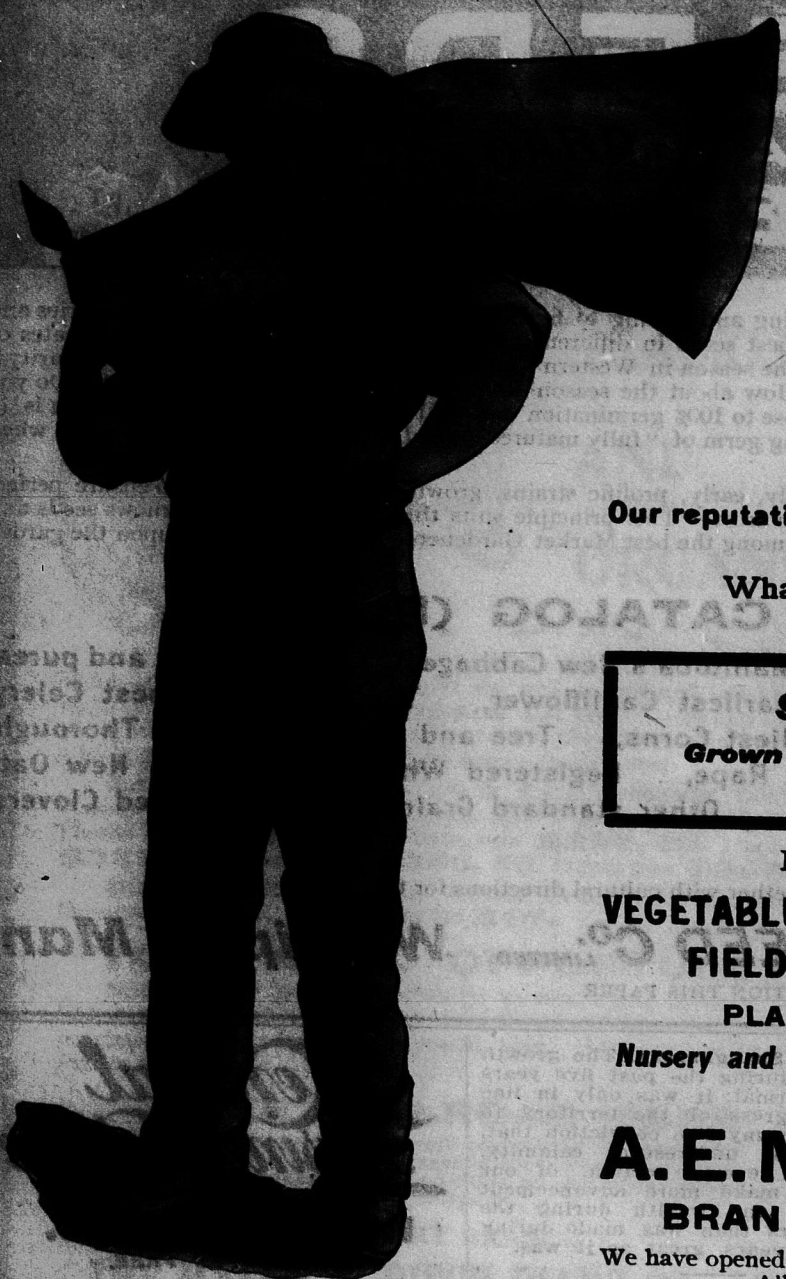




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Old Dad Kinney

By J. L. Harbour.

It is doing Old Dad Kinney no injustice to state openly that he was the toughest man in Camp Hilarity. Dad himself would not have resented this doubtful honor. He rather gloried in it and boasted openly that he was "open and above board" in all that he did. He called it "honest wickedness."

"I don't perfer to be what I ain't" he sometimes said, with his usual defiance of grammatical construction. There was defiance in all Dad did. He liked to set at naught established conventional. Like many other residents of Camp Hilarity, he was reticent regarding his past. It was known that he had come to Colorado from "the States" in what he called the "good old days of fifty-nine," and that he had been "mixed up" with every great boom in the Rocky Mountains since that time. He had a restless spirit and one that fed on excitement. Not even the weight of years could lessen his eager interest in a "boom."

The old man had the reckless generosity of most miners, and had been known to share his last dollar with some "poor cuss" who had appealed to him. Indeed, there was much that was commendable in the old man, and at times there was something wonderfully winning in him. At the age of seventy, Dad Kinney had made and lost several fortunes, and was living a hand-to-mouth existence in Camp Hilarity, and no man in it was a happier exponent of good cheer. It was his boast that he never "squealed" over the misfortunes that had befallen him.

Old Dad was a resident of Camp Hilarity long after the boom had subsided. A sudden and sharp attack of pneumonia had laid him low in his

little cabin, and nothing but his great physique and his fixed determination not to "pass in his checks" and "go over the range" had kept him from bidding adieu to all things earthly. He had come forth after his illness weak but triumphant, poverty-stricken but hilarious. Half philosopher and half jester, he had said, giving utterance to one of his common sayings:

"If you can't have what you want, be satisfied with what you kin git, by Joe!"

One stormy night in December five or six of "the boys" fought their way against a wind with an edge like a blade, and reached Old Dad's cabin "just to be sociable," as Jack Harney said. Old Dad had given them his usual cheery and noisy welcome. He placed boxes and stools for them around the fire, and piled on a fresh supply of pine knots. He was on his "high horse" that night, as one of the men said. Suddenly he stopped in the midst of a jolly song and said:

"Say, boys, you know what comes next week?"

"Ya-a-s, the bottom o' my old flour bar'l, an' there's the sum total o' my boodle to get me another one," said Long Jack, as he held out one broad and not very lean palm with a silver half-dollar on it.

"I reckon I'll have to begin takin' boarders then if the rest of you are in the same box, or par'l, for I've got a good half bar'l left," said Old Dad. "But, comin' back to my 'firstly,' as a gospel shark would say, ain't it ever crep' into the little things you gents air pleased to call your minds that next week is the time when you air to hang up your stockin's?"

"Christmas, by the great horn spoon!" roared Big Andy Taft, bring-



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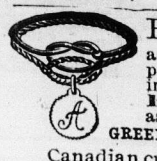
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