

EDITOR'S DRAWER

OLD MAN HICKS WAS RIGHT

BY RUTH COMFORT MITCHELL AND SANBORN YOUNG

"SHUCKS!" said Billy Pettigrew, charitably, "what of he wuz wrong? I never mind a feller's bein' wrong, long ez he owns up. What riles me is folks that's alwers right, like Old Man Hicks. Say, I'll bet he wuz right ninety-nine 'n' half times outer ev'ry hundred! He wuz jest nacherly so right he couldn't be wrong. What? Didn't you never hear about Old Man Hicks—an' the way he finally—? Well, then, jest you set there in the shade an' sink your teeth in some o' these here Kelsey plums, an' I'll tell you!"

He pushed his worn straw hat back on his gray stubble and took an ample mouthful from his plug, while his ancient horse edged to the side of the road and plunged his muzzle into the lush green grass. The people along Billy's R. F. D. route would have to wait for their mail that day; Billy had that rare and precious thing, a fresh audience.

"Yes, sir, Old Man Hicks he wuz alwers right. I never see the beat of it. Wust of it wuz, he wuz alwers right about things that wuz wrong. He could see trouble farther off with the naked eye than any feller that ever lived. Folks got so they hated him wuss'n pussley. Warn't nothin' mean he'd prophesy that didn't come true. When the new Baptist preacher come to town, likely-lookin' feller, unmarried, all the girls an' widders jest nacherly perked up. Seemed rea-

sonable enough that he might pick a wife from amongst our midst, as the sayin' is. But Old Man Hicks he up an' said he bet he wuz engaged to some girl back where he come from, an' sure enough, 'bout the time the wimmin folks got their new cloze made up an' had him to dinner all 'round, out she come from the East an' they wuz wed! An' when the boys wuz to play the Salinas team fer the champeenship, after havin' licked the tar outer ev'ry other bunch round the country, an' the whole town turned out, happy an' proud to see 'em fetch home the turkey, Old Man Hicks he said they wuz due to



THERE WUZ OLD MAN HICKS WITH HIS GALOSHES AN' UMBRELLA

lose 'cause our pitcher was goin' stale. An' by gum! he wuz right! Soreset town you ever see. Ready to tar an' feather that pore kid. He couldn't figure himself what had happened to him, 'cept that jest at the fizziological moment, as the sayin' is, he looked up an' saw Old Man Hicks's face as long ez your arm, an' it put the kibosh on him so hard he couldn't 'a' throwed a biscuit acrost the table.

"An' when the Lady Maccabees set the day fer their big picnic on the Fourth o' July, Old Man Hicks he 'lowed it wuz goin' to rain. Never had rained a drop after June first in twenty years. We thought he wuz talkin' to hear himself talk. Wimmin turned to an' worked themselves to a frazzle, bakin' and fryin' an' doin' up dimity dresses; but by heck! jest ez they wuz all loaded into the waggins, kids all slicked up clean an' the girls starched an' crimped an' the fellers with their store cloze on, an' boiled shirts, an' the wimmin holdin' passels o' fried chicken an' frosted cake, down she come like the Bible flood!

"An' when folks dripped home, kids blubberin' an' wimmin mad ez wet hens, there wuz Old Man Hicks with his galoshes an' umbrella, down to the gate to watch 'em go by! Wonder to me we didn't up an' lynch him. Kinder wisht we had.

"My sister's boy, that wuz in high-school, he told me it wuz like a woman he studied about in hist'ry, name o' Cassie Andrew, lived in Troy, New York. She wuz alwers prophesyin' the fall o' Troy, an' nobody believed her, but they went inter some kinder horse deal an' the city come to grief.

"Well, sir, when the Belgun hare craze hit the community Old Man Hicks wuz the first to ketch it, an' he took down with it hard. He wuz the first to git it, an' he got a corner on knowledge. What he didn't know about rabbits you could write on the back of a postage stamp and have room fer the Lord's Prayer besides. Some of us suspicioned he wuzn't so all-fired wise, but nobody could call his bluff. Mis' Hicks wuz alive then, an' it would 'a' done your heart good to see the comfort she took with them little critters. Old Man Hicks he wuz so near he'd never 'lowed her to have a pet. She uster beg fer a dog an' claim they needed him fer protection, but he 'lowed he wuz still spry enough to chase off tramps. Then she coaxed fer a cat an' said they wuz over-

run with rats, but he said a trap wuz jest ez capable an' et less.

