

THE HARTWELL FARM

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649599455

The Hartwell Farm by Laura Caxton

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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LAURA CAXTON

**THE HARTWELL
FARM**



THE
HARTWELL FARM.

BY

LAURA CAXTON,

AUTHOR OF "MARION HERBERT."

[Lizzie B. Conine]

Illustrated by the Author.



LORING, Publisher.

CORNER OF BROMFIELD AND WASHINGTON STS.,

BOSTON.

[1871]

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TO

MY DEAR AUNT ELIZA,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK,

NOT BECAUSE IT IS AN APPROPRIATE OR WORTHY TRIBUTE
TO HER MANY VIRTUES,

BUT ON ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT LOVE

I BEAR HER.

THE HARTWELL FARM.



CHAPTER I.

THE HARTWELL FARM.

"THEODORA! Theodora! come down, dear; here's a letter for you."

"A letter for me!" exclaimed Theodora Hartwell, as she ran downstairs. "Who is it from?"

"Your Uncle John," replied her mother; "open it quickly; I am quite anxious to know what he has to say to you."

Theodora seated herself in the window, tore open her letter in true girl-fashion, and by the fading twilight hurriedly devoured its contents, while her mother sat looking on.

"O mother! mother!" cried Theodora, jumping up in great excitement, "what *do* you think Uncle John wants? It is just like him. I do think he's perfectly splendid, and if it will *only* come out right, and I can raise clothes enough, and you and father think it's best, I shall be radiantly happy." And she stopped, fairly out of breath.

"Well, dear," said her mother, "if you will only tell me what it is all about I shall be much obliged; as yet your remarks are not very lucid."

"To be sure! Well, just listen to the letter, and see if you ever heard anything more glorious in your life;"

and Theodora commenced reading the letter aloud, throwing in sundry remarks of a decidedly original nature: —

“BOSTON, July 5, 187-.

“DEAR LITTLE DORA” (Aber! *little*, he might just as well have left that out): “I don’t know whether it was because the Fourth of July celebration yesterday took me back to the days of my youth, when your mother and I used to frighten the wits out of your grandmother by firing crackers and burning holes in our pinafores, or whether it was owing to some unexplainable cause, but certain I am that I could not get the thought of your mother out of my head all day yesterday; and, thinking of the mother, naturally made me think of the daughter. I believe it is two years since I saw you, and now of course you must be a young lady, but as you live off there in the backwoods I don’t believe that you have come to the panniers, and flounces, and frizzes, and all sorts of toggery that our young ladies in the city load themselves with.”

“No, my dear uncle, I haven’t as yet; but it’s a clear case of ‘Jacky wouldn’t, ’cause he couldn’t.’”

“Is that in the letter, dear?” asked Mrs. Hartwell.

“No, mother, that’s original. Let me see, where was I? —”

“At any rate I want to see for myself what you are like; see if there is any look of the mother in you” (Poor man, he’s doomed to disappointment); “so I propose that you come down the middle of this month, and go with us to Scranton to spend the summer.”

“There, mother,” cried Theodora; “now you know the pith of the whole thing, — the *crème de la crème*. Do you suppose I can go?”

“Read on, my dear, read on,” quietly replied her mother.

“But it’s dreadfully hard to read on when I’m in such a state of excitement, however —”

“I know your father and mother will let you come” (of course they will); “it will do you good, and Kate will be delighted to have you with her. We leave here the fifteenth, but you need not trouble yourself about the journey; if your mother gives her consent, I

promise to go after you; it will be a good opportunity for me to see that famous peach-orchard."

"I don't believe he has much faith in the peach-orchard," laughed Theodora.

Mrs. Hartwell shook her head, and Theodora continued to the end without making further interruptions.

"Kate says she is going to write you about what will be necessary for your wardrobe; but don't think that you will be obliged to be dressed up all the time. Scranton is a very democratic, independent place, or you may be pretty sure your old uncle would not spend all his summers there. Remember, when I invite you to go, I mean, of course, that you go at my expense; so don't worry about money matters,— I'll manage all that myself.

"Remember me to your father and the boys, and give a kiss to your mother for your
OLD UNCLE JACK."

"There, mother, isn't that splendid?"

"It certainly is very kind in Uncle John, very kind indeed."

"And it is so nice in him, letting me know at once that he pays for everything, instead of leaving me in a horrible state of uncertainty. But, may I go, mother?"

"My dear Theodora, how can I answer you so soon? In the first place, you have read the letter so fast, and thrown in so many comments, that I can hardly understand it all yet; and, in the second place, I must hear what your father has to say. Open the front blinds, and while I read the letter over quietly go and see that the supper-table is all right. Your father and the boys will be here directly."

"Yes, and I suppose the boys will be as hungry as bears; they have been way over to the east pasture. Here's the letter, mother, and do just say, 'I'll think about it,' won't you? For when you say that, I always feel it is a sure thing." And Theodora jumped up to see if the supper-table was as tidy as the particular eye