



SO BIG
[BY EDNA FERBER.]

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLARK AGNEW.

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Introducing "So Big" Dirk DeJong, in his infancy. And his mother, Selina DeJong, daughter of Simon Peak, gambler and gentleman of fortune. Her life, to young womanhood in Chicago in 1888, has been unconventional, somewhat seamy, but generally enjoyable. As a school her name is Julie Hempel, daughter of August Hempel, butcher. Simon is killed in a quarrel that costs his own and Selina, nineteen years old and practically destitute, becomes a school-

teacher. Selina herself was wise enough to know that to hold him she must not let him feel indebted to her. She knew that the debtor hates his creditor. She lay awake at night planning for him, scheming these schemes to him so gently as to make him think he himself had devised them. She had even realized of late that their growing intimacy might handicap him if openly commented on. But now she must see him daily, or speak to him. Her telephone was a private wire leading only to her own bedroom. She called him the first thing in the morning; the last thing at night. Her voice, when she spoke to him, was an organ transformed; low, vibrant, with a timbre in its tone that would have made it recognizable to an outsider. Her words were commonplace enough, but pregnant and meaningful for her. "What did you do today? Did you have a good day? . . . Why didn't you call me? . . . Did you follow up that suggestion you made about Kennedy? I think it's a wonderful idea, don't you? You're a wonderful man, Dirk; did you know that? . . . I miss you. . . . Do you? . . . When? . . . Why not lunch? . . . Oh, not if you have a business appointment. . . . How about five o'clock? . . . No, not there. . . . Oh, I don't know. It's so public. . . . Yes. . . . Good-by. . . . Good-night. . . . Good-night. . . . They began to meet rather furtively, in out-of-the-way places. They would lunch in department store restaurants where none of their friends ever came. They spent off afternoon hours in the dim, close atmosphere of the motion-picture palaces, sitting in the back row, seeing nothing of the film, talking in eager whispers that failed to annoy the scattered devotees in the middle of the house. When they drove in on an obscure street. Paula had grown very beautiful, her world thought. There was about her the aura, the glow, the roselike exhalation that surrounds the woman in love. Frequently she irritated Dirk. At such times he grew quieter than ever; more reserved. As he involuntarily withdrew she advanced. Sometimes he thought he hated her—her hot, eager hands, her glowing, asking eyes, her thin, red mouth, her sallow, heart-shaped, exquisite face, her perfumed clothing, her air of ownership. That was it! Her possessiveness. Sometimes Dirk wondered what Theodore Storm thought and knew behind that impassive flabby white mask of his. Dirk met plenty of other girls. Paula was clever enough to see to that. She asked them to share her box at the opera. She had them at her dinners. She affected great indifference to their effect on him. She suffered when he talked to one of them. "Dirk, why don't you take out that nice Farnham girl?" "Is she nice?" "Well, isn't she? You were talking to her long enough at the Kirk's dance. What were you talking about?" "Books." "Oh, books. She's awfully nice and intelligent, isn't she? A lovely girl!" She was suddenly happy. Books. The Farnham girl was a nice girl. She was the kind of girl one should fall in love with and doesn't. The Farnham girl was one of many well-bred Chicago girls of her day and class. Fine, honest, clear-headed, frank, capable, good-looking in an indefinite and unarresting sort of way. Hair-colored hair, good teeth, good enough eyes, clear skin, sensible medium hands and feet, skated well, danced well, talked well. Read the books you had read. A companionable girl. Loads of money but never spoke of it. Traveled. Her hand met yours firmly—and it was just a hand. At the contact no current darted through you, sending its shaft with a little tingle to your heart. But when Paula showed you a book her arm, as she stood next you, would somehow fit into the curve of yours and you were conscious of the feel of her soft slim side against you. He knew many girls. There was a distinct type known as the North Shore girl. Slim, tall, exquisite; a little fine nose, a high, sweet, slightly nasal voice, ear rings, a cigarette, luncheon at Huyler's. All these girls looked amazingly alike. Dirk thought; talked very much alike. They all spoke French with a pretty good accent; danced intricate symbolic dances; read the new books; had the same patter. They prefaced, interlarded, concluded their remarks to each other with, "My dear!" It expressed, for them, surprise, sympathy, amusement, ridicule, horror, resignation. "My dear! You should have seen her! My dear!"