"So, nacherly, she wuz plumb crazy 'bout the rabbits. She took all the care of 'em. Kep' 'em in a old two-story side-hill cow-barn—he wuz too tight to build decent hutches, like the books said. Made reg'lar pets of 'em, she did. Beat all, the way they come to know her. Learned 'em tricks, too. They lived in the down-stairs part, an' she kep' the feed up above. Well, sir, when she wuz ready to feed 'em she'd rap three times on the floor with her broom-handle, an' up the stairs them rabbits would come, lickety-brindle! She loved 'em like they wuz kids, an' she wuz so proud of what she'd learned 'em that whenever anybody 'd come in, out they'd have to traipse to see them rabbits fed, an' consekently they got many an extry feed, an' it made Old Man Hicks ez sore ez a boil.

"Well, I guess what with all else she done she wore herself out, for she took down one day, an' he 'lowed from the fust 'twas serious. Doctor said she'd pull through all right, an' folks thought 'twas jest bein' kinder beat out, but Old Man Hicks he says, 'Mark my words, she'll never go through that door ag'in till she goes feet foremost,' an' that wuz the way of it.

"Well, folks alwers suspicioned she done the brunt of ever'thin', an' it showed up after she went, the way the ranch run down. The old feller himself kinder went to pieces. Didn't keep nothin' up. Got sick an' disgusted with the rabbits. Wanted to clean 'em all out. I stopped by one day when he wuz feedin' 'em, an' I wisht you'd 'a' heard him take on about the work they made. Claimed his old woman had spoiled 'em. His rheumatis' wuz so bad that winter he wuz hobblin' 'round with a cane, an' he rapped three times on the barn floor an' up the stairs them rabbits come, lickety-brindle. Seemed like them little critters accherly missed Mis' Hicks an' the way she'd make over 'em. Anyhow, they missed the e. try rations!

"The old feller was plumb soured on 'em. Nothin' in rabbits, anyway. Warn't wuth their feed. Warn't wuth nothin'. Said he'd sell ev'ry last one of 'em ef he could find anybody fool enough to buy.

"Well, says I, 'I don't know nothin' much about rabbits, but I'll take a chanst. I'll give you thutty cents apiece fer 'em.'



"LOOKS TO ME," HE SAYS, "LIKE THEY ALL GOT THE SNUFFLES"

"He begun to hem an' haw an' hedge, but I wuz firm, an' the upshot of it wuz I boxed up the whole kit an' boilin' of 'em an' drove 'em home. Jest ez I was turnin' inter my gate two strangers drove up.

"What you got there?" says the feller that wuz drivin'. Kinder dark, sallow, furrin'-lookin' feller he wuz, name o' Lopez.

"Rabbits," says I.

"Fer sale?" says he.

"Yep," says I.

"How much?" says he.

"Two dollars," says I, bold ez brass.

"A dozen?" says he, kinder sneerin'.

"A piece," says I, kinder haughty.

"Lemme have a look," says he, climbin' down off his waggin. The other feller never said a word. Cross-eyed he wuz, with only three fingers on his right hand.

"Well, this Lopez he begun to run them rabbits down. Wasn't no disease they didn't have. 'Looks to me,' he says, 'like they all got the snuffles. I'm buyin' up rabbits fer my auction Friday, but this lot's likely to be dead before that. The man

that sold you them critters knew when to get rid of 'em!'

"Well," says I to myself, 'Old Man Hicks wuz right!'

"He went on to say they wuz only two or three in the lot that didn't have crooked feet or wry tails or lop ears, an' everythin' he'd say the cross-eyed feller 'd wag his head an' look mournful. I got so plumb discouraged I wuz about ready to pay 'em somethin' to take 'em off an' put 'em outer their mis'ry, an' when he finally says, kinder soft-hearted an' charitable-like: 'I'll give you twenty cents apiece for 'em. Mebbe they's five or six I c'n cure up, knowin' the business like I do.' I thanked him warm and cordial an' says, 'They're yourn!'

"Well, I helped him load 'em onto his waggin an' watched 'em off. 'Well, Billy Pettigrew,' says I to myself, 'served you dead right. Might 'a' knowed you'd get your comeuppance ef you dealt with Old Man Hicks!'

"I never intentioned he should know about it but Friday morning when I wuz workin'

on my tunnel he drove by and see me, an' whoaed his old nag an' come in. He looked kinder het up an' excited, but he says, 'What you think you're makin', Billy Pettigrew?'

"A tunnel," says I.

"A fool o' yourself," says he.

"Mebbe so," says I, 'but I've hankered fer a tunnel sence I wuz knee-high to the pump, an' by heck! I'm agoin' to have one.'

