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Romances of the Horse Dealer



He Leads a Varied Life and There's Not a Day Without Its Interesting Experience of Some Sort.

An Elopement in Which a Certain Horse Dealer Was One of the Two Most Interested Parties

Tricks of the Trade and on Whom They Are Worked. The Horse Dealers as the Honored Guests of the Farmers.

BY PAUL DANBY.

A big, red-headed, deep-chested, serious-faced, rather awkward chap of about thirty stepped off the accommodation train from the West one day in early Spring, at a small local railroad station in one of the old Middle States. He carried a well battered grip and something about his appearance caused the following colloquy between two men sitting on the stoop of the little two-story hotel across the road from the station:

"Jim," said the older of the two, "I'll bet that fellow's got horses to sell."

"Wah," said the younger, "he looks so serious for one thing. Hoss dealers always do look so solemn as your grandmother. He shows other signs of being a hoss dealer, but I can't describe 'em very well."

The older man's guess was right. The sanguine-topped stranger owned a carload of horses, which he had gathered in Missouri, the State in which he lived. As soon as he could find a place to sell them he purposed starting them on their eastern way. He was now stopping off at this particular way station to see what the prospects might be. The surrounding country being unusually good farming territory and the pressure of Spring plowing just beginning, he reckoned the demand for horses might be unusually good just then and there.

A GOOD MIXER.

It took the answer to only half a dozen of his seriously put questions to assure the horse dealer that he had reckoned correctly. Dumping his old hat behind the counter in the little hotel's apology for an office, he wandered solemnly back to the station, whence he dispatched a telegram to the caretaker of his carload of horses, telling her he had decided to put them on sale and directing that the car be started East as soon as possible. Then the dealer carried his awkward person back to the hotel stoop, where he disposed himself most comfortably and began to talk to the loungers there.

At first, shy of him, as country folk in the North and East generally are of the outsider, especially if his accent had a little to say in response to his friendly advances.

In an hour, however, he had made good headway with them. His stories and talk were quietly humorous and not clever enough to rouse resentment in their rather sluggish minds, and besides, under everything he said, there ran a vein of simple goodheartedness that was well nigh irresistible. Moreover, his accent wasn't all Southern. It had something of the quality which always accompanies real blarney, and it was clear that, no matter where he himself hailed from, his foreignness came from a certain green field across the sea that has furnished the world with more than its share of talkers who really know how to talk.

THE HORSE SALE.

Before the night of the third or fourth day thereafter, when the horse dealer's carload was left on the station's red siding by the daily freight, the red-headed horse dealer from Missouri, despite his deliberate ways, had managed to make the acquaintance of, or learned something about, pretty nearly every farmer within five miles of the station. He had also had a plain statement concerning his coming consignment of horses printed on two hundred postal cards, which he had scattered broadcast through the mails.

The sale took place about a week after the arrival of the carload. The horse dealer acted as his own auctioneer and made a record sale. He was never violent in his method of putting the merits of his horses before the prospective buyers nor was he strenuous in his jokes. But he made it clear to the farmers that he had good animals to sell, and the same vein of quiet, philosophical humor ran through all he had to say. His talk wasn't of the sort that would bring constant guffaws, but it did keep everybody in good humor all day long. The man didn't work half so hard selling fifty

horses as the local auctioneers generally did auctioning off the farming tools and furniture of some family about to leave the community, but the result was very handsome returns. It was the first sale of the sort that had ever taken place in that neighborhood, and after it was over the general opinion of the people was favorable to the dealer.

There was one exception, though. From time to time as the sale progressed little delegations of the farmers' wives and daughters had peeped through an open door into the hotel yard and had given some attention to the proceedings. Mary Smethers, however, was one of them. Mary was the soul of discretion, but something quaintly old-fashioned about her, the auctioneer had made her smile and look him straight in the eyes just when he was looking straight at her. The auctioneer smiled back and the girl flushed. Horace Goodell, as big as the horse dealer and nearly as old a man, known to be sweet on Mary, though not to have declared himself, intercepted the glance.

"It was plain to everybody, except the auctioneer, that Goodell didn't like it. The auctioneer hardly knew that the girl had looked at him, or that he had smiled back. He was thinking about selling horses not about girls, and the smile was part of his business, though it is possible that he had added a little to it when he saw Mary Smethers' eyes fixed appreciatively upon him, though he knew it was the joke and not him that caused the look."