—horror. Their slang was almost identical with that used by the girls working in his office. "She's a good kid," they said, speaking in admiration of another girl. They made a fetish of frankness. In a day when everyone talked in screaming headlines they knew it was necessary to red-link their remarks in order to get them noticed at all. The word rot was replaced by garbage and garbage gave way to the ultimate swill. One no longer said "How shocking!" but, "How pretty obscene!" The words, spoken in their sweet clear voices, fell nonchalantly from their pretty lips. All very fearless and uninhibited and free. That, they told you, was the main thing. Sometimes Dirk wished they wouldn't work so hard at their play. They were forever getting up pageants and plays and large festivals for charity; Yvettan fetes, Oriental bazaars, charity balls. In the programme performance of these many of them sang better, acted better, danced better than most professional performers, but the whole thing always lacked the flavor, somehow, of professional performance. On these affairs they lavished thousands in costumes and decorations, receiving in return other thousands which they soberly turned over to the cause. They found nothing ludicrous in this. Spontaneously they went into business or semi-professional ventures, defying the conventions. Paula did this too. She or one of her friends were forever opening blouse shops; starting Gift Shoppe; burgeoning into tea rooms decorated in crude green and vermilion and orange and black; announcing their affiliation with an advertising agency. These adventures blossomed, withered, died. They were the result of post-war restlessness. Many of these girls had worked indefatigably during the 1917-1918 period; had driven service cars, managed ambulances, nursed, scrubbed, conducted canteens. They missed the excitement, the satisfaction of achievement. They found Dirk fair game, resented Paula's proprietorship. Susans and Junes and Kates and Bettys and Sallys—plain old-fashioned names for modern, erotic misses—they talked to Dirk, danced with him, rode with him, flirted with him. His very unattainableness gave him pliancy. That Paula Storm had him fast. He didn't care a hoot about girls. "Oh, Mr. DeJong," they said, "your name's Dirk, isn't it? What a slick name! What does it mean?" "Nothing, I suppose. It's a Dutch name. My people—my father's people—were Dutch, you know." "A Dirk's a sort of sword, isn't it, or poniard? Anyway, it sounds very keen and cruel and fatal—Dirk." He would flush a little (one of his assets) and smile, and look at them, and say nothing. He found that to be all that was necessary. He got on enormously. Between the girls he met in society and the girls that worked in his office there existed a similarity that struck and amused Dirk. He said, "Take a letter, Miss Roach," to a slim young creature as exquisite as the girl with whom he had danced the day before; or ridden or played tennis or bridge. Their very clothes were faultless imitations. They even used the same perfume. He wondered, idly, how they did it. They were eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and their faces and bodies and desires and natural equipment made their presence in a business office a paradox, an absurdity. Yet they were capable, too, in a mechanical sort of way. Theirs were mechanical jobs. They were lovely creatures with the minds of fourteen-year-old children. Their hair was shining, perfectly undulated, as fine and glossy and tenderly curling as a young child's. Their breasts were flat, their figures singularly sexless like that of a very young boy. They were wise with the wisdom of the serpent. Their legs were slim and sturdy. Their mouths were pouting, soft, pink, the lower lip a little curled back, petal-wise, like the moist mouth of a baby that has just finished nursing. Their eyes were wide apart, empty, knowledgeable. They managed their private affairs like generals. They were cool, remote, disdainful. They reduced their boys to desperation. They were brigands, desperadoes, pirates, taking all, giving little. They came, for the most part, from sordid homes, yet they knew, in some miraculous way, all the fine arts that Paula knew and practiced. They were coresetless, pliant, bewildering, lovely, dangerous. Among them Dirk worked immune, aloof, untouched. He would have been surprised to learn that he was known among them as Frosty. They admired and resented him. Not one that did not secretly dream of the day when he would call her into his office, shut the door, and say, "Loretta" (their names were burbanian monstrosities, born of grafting the original appellation onto their own idea of beauty in nomenclature—hence Loretta, Imogene, Nadine, Natalie, Ardella), "Loretta, I have watched you for a long, long time and you must have noticed how deeply I admire you." It wasn't impossible. Those things happen. The movies had taught them that. Dirk, all unconscious of their pitiless all-absorbing scrutiny, would have been still further appalled to learn how fully aware they were of his personal and private affairs. They knew about Paula, for example. They admired and resented her, too. They despised her for the way in which she openly displayed her feeling for him (how they knew this was a miracle and a mystery, for she almost never came into the office and disguised all her telephone talks with him). They thought he was grand to his mother. Selina had been in his office twice, per-