"Not there in that soft-lime hillside you wun't," says he. 'It 'll come down on you, sure ez gun's iron. Well, mebbe it's jest ez well, 'cause you'll be buried right where you be, an' save a lot o' fuss. My old woman's funeral set me back eighty-five dollars, but they hain't got it all yit, an' they hadn't better hold their breath till they do! How's them rabbits comin' on?'

"Sold 'em," says I, tryin' to look smart and chipper.

"Then there's one bigger sucker in this country than you be, Billy Pettigrew," says he.

"Oh, I ain't complainin'," says I, airy-like.

"What 'd you git?" says he.

"Got enough to finance my tunnel," says I.

"He looked kinder doubtful, but he wuz so full up o' somethin' new he let it go at that. 'Well, you wuz in luck to clean 'em out at any price,' he says. 'Nothin' in common rabbits. I been readin' up. Imported, registered, pedigreed stock's the only thing. Belgun hares is beginnin' to boom an' they're agoin' sky-high!' He pulls a copy o' *The Pacific Breeders' Journal* outter his pocket an' read me out a great line o' stuff. Them writers had it all figgered out how one pedigreed pair of Belgun hares would make a fortune. Why, ef a rancher wuz to buy him sech a pair he c'd git him two hired men an' buy the old woman a washin'-machine an' send his boy to college an' pay off the mortgage inside o' two years. Listened kinder wild to me, but it wuz all right there in print. Old Man Hicks he said he wuz goin' inter the rabbit game again, but he wuz a-goin' in right! He wuz drivin' over to the auction at the county-seat where they sell nothin' but registered, pedigreed, imported stock, guaranteed free from all *dee-fects*.

"Guess I'll have to pay a right smart price," he says, wincin' like it hurt him to think of it, 'but I wun't begrudge it none. It's an investment, Billy Pettigrew. It's like loanin'

money at a hundred per cent. int'rest—no, sir, at a thousand!' He clumb up in his old waggin an' slapped the nag with the reins, an' he says, 'Well, so long,' he says. 'I'll stop by on my way home an' I'll let you see my stock, ef so be you ain't buried alive,' he says; 'but you're buried alive now, fur's that goes. So's this hull community!'

"Well, sir, I worked like a nailer on that tunnel all day long—never even stopped fer my dinner. Goin' fine she wuz, too, and I wuz all swelled up over it, but jest this side o' sundown, when I wuz standin' in the entrance, wipin' the sweat off my face and feelin' pretty neat, the hull blame' thing caved in and like to killed me. And nach-erly, jest ez I wuz a-brushin' myself off and gittin' the dirt outer my eyes and ears I hear the klip-klup, klip-klup o' the old nag, and Old Man Hicks come by. He wuz goin' at a right smart clip, and I lay low, and I thought he'd go by, but no, sir, he caught sight o' the entrance o' my tunnel and he whoaed down and beckoned to me.

"Well," says he, 'I see you done it! Didn't make a very neat job o' buryin' yourself, did you? Well, mebbe your life wuz spared to see what I've got here, Billy Pettigrew,' he says. 'Wipe your tunnel outer your eyes and come and look!'

"What you got?" says I.

"I got Leopold Second, King o' the Netherlands, and the Belle o' Flanders," says he. 'Registered, pedigreed, imported stock. Cast your eyeful-o'-tunnel over this, Billy Pettigrew,' he says, handin' me a typewritten pedigree ez long ez the ginnie-oligies in the Old Testament.

"Well, I'll be dad-kicked!" says I, respectful. 'Gimme a look!'

"Scrabble up on the waggin and do your lookin' ez I drive along," says he. 'I'm goin' to git these critters home before the evenin' damp. Aristocracy is delicate,' he says.

"So I clumb up on the waggin and he started off so quick I set down with one foot twisted under me and craned my neck round to look at his prizes. They was in gay-painted crates that looked like circus-waggins, and we wuz goin' so lively 'twas some minutes before I c'd get a fair look at 'em, and all the time Old Man Hicks wuz ravin' about 'em. 'Look at them registered numbers tattooed in their ears,' says he. 'That tells the story! Only the finest pedigreed imported stock c'n be registered. And them



OLD MAN HICKS HE SET RIGHT DOWN ON THE FLOOR

tin tags in the other ears,' says he, 'that marks 'em so they can't be confused with common stock in exhibitions. My, but this here is the biggest day o' my life!' says Old Man Hicks.

"What 'd you pay fer 'em?" says I.

