

A HOPELESS CASE.

He Had Figured It All Out and Took Things Philosophically.

A claim, beautifully situated on upland prairie, but waist high with weeds; a dilapidated sod shack whose thatched roof, as in the old song, "let in the sunshine and the rain," whose cubby hole windows were broken here and there and stuffed with wearing apparel of various hues, and whose four walls were so storm worn that they barely held together; an ancient wagon here, with one wheel off and a hopeless stagger in the other three; a ghost of a horse there, grazing in a patch of thistles, and a man in the shadow of the shack smoking and complacently eyeing the desolation about him.

"Hello," I cried, halting my horse; "what's the matter here?"

"Matter with what?" drawled a voice, as the speaker turned upward a pair of languid eyes.

"Why, with this farm. Running down, isn't it?"

He shrugged his shoulders and smoked on in silence.

"Do you live here?"

"Uh-huh."

"Married?"

"Gosh-a-mighty!"

"Why don't you fix things up? Look at that wagon, there. How do you get to town?"

"Ride horseback."

I looked toward his shadow of a horse and remarked pointedly:

"Thistles are poor fodder."

"Sho! I wonder."

"Why don't you picket your horse on the long grass down yonder in the bottom?"

Puff, puff, puff—and a wreath of smoke was my only answer.

"Don't you know," I went on severely, "that the animal will die if you don't take care of him? Then how would you get to town?"

"Hoof it, I reckon."

"If I were you I'd have some snap about me. I'd plow up all these weeds and get this farm into some kind of condition."

"Fate's agin it," he said, shaking his head ominously.

"Why so?"

Knocking the ashes out of his pipe, he put it away and hooked up one of his knees with both hands.

"Look here, stranger, this here claim's full o' wild mustard. Do you know how many seeds there is in one o' them plants?"

"No."

"Well, I spent all last summer findin out an averagin up the chances. They's 31,000 seeds in one o' them tarnation little plants. That means 31,000 plants to raise 31,000 more seeds next year, an how many billion plants d'you s'pose they is on this place, anyhow? Jest guess an multiply that by 31,000—why, stranger, you couldn't git all the figgers on an ordinary slate. I ain't no fool, tho' I do brag a mite on filosofy, an I tell you, now, I ain't goin to struggle agin fate. I've been White Capped in Kentucky, grass-hoppered in Kansas, hailed out o' Dakoty, an now if this blamed mustard's goin to drive me out o' here I shan't fly in the face o' Providence—en that's what."

Then he took his pipe out of one pocket and a handful of tobacco out of the other, and proceeded to fix himself for another smoke.

I looked at him a moment, resigned him mentally and rode away.

"But I'm glad that mustard hain't burdock," he called after me "cause every durned burdock is responsible for 400,000 more, an—"

I lost the rest. I had heard enough, however, to set me thinking.—Detroit Free Press.

Two Books of Rules.

Leo Tolstoi, the Russian novelist, who has ideas of his own as to the right of the community to punish its offending members, saw the other day a policeman take an individual into custody. He at once walked up to the constable and said:

"Can you read?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Have you read the Scriptures?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you forget that they command us to love our neighbors as ourselves."

The minion of the law, quite taken aback, stared at the count; then, after a moment's reflection, made answer:

"And, pray, can you read?"

"Yes."

"Have you read the police regulations?"

"No."

"Then read them."—Green Bag.

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Pa—Certainly, my child.

Tommy—Well, where is the wind when it doesn't blow—Texas Siftings.

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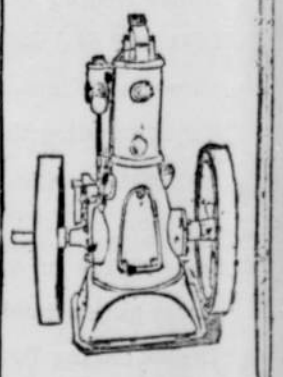
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