

**IT'S MINE—ALL MINE.**

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(For the Review.)

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By **BENJAMIN F. LINDAS.**

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The sun had just slipped behind a few wisps of clouds that hung above the western horizon, as a 'prairie schooner' came to a stop in the fertile bottom lands on the banks of a mighty river of the mid-west. A few trees growing in scattered clusters were all that broke the monotony of the plains that stretched in every direction as far as eye could see. The only vegetation was a high, thick, tangled grass that grew in luxuriant abundance from the rich black soil.

"Guess we had better stop here," said the driver, a harsh-voiced squatty man of middle age, whose shifty gray eyes peered out from under his heavy brows. "Soil looks good—no pestering neighbors," and he tugged at the heavy mustache that hid his tightly pressed lips.

"All right," was the tired response from his wife, who was slightly younger than her husband, with traces of beauty still visible in the clear-cut profile and large, dark, but now lusterless eyes. "But it's dreadfully lonesome, Jim."

The man was busy unhitching the horses and made no response. He was a man of few words; morose, hot-tempered and selfish. He had, by the strictest kind of economy and frugality hoarded together a few hundred dollars, and, ignorant though he was, he had left the little village in which he had been reared in answer to an inner voice that kept prompting him to "Get some land! Get some land!"

The horses were tied to a tree; some driftwood along the shore furnished them fuel enough to cook a meagre meal, and in this lonely prairie, lulled into restful slumber by the rattle of the frogs in the sloughs, the ceaseless chirp of the insects, and the gentle breeze cooled by the 'Father of Waters,' Jim Granite, his wife, and their baby girl passed the first night on the land that was soon to be their own.

The first year sped by swiftly. Both had so much work to do that they had no time to miss the society of their fellow-man. The old settlers who had formerly held this land had long since left, and soon, for a mere pittance, Jim had secured a thousand acres that he could call his own; land luxuriantly fertile.

About this time the lure of the west was attracting homeseekers in ever-increasing hordes. Day after day, travelers would knock at the little one-room cabin to ask about the fertile fields that spread all about them. One and all were greeted with the surly answer of Jim. "It's mine, all mine, as far as you can see is mine." And so they passed on. There was plenty of land still to be had for the asking in the trail of the setting sun.

Another lonesome year had crept by, when one evening after the rude table had been cleared, Jim Granite's wife suddenly cried out: "Jim, I can't

stand it any longer; I'll go mad in this solitude. When you are away in the fields, and baby is asleep in the cradle, and the birds are still, and I can hear no sound but the lapping of the waves on the shore, I have to bite my lips to keep from shrieking in this awful silence."

"You're tired—go to bed;" and after his wife, old and bent before her time, had tumbled into the rude cot, Jim sat on the bench at the door, and smoked and smoked, gazing into the night until the first grey streaks of dawn began to blot out the twinkling stars.

Jim was just starting for the field that morning as another one of the familiar looking canvas-covered wagons pulled up in front of his door. On the seat was a young, flaxen-haired, ruddy-faced Swede; alongside of him was his buxom, dimple-cheeked wife, holding on her lap their curly-headed boy of about three years.

"Dis bane good land," said the stranger, as he slowly glanced around the place, "I like dis—guess I stay," and he smiled, and his wife smiled, and the little baby cooed his greeting.

Jim was on the point of ordering the departure of the good-natured visitors when he caught the mute appeal in the anxious eyes of his wife, muttered something to himself, and suddenly blurted out:

"See that clump of bushes down by the river? you can have a few acres there if you want it,—but don't bother us."

Ole Johnson grinned his thanks and very soon their first neighbor was starting his modest home.

The following day Granite drove to the county seat to have a deed prepared for the patch of ground that Johnson was to get. The lawyer on whom he called was one of that type of ignorant, but shrewd backwoods solicitors who were so prominent at the bar of the new States. He listened to Jim attentively; spat out the window; pushed his large, black-rimmed spectacles up on his forehead; stroked his chin whiskers and said, "What are you going to sell for? Rent the place to him, man. With all your land you shouldn't work a day. Let your tenants work for you."

The words of the lawyer struck a responsive chord in Jim's grasping nature; why had he not thought of that before? Thus it was arranged that Johnson was to pay rent. Ever after that there was a welcome at the cabin for the land-hungry traveler. Homes soon began to spring up in every direction on Jim's land, and he worked no longer in the fields. But the crude shack still remained his home, and his tired wife forced her work-racked body to the ceaseless tasks, while Jim added acres and acres to his ever increasing possessions.

In the fresh invigorating air of the prairies their child was growing into splendid blooming girlhood, and on the adjoining farm the red-faced, happy, good-natured boy of Johnson was sprouting into a vigorous young man.

The two children were constant companions. Hand in hand they would wander to the sandy shore and in silent wonderment watch the white stern-

wheeler chug through the muddy water, or they would stroll together through the straggling streets of the little village.

