

PHIL DENNETT'S "HIGHBACK."

BY JOHN BOYD CLARKE.

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OTTED over the great grain prairies of upper Minnesota are many little communities of unpainted plank cottages or even of "sod" houses whose inhabitants possess more of the characteristics of the old time Yankee than the present occupants of our New England homesteads. And the reason for this is plain. These western Yankees are lineal descendants of our best Puritan stock and in migrating to their peculiar homes from the rugged New England hills farms took the peculiarities and homely virtues of their ancestors with them. Boston "culture" has been filtered over the New England farmsteads, and the old time Yankee or the old fashioned Yankee community is an impossibility in the east.

But these westerners display the industry and frugality of their ancestors. They are hardworking people whose pleasures come laboriously. For eight months in the year they are busy with the necessities and a few of the luxuries of life. The other four months they are snow bound. It is in this season, when the snow mingles the prairies and the ice king fetters the water courses, however, that the Minnesota boys and girls find most of their pleasures.

It is in winter that "school keeps," and some of the pupils are well grown youths and maidens. There is little time for education during the rest of the year, and the ambitions are not ashamed to show their anxiety for "book learning." The schoolhouse, usually in the center of the widely scattered community, is the headquarters for all junketings and frolics. If the schoolmaster happens to be musically inclined, so much the better. There is at once a singing school established for one evening in the week.

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There was one family, a recent acquisition to the Bottoms, which was rather an exception to this, however. They had lived some years down St. Paul way in a much more thickly settled part of the state and were inclined to look down a little upon the young folks of the Bottoms. Especially was this true of the son and daughter. Hiram Ball was a little spick and span fellow, with dark complexion and eyes and hair as black as coal. He was very gallant with the ladies and was inclined to snub some of the boys in a way which they could not resist excepting in their hearts. His sister Mira was a pretty little brunette, but, like her brother, had such an exalted opinion of her own importance that she was not very popular. In fact, the coming of the Balls to Sassafras Bottoms was the sowing of discord in the social life of the community.

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PECULIAR REASONS THAT AT TIMES INFLUENCE THE PAIR SEX IN MATTERS OF THE HEART—THE WOMAN WHO WON AND WEDDED A WOMAN HATER.

If there is one question more than another to which it is difficult to get or give a satisfactory answer it is surely this: "Why did you fall in love with your husband?" In 19 cases out of 20 woman would probably confess candidly that she did not know or else she would declare conclusively that she did because she did, and that ought to end the matter.

In the rare cases where the lady condescends to declare her reason the answers are both interesting and instructive.

"Whatever made you marry the prisoner?" a London magistrate asked a woman whose face bore "striking" evidence of her husband's affection. "Because he punched all the other fellows' heads," she answered, "and nobody else dared make love to me."

Another good lady confessed that she fell in love with her husband because he was the "only man who ever dared to snub her." While other men were stumbling over each other to pay her court and attention, he always treated her with absolute indifference and even rudeness.

The consequence was that she determined to bring him to her feet and his knees. She succeeded, but lost her heart in the attempt.

"I fell in love with my husband," one lady recently declared, "because he was the only man about whom no one was ever heard to say an unkind word. Even the women, although he paid them no special attention, were agreed that he was a darling; and, although he was plain, almost to ugliness, and old enough almost to be my father, I loved him and determined to marry him long before he had any such thought of me."

Not long ago a Yorkshire lady of wealth and beauty shocked her friends by marrying a poor cripple. He had come to her ears that he had long loved her in silence and had counted each day happy if he only caught a distant glimpse of her. She discovered that he was a devoted son and brother and a man of unusual gifts and culture for his humble position, and moved by one of those sudden, generous impulses to which some women are liable, she sought an interview with him, told him that she had learned his secret and offered him her hand and fortune. This may appear a strange and improbable thing, but thousands know that it is literally true.

Another lady whose marriage resulted from a similar impulse gives this explanation of it. Among the friends of her family was an old bachelor with a reputation for crustiness who had known her from a child and had often nursed her in early days. To her he had always been gentle and kind, and she had loved him "in a way" as long as she could remember.

One day she said, "Why have you never married, Mr. —?" "Marry, my dear? Why, no one would ever marry a grumpy old man like me!"

"Of course they would!" she answered indignantly. "Why, I would marry you myself!" "Thank you, my dear!" came the unexpected answer. "Then we'll consider the matter ended."

In spite of her surprise and misgivings the girl loyally kept her promise, and she has never had reason to regret her "moment's indiscretion."

A lady friend of the writer married her husband for the very illogical reason that he was an avowed woman hater. He made no secret of his aversion to the fair sex and declared it so constantly that, as she says, "I vowed I would convert him and make him change his mind, at least so far as one of my sex was concerned." He was not difficult to convert, for within 12 months he had forsaken his creed so far as to conduct one of the "hated sex" to the altar, and now he declares that he "loves them all."—Tit-Bits.

The Home of Echoes. Many valleys described in guide-books as "whispering valleys" are favorite resorts for tourists in all parts of the world. Few, however, exceed in wonder a valley at Stansfeld in Essex, England. The rector of this parish in giving a careful account of his own experiences states that his house stands on a hill 288 feet above sea level, rising in rear to 300 feet, while in front the ground slopes away to a stream 100 feet below and again rises 180 feet on the opposite side. From the rectory the bells of 14 or 15 villages may be distinguished, while across the valley footpaths and voices in conversational tone may be heard at half a mile.

The Earthquake. To the average resident of the temperate zones an earthquake is a rare and terrible event, creating more consternation than any other visitation of nature. In the tropics, however, particularly in Central America, it is wonderful how easily the residents become accustomed to these shocks, which do not come, however, wholly without warning.

You are sitting on a piazza on a hot afternoon chatting with your friends when suddenly the sky seems to grow hazy and the crows stop cawing. There is a general rush, and though you may not know what is the matter, you cannot help feeling uneasy.

The old natives say, "We're going to have a little shake," and then the house begins to rock, the tumbrels fall off the table, you feel dingly sick at the stomach, and the thing is all over. The sky clears, the crows begin their noisy screams, and things are soon put right again.