

SO BIG  
[BY EDNA FERBER]

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLARK AGNEW

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[Conclusion.]  
She admitted, though, that they did appreciate the things that other people did well. Visiting and acknowledged writers, painters, lecturers, heroes, they entertained lavishly and hospitably in their Florentine or English or Spanish or French palaces on the North side of Chicago, Ill. Especially for foreign notables of this description.  
Since 1918 these had descended upon Chicago (and all America) like a plague of locusts, starting usually in New York and sweeping westward, devouring the pleasant verdure of greenbacks and chirping as they came. Returning to Europe, bursting with profits and spleen, they thrifflily wrote of what they had seen and the result was more clever than amiable; bearing, too, the taint of bad taste.  
North Shore hostesses vied for the honor of entertaining these notables. Paula—pretty, clever, moneyed, shrewd—often emerged from these contests the winner. Her latest catch was Emile Goguet—Gen. Emile Goguet, hero of Champagne—Goguet of the stiff white beard, the empty left coat sleeve, and the score of medals. He was coming to America ostensibly to be the guest of the American division which, with Goguet's French troops, had turned the German onslaught at Champagne, but really, it was whispered, to cement friendly relations between his country and a somewhat diffident United States.  
"And guess," thrilled Paula, "guess who's coming with him, Dirk! That wonderful Roelf Pool, the French sculptor!"  
"What do you mean—French sculptor! He's no more French than I am. He was born within a couple of miles of my mother's farm. His people were Dutch truck farmers. His father lived in High Prairie until a year ago, when he died of a stroke."  
When he told Selina she flushed like a girl, as she sometimes still did when she was much excited. "Yes, I saw it in the paper. I wonder," she added, quietly, "if I shall see him."  
"That evening you might have seen her sitting, fingering the faded shabby time-worn objects the saying of which Dirk had denounced as sentimental. The crude drawing of the Haymarket; the wine-red cashmere dress; some faded brittle flowers.  
Paula was giving a large—but not too large—dinner on the second night. She was very animated about it, excited, gay. "They say," she told Dirk, "that Goguet doesn't eat anything but hard-boiled eggs and rusks. Oh, well, the others won't object to squabs and mushrooms and things. And his hobby is his farm in Brittany. Pool's stunning—dark and somber and very white teeth."  
Paula was very gay these days. Too gay. It seemed to Dirk that her nervous energy was inexhaustible—and exhausting. Dirk refused to admit to himself how liked he was by the shallow heart-shaped exquisite face, the lean brown clutching fingers, the air of ownership. He had begun to dislike things about her as an unfaithful spouse is irritated by quite innocent mannerisms of his unconscious mate. She scuffed her heels a little when she walked, for example. It maddened him. She had a way of biting the rough skin around her carefully tended nails when she was nervous. "Don't do that!" he said.  
Dallas never irritated him. She rested him, he told himself. He would arm himself against her, but one minute after meeting her he would sink gratefully and restlessly into her quiet depths. Sometimes he thought all this was an assumed manner in her.  
"This calm of yours—this effortless—ness," he said to her one day, "is a pose, isn't it?" Anything to get her notice.  
"Partly," Dallas had replied, amiably. "It's a nice pose though, don't you think?"  
"What are you going to do with a girl like that!"  
Here was the woman who could hold him entirely, and who never held out a finger to hold him. He tore at the smooth wall of her indifference, though he only cut and bruised his own hands in doing it.  
"Is it because I'm a successful business man that you don't like me?"  
"But I do like you. I think you're an awfully attractive man. Dangerous, that's what."  
"Oh, don't be the wide-eyed ingenue. You know d—d well what I mean. You've got me and you don't want me. If I had been a successful architect instead of a successful business man would that have made any difference?"  
"Good Lord, no! Some day I'll probably marry a horny-handed son of toll, and if I do I'll be the horny hands that will win me. If you want to know, I like 'em with their scars on them. There's something about a man who has fought for it—I don't know what it is—a look in his eye—the feel of his hand. He needs't have been suc-

cessful—though he probably would be. I don't know. I only know he—well, you haven't a mark on you. Not a mark. I'm not criticizing you. But you're all smooth. I like 'em bumpy. That sounds terrible. It isn't what I mean at all. It isn't—"  
"Oh, never mind," Dirk said, wearily. "I think I know what you mean. Listen, Dallas. If I thought—I'd go back to Hollis & Sprague's and begin all over again at forty a week if I thought you'd—"  
"Don't!"