And thus the years passed. Jim buried his wife under the willows behind the tiny church, and the care of the household fell upon the shoulders of little Bess.

It was just about this time that a rumor spread through the town that set everyone wild with excitement. Granite had leased several hundred acres of his land to a great corporation; immense rolling mills were to be built; thousands of men were to be employed; great steel piers were to be constructed at the river front; fleets of boats would make daily trips. It was to be "Granite Landing" no longer, but Granite City now. The work was started without delay. Immense factories were strung along the shore of the river, and whirring, clanging machinery broke the stillness of the prairies, while numberless teams cut furrows of progress in the dusty village streets.

It was just about this time that Johnson had determined to send his boy away to school. Every dollar that could be spared he had saved in order to give his only boy a better start in life than he himself had had, and now he was going to send him to kind friends in the eastern city who would see that he was taken care of.

During the years that Carl was away Granite City experienced its mushroom growth, and when he finally stepped once more from the steamboat at the landing with his M. D. diploma stored away in his traveling bag, he gazed at the scene before him with open-mouthed astonishment. The village road had given place to a city street lined with business of every imaginable kind; rude shacks and unsightly tenements had crowded out the simple, but pretty cottages of former years, while unkempt and dirty children had supplanted the freckle-faced, sunburned, and bright-eyed children of the prairies. Slowly he walked through the strange town, turned down a little lane, and soon was before the old familiar gate. A girl was in the garden clipping roses. "Bess!" he cried.

She turned with a glad cry and threw herself in his arms. "Why, Carl, you great big boy, you great big boy!" and laughing and talking, now brushing away a tear of joy, she led him to the porch. She, at least, had not changed. "Father, look here; come quick, father," she called.

Slowly and deliberately old Jim Granite came through the door; "Oh, its you, is it?" he growled. "Well, how do you like it?" pointing to the town. "It's mine, all mine," he snapped, and disappeared into the house.

Carl had returned at an opportune time. A few poorly equipped doctors were attending to the disabilities of the inhabitants with varying success, but the owners of the mills wanted an up-to-date physician, a company physician, and they were on the point of sending to the city for one, when Carl made his presence known and was instantly employed.

Carl's life work now began. He had to visit the homes of the workers, and look after the injured and the sick. He was brought in contact with pov-

erty, misery and want, such as he had never dreamed existed in a civilized land. He sat in the cheerless, dirty rooms; he watched over the poor babes dying for lack of nourishing food. He moistened the dry lips and stroked the feverish brows of the dying child and crossed the withered hands over the sunken chest wherein had never entered a single ray of youthful joy and gladness. When he would leave these hovels and trudge homeward through the dirty streets the thought kept pounding within him: "It's wrong, it's wrong."

One evening he was sent for by the superintendent of the plant, whose little girl had contracted a fever. He was wanted at once. A servant was waiting for him at the door and conducted him through the luxurious home to the glistening white bedroom of the little girl. Toys and dolls were scattered about in profusion; a uniformed nurse was already in attendance. The contrast between the dying child in the alley and this pampered child of luxury struck him like a blow, and a few hours later when seated with the father in the soft leather rocker in the library his thoughts almost unbidden blurted from his lips, "It's wrong, I tell you, it's wrong. How can you surround yourself with all this wealth, when the men who make it for you are starving? How can you grind down your men, the brawn and sinew, in fact, the very brick and mortar of your factories, so that they wallow in poverty like cattle, while you have more than you can possibly spend? It's wrong, I tell you. You're selling your soul for a few filthy dollars, and you're damning your fellow man to living tombs for their faithfulness."

"Doctor, you wrong me; listen to me. You're a sensible man. Listen to what I have to say. Sit down, I tell you. You've got to listen to me. What you see are results. You don't know the causes. You are jumping at conclusions. Do you know why we came to this place? Well, I am going to tell you. We were close to the coal fields for one thing; then river transportation was cheap; but the main reason was that we got old Jim Granite to take a big bulk of our stock. But the old fellow was shrewder than we thought. He had us lease his ground, but would give only a lease on yearly terms, with the privilege of indefinite renewal. For the first year we got on well. We employed American workmen only. We paid good wages and we were proud of our force and of our plant. When the renewal time came, however, Granite more than doubled our payment. We argued and pleaded, but it was of no avail. All the answer that we could get was, "It's mine, all mine!" We struggled through the second year; again the raise and again the cold sneer and the same answer. Then we changed our men; we imported ignorant foreigners by the hundreds; we cut the wages and raised the prices of our product as much as we could. Another year passed and another raise followed. This year business is slack. We can't run full time and I am facing ruin myself. This house that you have been admiring isn't mine; I'm just the temporary occupant, and the great factory yonder is built over a yawning chasm and will soon go crashing down to destruction if that imp of Satan who goes creeping around his victims snarling, 'It's mine' don't let up on us and give us a chance to live."

