

You—no underclothes, please. Now listen—about to-morrow's operations."

It was their last chance at a peaceful Hodge for some time to come.

"One of you harrows. Another drives the drill. The other three of us—"

Hodge paused for dramatic effect.

"Guess it, boys."

From a cloud of smoke came the simultaneous slogan,

"Fork manure!"

Hodge sat on the end of the table.

"You'll all take turn about at that," he continued, with a grim chuckle. "I'm the steady. There's at least 200 big waggon-loads in that barnyard. Half of it should have been hauled out last fall and ploughed under. That's at least six days' work for one team, two waggons and three men. One man, of course, pitches on—"

"That's you, Hodgey," they all agreed.

"You are happy right. I am the person. One man drives the team and unloads in the field. The third man spreads the manure. And I intend—" Hodge knocked the ashes from his pipe into the stove damper—"to keep those two men abnormally busy. Good-night, boys."

HODGE clapped on his hat, dipped a drink from the pail, and went out to bunk in the hay-mow.

At 5 a.m. of a marvelous morning this same irrepressible Hodge was banging about the barn. He crammed in hay to the six horses and called to the Chinaman.

"Rout 'em out, Soon."

Four drowsy-eyed magnates blundered below stairs in their socked feet wanting to know,

"Hey, Yem, where do we wash?"

This was a point Hodge had overlooked.

"Allee sameee—washee dish on the bench. Lain bal. Yah."

They came out to the rain barrel, admiring the bird-songs and the blue sky and the buds down by the creek—and all that; when Hodge suddenly hove along with two pails of fresh milk at his boot-legs.

"Say!" he exploded, "do you men think this is a Pullman? Whoever heard of a farmer washing himself before he does his chores? You'll be wanting breakfast in bed next. Here Mark, 'tend to this milk. I'll give you gentlemen a first lesson in barn work before breakfast."

Hodge led them all away unwashed to the stable, where to each man, pro tem, he assigned his duties. And it was a sure cure for the blues to watch Conf. Trust try to clean out the stables without jabbing the fork into the heels of a horse.

"By Jove!" he said. "I think we'd better back the horses out first."

"No you don't!" roared Hodge. "Make 'em stand over. Bat 'em on the rump with the fork-handle if they don't. My dear sir, you clean out a horse-stall with about as much pep as you use a finger bowl."

Advtg. Agency went currying a big horse under the belly as though he were taking the tats out of a girl baby's hair till Hodge gave him a lesson; and by this time Insurance Expert was timidly wriggling a nigh horse harness on to an off horse.

"Hold on!" screamed Hodge. "Don't you know nigh from off? Oh, Lord! Of course you don't. Here, what in the Sam Hill do you think you're doing, anyhow? Great ginger!"

Ins. Expert was merely trying to stick the hames of the harness on the horse's rump and the breeching-strap under his neck for a breast collar.

Hodge stood at the door to keep his awkward squad from seeing the tears of laughter in his eyes.

At 6.45 they sat in to breakfast. At 7.15 they

were out hitching up; Hodge giving instructions about harrows, seed oats and drill, and greasing the two waggons for hauling manure. By the time any one of these hired men would normally be shaving in his pyjamas in town they were all hard at work. Lawyer took the drill, because he had seen his father drive such a thing in his boyhood. Insurance took the harrows—which Hodge had rigged up as double set wide to save time getting over the ground. That left Advtg. Agency and Conf. Trust to hitch up the third team, while Hodge whopped a load of manure on to a waggon—in the space of 16 minutes by his own watch.

"Yank tother waggon in yonder," he advised. Change over your team to this one. No—don't undo the tugs. Don't—undo—'em! Yank out the bolt from the doubletree! Pick up the outfit. Ease up the tongue from behind and let it drop out o' the neckyoke. Glory to grief! You'll be—"

He showed them how one man could swing a team from one waggon to another in 30 seconds.