### Chapter XVI

General Goguet and Roelf Pool had been in Chicago one night and part of a day. Dirk had not met them—was to meet them at Paula's dinner that evening. He was curious about Pool but not particularly interested in the warrior. Restless, unhappy, wanting to see Dallas (he admitted it, bitterly) he dropped into her studio at an unaccustomed hour almost immediately after lunch and heard gay voices and laughter.  
Dallas in a grimy smock and the scuffed kid slippers was entertaining two truants from Chicago society—Gen. Emile Goguet and Roelf Pool. They seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely. She introduced Dirk as casually as though their presence were a natural and expected thing—which it was. She had never mentioned them to him. Yet now: "This is Dirk DeJong—Gen. Emile Goguet. We were campaigners together in France. Roelf Pool. So were we, weren't we, Roelf?"  
Gen. Emile Goguet bowed formally, but his eyes were twinkling. He appeared to be having a very good time. Roelf Pool's dark face had lighted up with such a glow of surprise and pleasure as to transform it. He strode over to Dirk, clasped his hand. "Dirk DeJong! Not—why, say, don't you know me? I'm Roelf Pool!"  
"I ought to know you," said Dirk.  
"Oh, but I mean I'm—I knew you when you were a kid. You're Selina's Dirk. Aren't you? My Selina. I'm driving out to see her this afternoon. She's one of my reasons for being here. Why, I'm—" He was laughing, talking excitedly, like a boy. Dallas all agrin, was enjoying it immensely.  
"They've run away," she explained to Dirk, "from the elaborate program that was arranged for them this afternoon. I don't know where the French got their reputation for being polite. The general is a perfect bore, aren't you? And scared to death of women. He's the only French general in captivity who ever took the trouble to learn English."  
"We're all going," announced Dallas, and made a dash for the stuffy little bedroom off the studio.  
Well, this was a bit too informal. "Going where?" inquired Dirk. The general, too, appeared bewildered.  
Roelf explained, delightedly. "It's a plot. We're all going to drive out to your mother's. You'll go, won't you? You simply must."  
"Go?" now put in General Goguet. "Where is it that we go? I thought we stayed here, quietly. It is quiet here, and no reception committees." His tone was wistful.  
Roelf attempted to make it clear. "Mr. DeJong's mother is a farmer. You remember I told you all about her in the ship coming over. She was wonderful to me when I was a kid. She was the first person to tell me what beauty was—is. She's magnificent. She raises vegetables."  
"Ah! A farm! But yes! I, too, am a farmer. Well!" He shook Dirk's hand again. He appeared now for the first time to find him interesting.  
"Of course I'll go. Does mother know you're coming? She has been hoping she'd see you, but she thought you'd grown so grand—"  
"Wait until I tell her about the day I landed in Paris with five francs in my pocket. No, she doesn't know we're coming, but she'll be there, won't she? I've a feeling she'll be there, exactly the same. She will, won't she?"  
"She'll be there." It was early spring; the busiest of seasons on the farm.  
They were down the stairs and off in the powerful car that seemed to be at the visitors' disposal. Through the loop, up Michigan avenue, into the South side. Chicago, often lowering and gray in April, was wearing gold and blue today. The air was sharp, but beneath the brusqueness of it was a gentle promise. Dallas and Pool were much absorbed in Paris plans, Paris reminiscences. "And do you remember the time we . . . only seven francs among the lot of us and the dinner was . . . you're surely coming over in June, then . . . oils . . . you've got the thing, I tell you . . . you'll be great, Dallas . . . remember what V'hray said . . . study . . . work . . ."