Business went from bad to worse. Hundreds of men were discharged. One evening as Carl was walking home he noticed a knot of men on one of the corners uttering dire threats against the capitalists who were turning them out to starve. A sudden impulse seized him and pushing through the crowd he shouted at the top of his voice: "You poor fools, why don't you try to discover the one who is really the cause of all your troubles. Don't you know that your employers are in the same boat with you? Give vent to your wrath in any way you wish; God knows I wouldn't blame you. If I had to suffer like some of you, I'd fight for my rights as long as I could breathe. But don't let your vengeance fall on the innocent. It is not your employer who is robbing you, but that despicable rascal who is extorting from all of us every cent that he can get for permission to live on this land that he got for a few dollars an acre, and never cultivated or used. You are living like slaves because you are poor miserable slaves and don't know it." Without waiting for a response he brushed them aside and hurried on his way, not even noticing the grim face of Granite on the edge of the crowd.

Carl had just reached his office the following morning when he received a summons from the general manager of the plant. He went to the office at once. "Sorry, Doctor," was the greeting; "guess we will have to let you go. Business is bad. If it picks up any we'll send for you," and politely bowed Carl out of the door. He reached the street just in time to meet his father, who had been looking for him. He had received notice from Jim Granite's lawyer to vacate the little farm that had been his home for so many years, and he was on the verge of tears.

"Never mind, father," said Carl, who understood it all now. "Never mind. You and mother and I will go away from here and start all over again. Don't worry."

He left his father and turned down the old familiar lane. Bess was at the gate and ran to meet him. "You can't come in, Carl. Father is terribly angry. What made you say such horrid things. Now what are we going to do?"

"Listen, Bess; I'm going away tonight. I'm going to a new country and start all over again, and I want you to come with me. I want you to leave this horrible place where you are wasting the best years of your life."

She dropped her eyes and slowly shook her head. "I can't, Carl. I can't leave father now. He is hard and cross, but he has no one but me now and I can't leave him. You go alone, I'll think of you always, and who knows, some day, maybe"—a sob choked her. She turned and ran down the road.

Many years had passed, and Carl, now a vigorous, bearded man, paid a visit to the home of his youth. But what a change since he had left. The great wharfs were decayed, twisted and broken beyond repair; the main street was a deserted road with the rotten hulks of houses that lined it slowly sinking into the weeds; the immense factories were roofless, and their glassless windows stared vacantly into the distance. On every side decay, ruin, solitude

and waste. Not a living thing was to be seen. He wandered through the almost hidden graveyard behind the crumbling church and on the simple tombstone that topped the grave next to where Jim Granite's wife had rested these many years he read: "Bessie Granite—Aged 23."

He turned into the old familiar lane with a sinking heart. The cabin was still there, and as he walked slowly down the path the door opened and an old, bent man came out leaning on his cane. His matted gray hair hung over his eyes. He hobbled up to Carl and pointing a shaking finger at the deserted city, he squeaked in a high, cracked treble, "It's mine, you understand. All mine, all mine."

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### THE ECONOMISTS ON THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES.

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ADAM SMITH—Ground-rents are a still more proper subject of taxation than the rent of houses. A tax upon ground-rents would not raise the rents of houses. It would fall altogether upon the owner of the ground-rent, who acts always as a monopolist, and exacts the greatest rent which can be got for the use of his ground\*\*\* Nothing can be more reasonable than that a fund which owes its existence to the good government of the State should be taxed peculiarly, or should contribute something more than the greater part of other funds.

J. S. MILL—A tax on rent\* falls wholly on the landlord. There are no means by which he can shift the burden upon anyone else\*\*\*A tax on rent therefore has no effect other than its obvious one (i. e., it does not increase prices). It merely takes so much from the landlord and transfers it to the State.

PROF. J. B. CLARK—Of the wealth that resides in land the State is certainly the creator and the original and lawful owner. As the creator, not of the substance of the earth, but of the value residing in it, the State has the producer's immediate right to use and dispose of its product.

PROF. E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS—To turn the golden stream of economic rent partly or mostly into the State's treasury, where it would relieve the public of taxation in burdensome forms, seems to be extraordinarily desirable.

RICARDO—Sismondi and Buchanan were correct when they considered rent as a value purely nominal and forming no addition to the National wealth, but merely as a transfer of value advantageous only to the landlords, and proportionately injurious to the consumer.

PROF. MARSHALL—In my view it was reasonable to levy poor-rates, etc., on the "public value" of land; that is on "its value as it stands after deducting for any buildings on it and any distinct improvements made in it during, say, the last twenty years."

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\* The term *rent*, as used by economic writers, does not include any payment made for the use of improvements, but solely payment for land. It is the annual land value.