"'Thutty dollars fer the doe and fifty dollars fer the buck,' says he, throwin' up his chest. 'Eighty dollars fer the pair!'

"And jest that minute he slowed down to let the ice-waggin go by and I got my first good look. 'Well, I'll be gee-conswizzled!' says I, lookin' ag'in.

"'You bet you'll be,' says he, contented-like. 'And I'll sell the first litter fer a hundred 'n' fifty. Like to never got 'em, neither,' says he. 'Biddin' was pretty hot. One feller bid ag'in' me up to the last minute. Never see anybuddy so set ez he was. Quiet he was, but awful determined. Stranger to me; cross-eyed feller; only three fingers on his right hand.'

"I leant over and took another look at Leopold Second, King o' Netherlands, and the Belle o' Flanders.

"'He wuz all broke up about losin' 'em; claimed the auctioneer favored me; they had some words. He come 'round afterwards and begged me to give him his choice o' the first litter, soon ez weaned, fer twenty dollars, but I said I couldn't make no promises. Well, here we be,' he says, turnin' in at the old gate. 'I'm anxious to git these critters bedded fer the night. Got to keep 'em in the old woman's shiftless way fer a while, but you be over here at seven o'clock to-morrow mornin' and git in two hours' work 'fore you start on your route, and we'll make a start on my new hutches,' says he, 'up-to-date, sanitary hutches like the books tell about.'

"I helped him boost the boxes down off the waggin and lug 'em to the old barn. I took another look while he was shuttin' the doors.

"'Can't take no chances,' says he. 'Plenty o' scalawags in this town would make off with 'em ef they wuzn't too ignorant to know what they're wuth.'

"'Well,' says I ez he opened the crates

and the critters hopped out, 'it's jest like I've alwers heard; royalty is pretty much of a muchness with common folks; they do say kings and queens and dooks is no better 'n you 'n me, once you look 'em in the face, and these here 'ristocrats don't look no different to me than the rabbits you sold me fer thutty cents apiece.'

"That made him so mad he pretty nigh got his tongue over his eye-tooth and couldn't see to speak. 'Why, you poor, nit-witted nuncumpoop,' says he, 'look at them registration numbers! Look at them exhibition tags? Hain't you got the tunnel outer your eyes yit? And what in time are you limpin' fer? Tryin' to make a mock o' my rheumatis'?"

"'No,' says I, meek and amiable; 'had my leg doubled under me and my foot's asleep.'

"'I bet it is,' says he; 'so's your brain.' And he starts hobblin' up-stairs to git the feed. 'Hain't goin' to put up with this nuisance,' says he. 'Goin' to git my hutches made shipshape, feed close by and handy.'

"I follered him up-stairs and I wuz smilin' like a cherub off a valentine. I wuz feelin' happy and peaceful like I hadn't felt sence Old Man Hicks had come to town. Seemed like I c'd even fergit to be sore about my tunnel.

"'Guess I'll pack enough feed down to last till I git my hutches built,' says he.

How the Other Half Lives

A MISSION worker, in deprecating the way some people talk of "the drab lives of the poor," tells of some East Side girls who were taken up to a beautiful Westchester County country home to spend a summer day. As they were leaving their hostess said how much she had enjoyed their visit. Whereupon one of the girls replied:

"I guess we have cheered you up a little; it must be awful dull up here."

Words Without Music

SIMMONS, who is of a very nervous temperament, sat at the opera behind a couple who talked so continuously that Simmons soon found the situation intolerable. So he leaned forward and, with the utmost gravity, said:

"Pardon me, but would you mind speaking a little louder? Sometimes the music prevents my hearing exactly what you say."

'Hain't goin' to kill myself climbin' up an' down stairs.'

"'Whyn't you learn 'em to come up here fer their meals, the way Mis' Hicks done?' says I.

"'Cause these here is blooded stock, not old woman's playthings,' says he. 'You don't reelize what these rabbits *are*!'

"'Don't I?' says I, lookin' him right in the eye, meaningful.

"He stood still in his tracks and stared at me like he never see me before, and then he hobbled over to the feed-bin quick and flustered-like. 'I got to hurry,' he says, kinder quaverin'; 'them critters is hungry.'

"But jest ez he was ready to start down, 'By gum!' I says, 'my foot's still asleep!' and I stamped with my heel three times, sharp and hard. . . .

"He wheeled 'round like he wuz shot and I vow he turned pale.

"Up the stairs, lickety-brindle, come Leopold Second, King o' the Netherlands, and the Belle o' Flanders!