haps. On one of these occasions she had spent five minutes chatting sociably with Ethelinda Quinn, who had the face of a Da Vinci cherub and the soul of a man-eating shark. Selina always talked to everyone. She enjoyed listening to street car conductors, washwomen, janitors, landladies, clerks, doormen, chauffeurs, policemen. Something about her made them talk. They opened to her as flowers to the sun. They sensed her interest, her liking. As they talked Selina would exclaim, "You don't say! Well, that terrible!" Her eyes would be bright with sympathy. Selina had said, on entering Dirk's office, "My land! I don't see how you can work among those pretty creatures and not be a sultan. I'm going to ask some of them down to the farm over Sunday." "Don't, Mother! They wouldn't understand. I scarcely see them. They're just part of the office equipment." Afterward, Ethelinda Quinn had passed expert opinion. "Say, she's got ten times the guts that Frosty's got. I like her fine. Did you see her terrible hat! But say, it didn't look fan-like on her, did it? Anybody else in that get-up would look comical, but she's the kind that could walk off with anything. I don't know. She's got what I call an air. It beats style. Nice, too. She said I was a pretty little thing. Can you beat it! At that time—" "I certainly can't."

All unconscious, "Take a letter, Miss Quinn," said Dirk half an hour later. In the midst of this fiery urgency of femininity Dirk walked unscorched Paula, the North shore girl, well-bred and professional business woman, occasionally met in the course of business, the enticing little nymphs he encountered in his own office, all practiced on him their warm and perfumed wiles. He moved among them cool and serene. Perhaps his sudden success had had something to do with this and his quiet ambition for further success. For he really was accounted successful now, even in the spectacular whirl of Chicago's meteoric financial constellation. North-side manumans regarded his income, his career, and his future with eyes of respect and wily speculation. There was always a neat little pile of invitations in the mail that lay on the correct little console in the correct little apartment ministered by the correct little Jar on the correct North-side street near (but not too near) the lake, and overlooking it. The apartment had been furnished with Paula's aid. Together she and Dirk had gone to interior decorators. "But you've got to use your own taste, too," Paula had said, "to give it the individual touch." The apartment was furnished in a good deal of Italian furniture, the finish a dark oak or walnut, the whole massive and yet somehow unconvincing. The effect was somber without being impressive. There were long carved tables on which an ash tray seemed a desecration; great chairs roomy enough for lolling, yet in which you did not relax; dull silver candlesticks; vestments; Dante's saturnine features sneering down upon you from a correct cabinet. There were not many books. "Tiny foyer, large living-room, bedroom, dining-room, kitchen, and a cubby-hole for the Jap." Dirk did not spend much of his time in the place. His upward climb was a treadmill, really. His office, the apartment, a dinner, a dance. His contacts were monotonous, and too few. His office was a great splendid office in LaSalle street. He drove back and forth in a motor car along the boulevards. His social engagements lay north. LaSalle street bounded him on the west, Lake Michigan on the east, Jackson boulevard on the south, Lake Forest on the north. He might have lived a thousand miles away for all he knew of the rest of Chicago—the mighty, roaring, sweltering, pushing, screaming, magnificent hideous steel giant that was Chicago. Selina had had no hand in the furnishing of his apartment. When it was finished Dirk had brought her in triumph to see it. "Well," he had said, "what do you think of it, Mother?" She had stood in the center of the room, a small plain figure in the midst of these massive somber carved tables, chairs, chests. A little smile had quirked the corner of her mouth. "I think it's as cozy as a