plants. Whenever possible Roelf neglected this dull work for some fancy of his own. To this Klaus Pool objected as being "dumb."

"Roelf, stop that foolishness, get your ma once some wood. Carving on that box again instead of finishing them coldframes. Some day, by golly,

I show you. I break every stick . . . dumb as a Groningen . . ."

Roelf did not sulk. He seemed not to mind, particularly, but he came back to the carved box as soon as chance presented itself. He was reading her books with such hunger as to cause her to wonder if her stock would last him the winter. Sometimes, after supper, when he was hammering and sawing away in the little shed Selina would shatch Maartje's old shawl off the hook, and swathed in this against draughty chinks, she would read aloud to him while he carved, or talk to him above the noise of his tools. Selina was a gay and volatile person. She loved to make this boy laugh. His dark face would flash into almost dazzling animation. Sometimes Maartje, hearing their young laughter, would



She Would Read Aloud to Him While He Carved.

come to the shed door and stand there a moment, hugging her arms in her

her bumping little shed off the kitchen. He had apology; that clanged, and shrieked. and whistled, and roared in her ears now grown accustomed to the prairie silence.

She spent the time between one and three buying portable presents for the entire Pool household-including bananas for Geertje and Jozina, for whom that farinaceous fruit had the fascination always held for the farm child. She caught a train at four thirty-five and actually trudged the five miles from the station to the farm, arriving half frozen, weary, with aching arms and nipped toes, to a great welcome of the squeals, grunts, barks, and gutturals that formed the expression of the Pool household. She was astonished to find how happy she was to return to the kitchen stove, to the

smell of frying pork, to her own room with the walnut bed and the book shelf. Even the grim drum had taken on the dear and comforting aspect of the accustomed.

## Chapter IV

High Prairie swains failed to find Selina alluring. She was too small, too pale and fragile for their robust taste. Naturally, her coming had been an event in this isolated community. With no visible means of communication news of her leaped from farm to farm as flame leaps the gaps in a forest fire. She would have been aghast to learn that High Prairie, inexplicably enough, knew all about her from the color of the ribbon that threaded her neat little white corset covers to the number of books on her shelf. She thought cabbage fields beautiful; she read books to that dumb-acting Roelf Pool; she was making over a dress for Maartje after the pattern of the stylish brown lady's-cloth she wore (foolishly) to school.

On her fifth Sunday in the district she accompanied the Pools to the morning service at the Dutch Reformed church. Maartje seldom had the time for such frivolity. But on this morning Klaas hitched up the big farm wagon with the double seat and took the family complete-Maartje, Selina, Roelf, and the pig-tails. Roelf had rebelled against going, had been cuffed for it, and had sat very still all through the service, gazing at the red and yellow glass church window. Selina's appearance had made quite

a stir, of which she was entirely unaware. As the congregation entered by twos and threes she thought they resembled startlingly a woodcut in an old illustrated book she once had seen. The men's Sunday trousers and coats had a square stiff angularity, as though chopped out of a block. The women, in shawls and bonnets of rusty black, were incredibly cut in the same pattern. The unmarried

cheeked, and not uncomely, with high soft white hands and the cooking tal- and, about to cast it into the box, saw, girls, though, were plump, redround cheek-bones on which sat a ents, had set her affections. She upturned to her from its depths, the

one so amply proportioned. She made straight for him, skirts billowing. flounces flying, plumes waving. Maartje clutched Selina's arm. "Look how she makes! She asks him to eat Sunday dinner I bet you! See once how he makes with his head no."

Selina-and the whole congregation unashamedly watching-could indeed see how he made with his head no. His whole body seemed set in negationthe fine head, the broad patient shoulders, the muscular powerful legs in their ill-fitting Sunday blacks. He shook his head, gathered up the reins, and drove away, leaving the Widow Paarlenberg to carry off with such bravado as she could muster this public floating in full sight of the Dutch Reformed congregation of High Prairie. I' must be said that she actually

achieved this feat with a rather magnificent composure. Her round, pink face, as she turned away, was placid: her great cowlike eyes mild. She stepped agilely into her own near phaeton with its sleek horse and was off down the hard snowless road, her head high.

"Well !" exclaimed Selina, feeling as though she had witnessed the first act of an exciting play. And breathed deeply. So, too, did the watching congregation, so that the widow could be said to have driven off in quite a gust. As they jogged home in the Pool farm wagon Maartje told her tale with a good deal of savor.

Pervus DeJong had been left a widower two years before. Within a month of that time Leendert Paarlenberg had died, leaving to his widow the richest and most profitable farm in the whole community. Pervus De-Jong, on the contrary, through inheritance from his father, old Johannes, possessed a scant twenty-five acres of the worst lowland-practically the only lowland-in all High Prairie. The acreage was notoriously barren. I'ervus DeJong patiently planted, sowed, gathered crops, hauled them to market; seemed still never to get on in this thrifty Dutch community where getting on was so common a trait as to be no longer thought a virtue. Luck and nature seemed to work against him. His seedlings proved unfertile; his stock was always ailing; his cabbages were worm-infested; snout-beetle bored his rhubarb. When he planted largely of spinach, hoping for a wet spring, the season was dry. Did he turn the following year to sweet potatoes, all auguries pointing to a dry spring and summer, the summer proved the wettest in a decade. Had he been small, puny and insignificant his bad luck would have called forth | Thirty cents! Thirty-five! Shame on about him the lovableness and splen-

dor of the stricken giant. It was on this Pervus DeJong, then,

it. She decided, suddenly, that she would have none of it. In her trunk | Did you?" she had a cardboard box such as shoes come in. Certainly this should hold enough lunch for two, she thought. whole thing; rather dreaded the prospect of eating her supper with a High Prairie swain unknown to her. Suppose no one should bid for her box! pattern, disregarding Maartje's heavy provender.

She had the kitchen to herself. Jakob was in the fields or out-houses. The house was deliciously quiet. Selina rummaged for the shoe box, lined it with a sheet of tissue paper rolled up her sleeves, got out mixing bowl, flour, pans. Cup cakes were her ambition. She baked six of them.

They came out a beautiful brown be somewhat leaden. Still, anything was better than a wedge of soggy pie, she told herself. She boiled eggs very hard, halved them, devilled their yolks filled the whites neatly with this mix ture and clapped the halves together again, skewering them with a tooth pick. Then she rolled each egg sep arately in tissue paper twisted at the ends. Daintiness, she had decided should be the keynote of her supper box. The food neatly packed she wrapped the box in paper and tied 11 with a gay red ribbon yielded by her trunk. At the last moment she whipped into the yard, twisted a brush of ever green from the tree at the side of the house, and tucked this into the knot back and thought the effect enchanting She was waiting in her red cashmere and her cloak and hood when Hoogen dunk called for her. They were late arrivals.

stairway. The hall was on the second ears had the effect of a physical blow. crullers. She hesitated a moment, and if there tioneer was Adam Ooms who himself had once been the High Prairie school foundation of shrewdness under his clowning and a tart layer of malice over it.

contemptuous pity. But there was you, gentlemen. What am I bid! Who'll make it forty!"

Selina felt a little thrill of excitement. She looked about for a place on that the Widow Paarlenberg of the which to lay her wraps, espied a box rich acres, the comfortable farmhouse, that appeared empty, rolled her cloak, the gold neck chain, the sllk gowns, the muffler and hood into a neat bundle

(Continued mext week.)

block.

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