"THE WOMAN IN THE CASE."

He, however, had not Goodell taken it to heart; and thus began the romance of one horse dealer's life. After the sale was over Goodell, thoroughly angered, marched straight up to the Missourian, made some pointed remarks about men from the South and West who were foolish enough to try to shine around New York State girls, and the generally unhappy consequences. The horse dealer laughed and tried to pass it off as a joke, but Goodell wouldn't have it that way.

"I'm going to marry Miss Smethers," he said, "and you'll have me to settle with if you bother yourself about her a little bit."

Everybody, including the girl, heard this bold defiance. She flushed more furiously than before. The horse dealer flushed, too, but controlled himself, and Goodell stalked away with his hands in his pockets, climbed into his buggy and drove home to his farm, some five or six miles away. He was almost blind he was so angry, and he never once looked at the girl, let alone speaking to her.

The immediate sequel need hardly be told. Some officious chap, sending possible complications that might give unwanted interest to the neighborhood, introduced the girl to the horse dealer that very day. The latter was interested, and instead of starting back West that night to buy more horses, leaving his helper to sell the remaining animals, decided to stay himself for a week or ten days.

ELOPEMENT AND REVENGE.

Deliberately, but purposefully, he set about winning Mary Smethers, and her father not liking the Missourian

any more than Horace Goodell had, an elopement took place at the end of the week. Horace Goodell was beside himself for years he had expected to marry Mary some time, but had never had the courage to tell her about it, and before the elopement, Goodell tried to tell his side of the story to her, but she was so indignant that she wouldn't speak to him. For some reason the two men did not meet and have it out. It was the opinion of the villagers that "one was afraid and the other dared" risk an encounter; anyway, there was no fight.

Goodell got his revenge, though, or thought he did. On the day after the elopement he took the train to a nearby city, hunted up one of the newspaper editors and made his way to the city editor's desk. To this young man he poured out the entire story, beginning the tragic recital of his heart-wrenching with the announcement told for years in that office legend to cub reporters that:

"My girl's run away with a gosh-darned horse dealer, and I want it printed, by golly!"

It isn't very often that the wandering horse dealer, either buyer or seller, figures in such a romance as this Missourian was the hero of, for most of them are staid married men or else confound in the single life and with their minds fixed as his had been, down to the time Horace Goodell handed him a ready-made romance, upon horses and not worrying about girls.

A NOT UNPLEASANT LIFE.

Still the travelling horse dealer who makes good in every sense, lives a not unpleasant life, in spite of all the hard work he has to do.

Of travelling horse buyers and sellers, outside the ranks of our friends, the gypsies, who travel virtually all the time, there are not many, comparatively. Much of the buying is done by dealers who are anchored in one place, often conducting some other business at the same time. More often than not the horses they buy are brought to them by small breeders in the vicinity. Such trips as these make are so short generally that each may be compassed in a day's driving among the farmers round about.

When enough horses have been gathered to make a consignment of, unless there is a sale for them at home, they are shipped to New York or Chicago, St. Louis or some other big city market, a man going along with the car to see that the animals are watered and otherwise cared for. The romance that falls to the lot of the man who travels with the horses is like sweet sounds in a boiler factory—it doesn't exist.

The comparatively few dealers in the Middle West who so out and find and buy their horses and then take them east to sell among the farmers, pass through many diverse experiences. They spend much of the time in the open air and this makes them healthy. They meet all sorts of characters among the small breeders and farmers they buy of, and do not often come in contact with the larger breeders, because they sell mainly to the big city buyers direct. Some of the small horse breeders are "square and right," but some of them have thorough knowledge of all the tricks of "hoss tradin'" known to the most hardened type of

country deacon, such as "David Harum" had dealings with.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE.

The horse buyer himself doesn't have much chance to work such tricks when he is buying in the West. It is then his business to see that he isn't fooled by the tricks. When he gets east and begins to sell, however, he may sometimes increase his business heavily by trickiness. To do so, however, he must be a very slick article, indeed, for the farmers naturally suspect a horse dealer of every scheme and subterfuge that the mind of man can invent.