cathedral." Sometimes Selina remonstrated with him, though of late she had taken on a strange reticence. She no longer asked him about the furnishings of the houses he visited, or the exotic food he ate at splendid dinners. The farm flourished. The great steel mills and factories to the south were closing in upon her but had not yet set iron foot on her rich green acres. She was rather famous now for the quality of her farm products and her pens. You saw "DeJong asparagus" on the menu at the Blackstone and the Drake hotels. Sometimes Dirk's friends twitted him about this and he did not always acknowledge that the similarity of names was not a coincidence. "Dirk, you seem to see no one but just these people," Selina told him in one of her infrequent rebukes. "You don't get the full flavor of life. You've got to have a vulgar curiosity about people and things. All kinds of people. All kinds of things. You revolve in the same little circle, over and over and over." "Haven't time. Can't afford to take the time." "You can't afford not to." Sometimes Selina came into town for a week or ten days at a stretch, and indulged in what she called an orgy. At such times Julie Arnold would invite her to occupy one of the guest rooms at the Arnold house, or Dirk would offer her his bedroom and

tell her that he would be comfortable on the big couch in the living room, or that he would take a room at the University club. She always declined. She would take a room in a hotel, sometimes north, sometimes south. Her holiday before her, she would go off roaming gaily as a small boy on a Saturday morning, with the day stretching gorgeously and adventurously ahead of him, sallies down the street without plan or appointment, knowing that richness in one form or another lies before him for the choosing. A sociable woman, Selina, savoring life, she liked the lights, the color, the rush, the noise. Her years of grinding work, with her face pressed down to the very soil itself, had failed to kill her zest for living. She prowled into the city's foreign quarters—Italian, Greek, Chinese, Jewish. She loved the Michigan boulevard and State street shop windows in which haughty waxed ladies in glittering evening gowns postured, fingers elegantly crooked as they held a fan, a rose, a program, meanwhile smiling condescendingly out upon an envious world flattening its nose against the plate glass barrier. She penetrated the Black belt, where Chicago's vast and growing negro population shifted and moved and stretched its great limbs ominously, reaching out and out in protest and oversteering the bounds that irked it. Her serene face and her quiet manner, her blind interest and friendly look protected her. They thought her a social worker, perhaps; one of the uplifters. She bought and read the Independent, the negro newspaper in which herb doctors advertised magic roots. She even sent the twenty-five cents required for a box of these, charmed by their names—Adam and Eve roots, Master of the Woods, Dragon's Blood, High John the Conqueror, Jezebel Roots, Grains of Paradise. "Look here, Mother," Dirk would protest, "you can't wander around like that. It isn't safe. This isn't High Prairie, you know. If you want to go round I'll get Saki to drive you." "That would be nice," she said, mildly. But she never availed herself of this offer. She would go over to South Water street, changed now, and swollen to such proportions that it threatened to burst its confines. She liked to stroll

along the crowded sidewalks, lined with crates and boxes and barrels of fruits, vegetables, poultry. Swarthy foreign faces predominated now. Where the red-faced overland men had been she saw now lean muscular lads in old army shirts and khaki pants and scuffed puttees wheeling trucks, loading boxes, carting down the street in huge rumbling auto vans. Their faces were hard, their talk terse. Any one of these, she reflected, was more vital, more native, functioned more usefully and honestly than her successful son, Dirk DeJong. "Where 'r beans?" "In 'th' ol' beanery." "Tough." "Best you can get." "Keep 'em." (Continued next week.)