Dirk was wretched. He pointed out objects of interest to General Goguet. Sixty miles of boulevard. Park system. Finest in the country. Grand boulevard. Drexel boulevard. Jackson park. Illinois Central trains. Terrible, yes, but they were electrifying. Going to make 'em run by electricity, you know. Things wouldn't look so dirty, after that. Halsted street. Longest street in the world.  
And, "Ah, yes," said the general, politely. "Ah, yes. Quite so. Most interesting."  
The rich black loam of High Prairie. A hint of fresh green things just peeping out of the earth. Hothouses. Coldframes. The farm.  
"But I thought you said it was a small farm!" said General Goguet, as they descended from the car. He looked about at the acreage.  
"It is small," Dirk assured him. "Only about forty acres."  
"Ah, well, you Americans. In France we farm on a very small scale, you understand. We have not the land. The great vast country." He waved his right arm. You felt that if the left sleeve had not been empty he would have made a large and sweeping gesture with both arms.  
Selina was not in the neat, quiet house. She was not on the porch, or in the yard. Meena Bras, phlegmatic and unflustered, came in from the kitchen. Miss DeJong was in the fields. She would call her. "This she proceeded to do by blowing three powerful blasts and again three on a horn which she took from a hook on the wall. She stood in the kitchen doorway, facing the fields, blowing her red cheeks puffed out anxiously. "That brings her," Meena assured them; and went back to her work. They came out on the porch to await Selina. She was out on the west sixteen—the west sixteen that used to be unprofitable, half-drowned muckland. Dirk felt a little uneasy, and ashamed that he should feel so.  
Then they saw her coming, a small dark figure against the background of sun and sky and fields. She came swiftly, yet ploddingly, for the ground was heavy. They stood facing her, the four of them. As she came nearer they saw that she was wearing a dark skirt pinned up about her ankles to protect it from the wet spring earth, and yet it was spattered with a border of mud spots. A rough, heavy gray sweater was buttoned closely about the straight, slim body. On her head was a battered soft black hat. Her feet, in broad-toed sensible shoes, she lifted high out of the soft, clinging soil. Her hair blew a little in the gentle spring breeze. Her cheeks were faintly pink. She was coming up the path now. She could distinguish their faces. She saw Dirk; smiled, waved. Her glance went inquiringly to the others—the bearded man in uniform, the tall girl, the man with the dark, vivid face. Then she stopped, suddenly, and her hand went to her heart as though she had felt a great pang, and her lips were parted, and her eyes enormous. As Roelf came forward swiftly she took a few quick, running steps toward him, like a young girl. He took the slight figure in the mud-spattered skirt, the rough gray sweater and the battered old hat into his arms.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
They had had tea in the farm sitting room and Dallas had made a little moaning over the beauty of the Dutch luster set. Selina had entertained them with the shining air of one who is robed in silk and fine linen. She and General Goguet had got on famously from the start, meeting on the common ground of asparagus culture.  
"But how thick?" he had demanded, for he, too, had his pet asparagus beds on the farm in Brittany. "How thick at the base?"  
Selina made a circle with thumb and forefinger. The general groaned with envy and despair. He was very comfortable, the general. He partook largely of tea and cakes. He flattered Selina with his eyes. She actually dimpled, flushed, laughed like a girl. But it was to Roelf she turned; it was on Roelf that her eyes dwelt and rested. It was with him she walked when she was silent and the others talked. It was as though he were her one son, and had come home. Her face was radiant, beautiful.  
Seated next to Dirk, Dallas said, in a low voice: "There, that's what I mean. That's what I mean when I say I want to do portraits. Not portraits of ladies with a string of pearls and one lily hand half hidden in the folds of a satin skirt. I mean character portraits of men and women who are really distinguished looking—distinctly American, for example—like your mother."  
Dirk looked up at her quickly, half smiling, as though expecting to find her smiling, too. But she was not smiling. "My mother!"  
"Yes, if she'd let me. With that fine splendid face all lit up with the light that comes from inside; and the jawline like that of the women who came over in the Mayflower; or crossed the continent in a covered wagon; and her eyes! And that battered funny gorgeous bum old hat and the white shirt-waist—and her hands! She's beautiful. She'd make me famous at one leap. You'd see!"  
Dirk stared at her. It was as though he could not comprehend. Then he turned in his chair to stare at his mother. Selina was talking to Roelf.  
"And you've done all the famous men of Europe, haven't you, Roelf! To think of it! You've seen the world, and you've got it in your hand. Little Roelf Pool. And you did it all alone. In spite of everything."  
Roelf leaned toward her. He put his hand over her rough one. "Cabbages are beautiful," he said. Then they both laughed as at some exquisite joke. Then, seriously: "What a fine life you've had, too, Selina. A full life, and a rich one and successful."  
"I!" exclaimed Selina. "Why, Roelf, I've been here all these years, just where you left me when you were a boy. I think the very hat and dress I'm wearing might be the same I wore then. I've been nowhere, done nothing, seen nothing. When I think of all the places I was going to see! All the things I was going to do!"  
"You've been everywhere in the world," said Roelf. "You've seen all the places of great beauty and light. You remember you told me that your father had once said to me that you were a little girl, that there were only two kinds of people who really mattered in the world. One kind was wheat and the other kind emeralds. You're wheat, Selina."  
"And you're emerald," said Selina, quickly.  
The general was interested but uncomprehending. He glanced now at the watch on his wrist and gave a little exclamation. But the dinner! Our hostess Madame Storm! It is very fine to run away but one must come back. Our so beautiful hostess. He had sprung to his feet.  
"She is beautiful, isn't she?" said Selina.  
"No," Roelf replied, abruptly. "The mouth is smaller than the eyes. When the mouth is smaller than the eyes there is no real beauty. Now Dallas here—"  
"Yes, me," scoffed Dallas, all agrin. "There's a grand mouth for you. If a large mouth is your notion of beauty then I must look like Helen of Troy to you, Roelf."  
"You do," said Roelf, simply.  
Inside Dirk something was saying: "Over and over, 'You're nothing but a rubber stamp, Dirk DeJong. You're nothing but a rubber stamp.' Over and over."  
"These dinners!" exclaimed the general. "I do not wish to seem ungracious, but these dinners! Much rather would I remain here on this quiet and beautiful farm."  
At the porch steps he turned, brushed his heels together with a sharp smack, bent from the waist, picked up Selina's