They examine the legs of the horses they buy with the utmost care in search of defects, they are suspicious of the "wind" of every animal that is brought to them and in every way possible they make their suspicions perfectly apparent to the dealer.

It is true that the dealers sometimes deserve the worst opinions of the buyers, but there are square horse dealers nevertheless and when the farmers of a given community have made up their minds that a given travelling dealer is really square and right, the best in the land isn't too good for him. Sometimes such a dealer receives the same attention as are generally bestowed upon a gang of house painters who come to the farm to rejuvenate the big farm house, the front yard fence, etc., and if the farmer is especially prosperous, the big barn as well.

THE GUEST OF HONOR.

Then the fattest chickens are killed for the midday dinner every day, the choicest preserves are brought out for the tea or the supper, and the painters live on the fat of the land during the week or ten days it takes them to do the work. Any way, that's the way it used to be and the writer remembers bringing horses to the neighborhood when he was a lad in one of the old Middle States, who was almost made the honored guest of the entire community at his annual or semi-annual appearance with his string of horses.

Yet it is true that the stories of most travelling horse buyers, when they can be got to talk about it, which is not often, reveal a good deal more of real hardship and annoyance than anything else. Long, disagreeable trips through farming regions, constant dickering about prices, ceaseless vigilance lest unsound horses be palmed off upon him, these are constant features of his day's work.

If the dealer travels with his own horses by rail from the place of buying to that of selling he can tell of many dull and worrying days; of horses made sick and worthless by the discomforts of the train; of sleepless nights spent doctoring them up, for the value of each horse to the dealer makes good care of the animal profitable; of horses with broken legs though restlessness prevents haven't been taken, and sometimes utter failure to sell out the consignment even after it has been got to the hoped for market.

A LEVEL HEADED CHAP.

The horse dealer is a pretty level headed chap generally, or he couldn't maintain himself in the business, and he rarely kicks unless he is "drawn," no matter how rasping his experiences—in fact, he doesn't think about them; his mind is "on hosses, not hunting for grouches," as one of them told the writer yesterday. He must know horse nature or he couldn't buy and sell to advantage, and for the same reason he must know human nature better than most of his fellows. For this reason he looks alike upon the man who tries to "do him" and the man who is afraid he will be "done" with the eye of good natured indulgence, and rarely holds a grudge, no matter what the provocation.

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HIGH CLASS TAILORS.
Someone has said that the finest asset a young man can possess is a good suit of clothes, and there is a deal of truth in the saying. Edgecombe and Chaisson, 101 King street, have just received per steamer Andros the latest London novelties with exclusive designs. Those requiring a high class suit of clothes should give them a call.

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For dessert can be had without trouble and at slight expense by sending your order to T. J. Phillips, 213 Union street. Phone 1,240. Your order will have prompt attention. Any quantity, but only one quality—the best.

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She only answered "Ting a ling" to all that she could say. She seemed to live on "Ting a ling" by night as well as day. He said to her, "I'll marry you; but all that she could say was "Ting a ling, ting a ling, ting a ling, ting a ling." The young lady had tried some Ting a ling candy made by A. J. Russell, on Union street.

UNDERTAKER.
Death must always be a painful subject, but when it comes—as come it must—it is gratifying to know that our dear ones have the greatest care and attention shown them in the last offices. T. Fred Powers, of Princess street, pays special attention in this respect, and one cannot do better than entrust him when occasion arises.

GENTS' CLOTHING AND FURNISHINGS.
A store which is situated in a very convenient place, is that of E. Komensky & Co., 48 Mill street, as its handiness to the depot makes it sought after by people coming in or going out of the city. A full line of the latest gents' clothing and furnishings are carried by Mr. Komensky.

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branch office at 6 1/2 Charlotte street, where they take orders for coal, wood and kindling at the lowest cash prices, has recently undergone a thorough course of renovation and improvement. It attracts a great deal of attention. People are greatly interested in the superior quality of triple X hard coal which is displayed in the window. It is the best American hard coal imported to St. John and only costs a little more than the kinds usually sold here.

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There is nothing more delightful when strolling in the park than to smoke a good cigar, or a pipe of your favorite tobacco. If you are in want of either the genial Oscar has erected a delightful bungalow wherein you can obtain them, and indulge in a quiet game of pool to pleasantly while away an hour. Pop in and see him.

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