She Liked to Stroll Along the Crowded Sidewalks.

The liberty allowed either a youth or an adult, is an absolute power which always corrupts unmistakably. Boys develop either a love or a hate for animals, according to the direction their teaching takes. The boy who has been taught to respect and care for an animal will develop a sense of responsibility and a degree of moral exaltation that are humanizing to a high degree. Animals will regard him in turn as their benefactor. The list of pet animals we may have is a long one. If a Shetland pony, a dog, a cat, the fox, the woodchuck, hens, ducks, opossums, the raccoon, the rabbit, the squirrel, pigeons, pheasants, parrots and partridge. The trappers deal in torture for cash, the woman buys these dreadful articles for cash, to gratify her vanity. Thus thirty millions of tortured animals are yearly sacrificed for the sake of selfishness, greed and vanity. Furs, if we must have them, should be taken by discarding the processes of torture. Any one of a humane disposition must be filled with infinite sadness to walk along any of the principal avenues of our cities in winter and see the thousands of furs worn, knowing what terrible cruelty such furs are obtained. Under State law in Massachusetts, all traps must be removed at the close of the open season on fur-bearing animals.—By James A. Peck, in Our Dumb Animals.

Real Estate Transfers.

- William L. Foster, et al, to Beryl F. Riddles, tract in State College; \$800.
Mary A. Crider, et bar, to Ray F. Bullock, tract in Liberty township; \$5,000.
W. S. Furst, et al, Exr., to James C. Furst, tract in Bellefonte; \$1.
W. S. Furst, et ux, to J. T. Storch, tract in Bellefonte; \$1.
J. T. Storch, et ux, to James C. Furst, tract in Bellefonte; \$1.
Harry Reese, et ux, to Emma C. Dann, tract in Spring township; \$600.
Paul R. Emerick, et ux, to Mary A. Martin, tract in Walker township; \$825.
Irving G. Foster, et ux, to Newton C. Neidigh, tract in Ferguson township; \$1.
Irvin R. Walker, et ux, to Esther A. Neidigh, tract in Ferguson township; \$550.
Howard W. Stover, et ux, to C. L. Eyster, tract in Penn township; \$1,700.
James I. McClure, et ux, to Thersia McClure, tract in Bellefonte; \$1.
F. B. Bower, et ux, to John A. Bower, tract in Haines township; \$350.
W. Bright Bitter to John F. Myles, tract in Gregg township; \$200.
Trustees of the Presbyterian church of Pine Grove Mills, to William H. Fry, tract in Ferguson township; \$4,600.
Donald Snyder, et ux, to Marion J. McCulley, tract in Spring township; \$600.
J. Howard Musser, et ux, to Fred J. Holber, tract in State College; \$1,500.
Russell Miller, et ux, to Samuel Coble, et ux, tract in Spring township; \$200.
Anna T. H. Henszey, et bar, to Alumni Association of Upsilon Chapter of Alpha Sigma Phi Fraternity, tract in State College; \$2,400.

Failures Caused by Lack of Initiative

One of the greatest improvements of the automobile is the self-starter, now found on all but the cheapest kinds of cars, which need to be cranked by hand. The device suggests the reflection that a very large proportion of the human family require something of like nature. They lack initiative, voluntary effort; they need cranking in the form of orders or directions before doing anything worth while. The men and women who succeed best in life and get the most out of it are of the self-starter type. They don't wait to be told or advised what to undertake, but proceed of their own accord to do things. The great inventors, such as Edison, are all of this sort, says the Sacramento Bee. They are originators, not mere followers or imitators, and they rank among the chief benefactors of the world. So it is in business, literature, art, the various industries, and, in fact, all occupations. Success in each is dependent chiefly upon originality or initiative.