rough work-worn hand and kissed it. And then, as she smiled a little, and certainly, her left hand at her breast, her cheeks pink, Roelf, too, kissed her hand tenderly.  
"Why," said Selina, and laughed a soft tremulous little laugh. "Why, I've never had my hand kissed before."  
She stood on the porch steps and waved at them as they were whirled swiftly away, the four of them. A slight straight little figure in the plain white blouse and the skirt spattered with the soil of the farm.  
"You'll come out again?" she had said to Dallas. And Dallas had said yes, but that she was leaving soon for Paris, to study and work.  
"When I came back you'll let me do your portrait!"  
"My portrait!" Selina had exclaimed, wondering.  
Now as the four were whirled back to Chicago over the asphalted Halsted road they were relaxed, a little tired. They yielded to the narcotic of spring that was in the air.  
Roelf Pool took off his hat. In the cruel spring sunshine you saw that the black hair was sprinkled with gray. "On days like this I refuse to believe that I'm forty-five. Dallas, tell me I'm not forty-five."  
"You're not forty-five," said Dallas in her leisurely caressing voice.  
Roelf's lean brown hand reached over frankly and clasped her strong white one. "When you say it like that Dallas, it sounds true."  
"It is true," said Dallas.  
They dropped Dallas first at the shabby old Ontario street studio, then Dirk at his smart little apartment, and went on.  
Dirk turned his key in the lock. Saki, the Japanese houseman, slid silently into the hall making little hissing noises of greeting. On the correct little console in the hall there was a correct little pile of letters and invitations. He went through the Italian living room and into his bedroom. The Jap followed him. Dirk's correct evening clothes (made by Peel the English tailor of Michigan boulevard) were laid correctly on his bed—trousers, vest, shirt, coat; fine, immaculate.  
"Messages, Saki?"  
"Missy Sloom telephone."  
"Oh. Leave any message?"  
"No. Say s'e call 'gain."  
"All right, Saki." He waved him away and out of the room. The man went, and closed the door softly behind him as a correct Jap servant should. Dirk took off his coat, his vest, and threw them on a chair near the bed. He stood at the bedside looking down at his Peel clothes, at the glossy shirtfront that never bulged. A bath, he thought, dully, automatically. Then, quite suddenly, he flung himself on the fine silk-covered bed, face down, and lay there, his head in his arms, very still. He was lying there half an hour later when he heard the telephone's shrill insistence and Saki's gentle deferential rap at the bedroom door.  
[THE END.]



