

tremendous labour. The four from the "Tarpeian Rock" could in no way be said to be biased, for they were none of them agriculturists. But, after the first hour of it, they were making perspiring oaths to one another that of all man's work, handling a timothy crop on a hot day must certainly be classified in a limbo of its own.

When the third load had been thrown off, it was long after one o'clock. They put the team in the stable and gave the horses their midday oats. Then they wearily dragged themselves back to the field, and in the shade of the big elm opened their lunch basket.

A half hour later, following the advice and example of the Doctor, "Foxy" and "Vander" proceeded to take a balmful siesta. The Colonel still sat glowering for some time, but ended by joining them.

They slept much longer than they had intended to. It was almost three when they got up stiffly again. Nor could it be said that they went back to work with any vigour renewed. That first load of the afternoon was put on with creakings of the joints which no perspiration could lubricate, and hoisted into the mow with interminable groanings.

It seemed rather queer, too, that Mrs. Dorsey had not yet made any appearance. Of course nobody desired it. In point of fact, her benedictions would no doubt be rather embarrassing than otherwise. But it would be well to have the thing over and done with. And, to say the least of it, it was strange that she had not so much as shown herself, though they had come in with load after load.

The Doctor made apologetic explanation for her. "Her husband's on his back, you know, and she hasn't begun to get over her first fright yet. It's natural enough for her to be blind and deaf to everything else. In fact, I told her myself to stay by him as closely as possible."

When they came in with the last load, however, the good woman was standing by the barn door. She had her milk pails with her, but it was plain that her mind was upon things other than the milking. She was very full of shy and stammering gratitude indeed.

Yet—yet—there was something else.

"I—I just hate to speak of it," she said, weakly, "but that hay—I should 'a' thought to come out and look at it myself in the beginnin', for none of you could be expected to know—that hay seems to be left wet and heavy by the storm last night; I'm terrible afraid you've fetched it in before it's got rightly dried. If it should heat and go sour—it's terrible thin this year at the best, and if we were to lose what we have, I don't know what in this world we'd do for feed! I can't tell you how much we're thankful an' obliged to you, and I know how it must sound for me to be sayin' this, but if that hay—"

The Judge made answer. He said they could not tell how glad they were that she had spoken of the matter. They would make all haste to take that hay out again. They would do it the first thing in the morning. But for the dew, they would insist on doing it before they went home that night.

As they pulled haltingly and bitterly across the lake, there was much more they might have said—but to what end? There was nothing else for it but to take that hay out. Besides, no mere trifling blunder can affect an underlying, ethical principle. It is the intention which is the reality. If Dorsey really was too ill to get up and do his work like a man—and the Doctor at any rate appeared to believe he was—they accepted the situation, and they would go through with it to the bitter end.

It was much later even, next morning, when they got over to the farm than it had been the day before. And as they stood in the barn door and looked at the high-rising and plethoric mow, enthusiasm, that winged aid, had given place to taciturnity and gloom.

VANDERDECKEN had an idea, however, which seemed likely to subtract somewhat from the amount of work ahead. On the west side of the barnyard, and stretching back to the bush, was a field which had been allowed to lie fallow. To open the rail fence to it would offer a spreading-ground directly at hand. It would save the necessity of any laborious load-building, too; for they could pitch the hay down on the rack as loosely as it would be forked off again. The judge alone found fault with the scheme; and all he could say was that it seemed a good deal too easy, somehow.

It was the objection of unreasoning pessimism, and it was over-ruled with contumely.

The morning was sweltering hot, and the hay-mow was in the sunward wing of the barn. It was an oven which there was no breath of air to cool. And out in the fallow field, the four distilled in perspiration. Thereto was added yet another thing: the bun-backed shoat, which had been healthily mumbing a corn-cob when they arrived, now persistently got in front of the Colonel as he drove, and fled before him with the renewed squeals of an anguish by this time too palpably simulated. And the super-human restraint which the Colonel was plainly putting upon himself were hardly less sawingly upon the nerves of the other three. Because, too, they were now moving only half as much at a load, there were twice as many loads to move. There appeared to be absolutely no end to the operation.

BUT, a few minutes before twelve, it was finished. Now at least they could begin again where they had originally begun, and there was fresh hope in that. They ate their lunch in the shade of the barn, and then once more headed the hayrack for the outer field.

A new fact, however, was revealed by a more careful examination of that "upper ten." Perhaps half its acreage consisted of rather low ground, and before the hay on that part of it could be brought in, it would have to be turned and left to



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sun for at least another day. That, too, was something which obviously demanded attending to before anything else. For which reason they turned sourly away from it, and proceeded to take another load from those windrows which were already dry.