"Old Man Hicks he set right down on the floor like his legs wouldn't hold him. 'Billy Pettigrew,' he says, weak and feeble—'Billy Pettigrew, I been a good friend to you,' says he. 'I've give you good advice time 'n ag'in. If this here ever gits out, ef the town ever knows of this deal, I'll never hear the last of it to the longest day I live!'

"And Old Man Hicks wuz right."

Outwitted

AN old gentleman, known for his closeness, asked a friend to recommend a physician. The friend named a certain specialist noted for wit as well as professional skill.

"Are his fees very high?" asked the old fellow.

"Not very. He will charge you five dollars for the first visit and three dollars for each one after that."

Not long afterward the old gentleman walked into the office of the physician, and upon being admitted to the consulting-room, laid down three dollars and remarked, "Well, doctor, here I am again."

The doctor coolly picked up the money and put it into a drawer, which he locked. The patient looked on, expectantly, awaiting.

"I am ready to be examined," he said at length.

"It is hardly necessary," said the physician. "Just continue with the same medicine. Good day, sir."

Unto Cæsar the Things That Are Cæsar's

TOM was spending a week in the country with his aunt, a very devoted church-woman. On Sunday he accompanied her to the chapel to arrange the flowers before service, and while there the rector came in. After a few moments of conversation, the latter was about to leave, when Tom exclaimed, "Here, I've got something for you!" and, plunging his hand into his pocket, produced a dime which he held out to the astonished rector.

"Oh, Tom," said his aunt, reprovingly, "that is your church offering; you mustn't give it to Mr. Halloway."

Tom looked at his aunt with an air of worldly wisdom, and remarked, drily:

"He'll get it sooner or later, Aunt May. I may as well give it to him now."

Lèse Majesté

JUST as every one had sat down to the dinner-table Helen's big sister stepped into the hall to straighten her hair at the mirror.

Helen was so hungry, yet she knew that father would not say grace until big sister was in her seat. After fidgeting for a few moments she called out:

"Hurry up, Ruth; you're keeping God waiting."

An Ornithological Miracle

ANATIVE minister was telling the missionary in charge of the district that a sparrow had built a nest on the roof of his house.

"Is there anything in the nest yet?" asked the missionary.

"Yes," replied his Indian brother, proud of his English, "the sparrow has pups."

The Needle of To-day

A COUPLE of young business men were on their way down-town when one took the other into his confidence:

"I wish my wife were more domestic. She doesn't seem to care a thing about our house. Indeed, she is out most of the time."

"That reminds me!" exclaimed the other. "Excuse me a moment; I must run in here."

A moment later he reappeared, placing a small packet in his pocket. "Just remembered that my wife asked me to get her a package of needles. Lucky your talk reminded me."

"I wish my wife would ask for needles," continued the other. "But she absolutely refuses to sew a stitch."

Whereupon the other grinned. "Mine, too! These are phonograph needles," he explained.



Rural Criticism

"I suppose besides chargin' fer yer time ye make a profit on the paint too?"



To Decrease Visibility
Why not camouflaged stockings?

The Chief Question

AT the last lecture of the term Professor Clarkson told the students, with much emphasis, that he expected them to devote all of their time to preparation for the final examination.

"The examination-papers are now in the hands of the printer," he said. "Is there any question you would like answered at this time?"

For a moment there was silence; then one of the students called out:

"Who is the printer?"

Knew What He Was About

A MEMBER of a national medical association tells the following story at the expense of a physician:

"Are you sure," an anxious patient once asked—"are you sure that I shall recover? I have heard that doctors have sometimes given wrong diagnoses and treated a patient for pneumonia who afterward died of typhoid fever."

"You have been woefully misinformed," replied the physician, indignantly. "If I treat a man for pneumonia, he dies of pneumonia."

Lindy

(Negro Love Song)

MY Lindy say she lumme,
 My Lindy say it's so;
 My Lindy say she lumme lots,
 But why she doesn' know.
 I bet My Lindy lumme, I bet her heart mos' break,
 'Case if she didn' lumme lots, she sho make one mistake.

My Lindy say she lumme,
 She say she tell me true;
 She say she lumme such a much
 She don' know what to do.
 I bet dat's true she lumme, she lumme all she can,
 'Case if she didn' lumme, den she couldn' love no man.

My Lindy say she lumme,
 She say she lumme hard.
 My Lindy smilin' all de while,
 And smilin' 'most a yard.
 I bet my Lindy lumme, I bet dat make her proud;
 I bet she got a right to smile and maybe laugh out loud!

EDMUND VANCE COOKE.



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