He Picked Up Selina's Rough Work-Worn Hand and Kissed It.

"Primitive Customs in Cornish Fishing Town"  
A place where grown men play marbles with the zest of schoolboys and where cats catch live fish among the rock pools when the tide is out. Such a place does exist, and in the quaint old fishing town of St. Ives, in far-away Cornwall, these things may be seen.  
In the cool of the evening, along the broad road bordering the sheltered harbor, numerous groups of hardy fishermen, with sea and sun-tanned complexions, play marbles for hours at a time, surrounded by many interested onlookers, remarks London Tit-Bits.  
Grizzled old mariners, many of whom preserve the old Cornish custom of wearing small gold earrings, pace the quayside in parties of three and four, following the "walk four steps and turn," which is all they are able to do on the clear space on the decks of their luggers.  
There is a legend about the cats of St. Ives, but there was surely never another fishing town with so many cats. Each morning, when the night's catches of mackerel, dogfish and skate are brought ashore, the fish are cleaned on tables placed near the water's edge and scores of cats have a glorious feed on the offal.  
Never Sorry That He Stuck to Dependents  
Nearly every one of us is helping to take care of those unable to take care of themselves. We generally consider it a thankless task of which we would gladly see the end. But once we begin to help, the objects of our benevolence have a way of hanging on forever.  
Here once more I had been obliged at an early age to work out a guiding principle. If I go on like this, I had often said to myself, I shall have nothing saved. Later I had to express it in terms that applied to old age and the future of my family. At times it looked like a duty to abandon dependents now, so that I myself might be secured in the years to come.  
But here I reasoned that I could never be a loser from standing by those who had a claim on me. It could not be that having done what I could for them I should be left with nothing for myself. I was not generous at heart; I was doing what I did only because there was no one else to undertake it; but even so, it seemed to me the Giver of All Things would not desert a man who was humbly trying to be a giver in his turn.  
And He never did. As the first of each month came around, I always had money, even at the worst of times, to pay my bills and meet my obligations of affection. There was often no more; but there was that; and by the time the first of the next month came round the empty purse filled up again. Many a time I was reminded, and I am reminded still, of the barrel of meal and the crust of oil of the widow of Sarepta. "And the barrel of meal was not empty, neither did the crust of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord."—Basil King, in Hearst's International.  
Early Sunday School Work  
While the world's convention was in session in Glasgow recently Scotchmen came forward with the claim that the honor of starting the Sunday school movement should not go to Robert Raikes but to Christian workers who carried on the same sort of work in one of the cities of Scotland before Raikes gathered his classes in Gloucester in 1780. Now we are told of a Baptist deacon, William Fox, who actually began to teach the Bible to his pupils in the school organized at Clapton, England, in 1673, says the Detroit News. Raikes continued his attention to spelling, reading and arithmetic.  
The first Bible school is said to have been organized by Rev. Morgan John Rhys at Clifwawn, near Swansea, Wales, in 1648, and a student under Rhys, Rev. Morgan Jones, driven out by the act of uniformity, is said to have come to Elmhurst, L. I., and begun a Bible school in 1682, or 98 years before Raikes.  
Central Cooling  
The new system of central cooling, which has been perfected by experiments in the School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta, may prove a key which will open up the great potential treasure-house of the tropics. By this system a special "cool room" can be kept at a temperature from 20 to 30 degrees below the outside heat. This is done by a forced supply of air, which is passed over the pipes of a refrigerating plant before it reaches the room, while the relatively hot air already in it is drawn out. The room is especially insulated by cork. Experiments over a period of two years prove the efficiency of the "cool room," and also that one can pass between it and the warmer air outside without any injurious effect on health.  
—If it's readable, it is here.