They had just put it on, when the Doctor decided that this time he preferred to walk to the barn. In getting down he managed to prod the nigh horse with his fork. In the fine free-for-all, catch-as-catch-can runaway which ensued, if the Colonel was not left upon the field, the greater part of that load of timothy was.

But once again they silently hoisted it on and started for the barn. And when they reached the head of the lane, what sight awaited them was this: from the maple bush at the other end of that fallow field, to the hay spread forth before them there had come up every hoof and horn of the Dorsey stock. And they had encompassed it about, and were laying waste, and trampling, and with all possible speed devouring it!

The four made no demonstration of passion. They had no more heart for it. They simply opened the fence, drove the animals into the barnyard and closed up the gap after them again. In the straggles of even the most indomitable spirits there too often comes a moment when it is evident that fate itself has declared against them. Thereafter they may still resist, but it is with the unhoping automatism of fish caught in the net of Ananke.

They threw off their load, and wended their weary way back to the field to turn the wet windrows of that "upper ten."

It was on towards the end of the afternoon that "Foxy" and the Doctor took their forks on their shoulders and again mounted the lane to see if the first hay was not now dry enough to put back in the mow. It would have surprised them little, if, in their absence, a tidal wave had rolled over it, or the earth had opened and engulfed it.

But the imp of the perverse takes too keen a delight in the exercise of his ingenuity to contrive any such commonplace calamities. When the pair had examined that loathly, fallow field timothy, and decided that what remained of it was at last cured beyond any danger of relapse, they went moodily back to the stable to get the horses. Leaning against the feed bins was a half-grown, red and white calf; and even the Judge could see at a glance that its condition was pathological.

The Doctor took a second and confirmatory look. "Great heavens!" he cried, "this—this puts the crown on everything! He's got into the oats!"

"Well—and I've no doubt it was I who left the barn door open," spluttered up "Foxy." "But all I've got to say is that I hope he may be rewarded for the smartness he's displayed in working his way clear through here, by an infernally good pain in his pinny!"

"Pain?" The Doctor turned the beast's eyes around to the light. "Pain nothing! The brute doesn't feel anything at all, most likely—but he's on the verge of collapse!"

"What?—What?" The Judge's whole attitude underwent the most immediate change. "Good Lord, Fergusson, don't tell me that! Why, merely a few oats—"

"Get hold of his other ear!" shouted the Doctor, swinging the animal ruthlessly to the right-about. "I've no hope whatever that there's anything in the stable I could give him. But if we get him outside and keep him on the jump—make him run like blue blazes—!"

THE old gentleman grasped the left ear, they flung out of the door and started on a gallop down the lane. They reached the bars at the end of it, turned, and with almost unslackened speed made their course a second time. They could not have believed they had any such power of exertion left in them.

The red and white calf rolled his head from side to side, and tried desperately to balk. But the two Tarpeianers thumped upon his thick, oat-filled rotundity, and rushed him onward. He could only keep sending forth a piteous, blating bawl.

And it did not go unanswered. By the time they had thrice made the circuit of their hippodrome, every milch cow, heifer, and leggy yearling which those enemies of the bovine kind had imprisoned in the barnyard, was following the amazing spectacle with ears set forward and eyes protuberant. And, by their fourth time around, the herd had started after them. They did not make any attempt at a rescue. But, bellowing their sympathy, they circled and pushed one another in upon the torturers as they ran.

"My heavens! but will you get out?" roared the Judge.

They only "boo'd" their protests, and flung their tails, and crowded in the closer.

Another round of that was all that human nature could endure. When the two reached the place where they had opened the fence in the morning, the Doctor let go of his "handle," and began furiously to pitch the rails down again; and that done, he did not stop until he had driven the last of the herd through into the fallow field once more. "No doubt they'll finish that hay," he choked; "but let them! Let them! And it's a choice between that and the field of oats!"

In the meantime, while he was closing up the gap again, the *vis inertiae* which the calf was able to oppose to the Judge's single propelling power had fairly brought him to a standstill. And it was a standstill which Foxy Grandpa showed a craven willingness to take advantage of.

"Fergusson," he panted, as the former came back on the run, "I really think he's getting over it—I'm almost certain—"

"Look here!" And the Doctor launched the brute ahead again while trying vainly to contain himself. "What—what do you imagine—would be likely to happen to you—if you had eaten about two bushels of dried apples?"

(Concluded on page 14.)