**Normal Age Extended by Modern Science**  
Americans are living longer today than they did 50 years ago, but their average life span is still about 15 years short of the biblical "three-score and ten," which is popularly supposed to be the normal limit of human life.  
At the present rate of increase it will be another half century before the average man or woman will be justified in counting definitely on the 70 years of existence mentioned by the Hebrew poet, Dr. Harvey W. Wiley writes in Good Housekeeping.  
In 1875, when the state of Massachusetts began compiling the statistics, inhabitants of the United States died at an average age of about 43½. By 1900 this figure had been increased to a fraction under 48 and ten years later to approximately 52. And in 1920, the date of the latest available figures, the average white child could be expected to live almost exactly 65 years.  
This steady improvement is due largely to better protection of the newborn, particularly the control of hot-weather diseases among children. Infantile diarrhea or "summer complaint," which formerly brought death to so many thousands of little ones, is now known to be caused by the infection of food, and the modern mother has learned to take special care to avoid exposing her baby's food supply to diarrheal infection during the hot months. As a result the infant death rate has dropped from 14 per cent to about 9 per cent in the last 40 years.  
Grownups, too, have learned to stave off death from natural causes by means of sanitation, proper diet and vaccination. The whole theory of infection, based upon Pasteur's immortal work, is now well known and understood. Its understanding is not confined alone to physicians and physiologists, but the mother and the father and the young child have more or less a working knowledge of how to prevent infection.  
The average American woman lives about three years longer than the average man. Kipling's fling at females needs a slight revision. It should read: "The female of the species is more vital than the male."  
It is also shown that the average length of life of the colored race in this country is at least 15 years less than that of the white race.  
**Italy's Heroes**  
One of the impressive features of the procession in honor of Victor Emmanuel's twenty-fifth anniversary as king of Italy, was the squad of 50 "Garibaldi" who more than half a century ago fought their way with "the liberator" from Marsala to Capua. Not only in parades, but often on ordinary days one may see these picturesque old men, with their red shirts and their long white beards and frequently in white trousers, hobbling along the streets on canes, sometimes mumbling to themselves and eyeing curiously this noisy, white, modern Rome, so different from the sleepy reddish-brown city for which they offered their lives. Is the reverence which they inspire the product of a romantic legend? Perhaps. But they have a sound title to honor. They never attacked a foe weaker in arms and numbers than themselves. They never persecuted the weak. They never humiliated or mistreated a conquered foe. They never confiscated the property of the poor. Not all the younger Italians who have used violence for patriotic ends have as good a record as theirs.  
**Romantic Robber**  
Beside her bed when she arose in the morning the beautiful wife of a wealthy merchant of Lugano, Switzerland, found her jewels done up in a neat package and the following letter written in Italian: "Signorina—Last night I visited your flat when you were asleep. As I had not the honor of a personal invitation, I entered by the open window—frankly in order to rob you. You will notice that I collected your jewels and some other valuables, which I am greatly ashamed to say I intended taking with me. I saw you sleeping peacefully and fell in love with you. I sat by your bedside for ten minutes 'devouring' your beauty, and became ashamed of myself. Therefore I restore you your jewels. Your humble admirer."  
**Might Be, You Know**  
A certain sour spinster always became annoyed when asked a question the answer to which she considered obvious. Thus on the last night of April last she asked the girl at the hotel desk to call her early the next morning by ringing her telephone bell in her bedroom.  
"To catch a train?" asked the girl, pleasantly.  
"For what other reason does one wish to be called early?"  
"Sometimes one is to be queen of the May," suggested the girl, still pleasantly.  
**Her Occupation**  
Four-year-old Marlan was sitting on the floor with a paper in her lap. While thus engaged, a neighbor came in and asked her what she was doing.  
With a look of great importance, Marlan answered: "I'm doing a crossword puzzle."  
**Fertile Imagination**  
Frances, four years old, came running to her mother and hid in her skirts. Mother, surprised, asked the cause of her fright.  
"I was telling myself a story I was making up," explained Frances, "and there were wolves in it—and I got scared!"