"Oh, my dear fellow-citizens," he said, "don't imagine that because you can drive a motor-car you know a blessed thing about mechanics. Now up you get. For the love o' Mike don't be looking round for a waggon seat—there isn't any. And don't sit on the manure till you get rubber seats for your overalls. Stand up and drive, my boy. You, Tom, jab the two forks in behind and hang on to 'em. Now hit the lane. Get that waggon back here by the time I get the next load on. Watch where you're driving in this yard or you'll bog the team and upset. Skedaddle!" he finally roared.

No man who has never pitched manure in a warm barnyard keeping one waggon loaded all day long can appreciate the experiences of Hodge that May day. Two winters of horses and cattle had packed that barnyard into geological layers. The formation ranged from six inches deep on the outside edge towards the fence to five feet at the stable door. The average depth over most of the yard was about two feet. It was all a vast tank of ooze and smell, tramped down there for the express purpose of busting fork-handles and pulling a man's arms out by the roots. All the ancient magic of that barnyard was there now as it had been thirty-odd years ago. Men and cities and institutions may change. A manure heap is always what it used to be and what it is going to be till the end of time.

Hodge grabbed the manure fork close up to the tines. He levered the handle over his right leg. The forkfuls he heaved up made the waggon-boards rattle when they came down. He worked with the rhythm of a steam shovel and about the same kind of grim energy. On his second load he sweat crocodile tears which he took no time to wipe away.

When Conf. Trust came banging awkwardly back to the yard he wanted to laugh and talk a bit. Hodge bit him off, gave him gruff directions just where he wanted the empty waggon and went whopping up manure without another word.

ROBINS and swallows twittered overhead. The fields danced in the forenoon sun. Hodge put the blinkers on himself and shut it all out. No slave is driven so hard as the slave who drives himself. Hodge's bluff was called and his dander was up. For two hours he scarcely noticed the waggons change. All he knew was that the teamster was still in the land of the living and as yet had not upset a load or got the horses snarled up in the harness. He rather admired him for his pluck. The only driving Conf. Trust had ever done was a bit of

dandy work at the horse show. This was different. The only spreading Advtg. Agency had ever done was to scatter ads in newspapers at so much a line. That job in the field was different. He would praise Advtg. Agency at noon; also Conf. Trust. They were good sports.

But they must first—be bushed.

Hodge let his braces go loose. He could feel the ooze trickling down his back and his legs. He liked it. Sweat blinded his eyes. He rubbed it away with the roll-up of his sleeve. His breath came in what he used to call chunks when he was a boy. He took it gladly.

Towards noon he realized that he was losing a little time. By his thirteenth load he knew it. He



had yet five to pitch to make what he considered a good forenoon's work.

But he had no trouble keeping ahead of the gang. They were tuckering. Hodge said never a word to his teamster. But he knew by the way the man wobbled about the waggon that he was feeling shaky. He glanced up about the 15th load and was quite surprised to find that the driver was Advtg. Agency, who had been already tuckered at the spreading and thought he would like to ride a bit.

AND when the Chinaman pounded the tin pan, the signal for dinner, Hodge wiped the sweat from his face, pulled his togs together and rammed his hands in his pockets to look as unconcerned as possible. The teams came creaking together at the water trough. They banged into the stalls. Hodge leaned on the doorway to see what insane things three of them might do, while the other rammed hay into the mangers.

"Easy, boys," he said, holding up both hands. "No, you don't unharness horses at noon. Come on to chuck!"

The tired gang trailed away to the wash-basin and the rain barrel.

Not until they had got the first round of a square meal did a man of them speak.

"Say," said Conf. Trust. "Is anybody tired?"

When they got out to the chip hill for an after-dinner smoke they all, except Hodge, went to sleep in the sun.

Hodge watched the sleeping babes with a fatherly eye. "Poor things!" he said. "They're dreaming they're smoking cigars at the Club. It's a darn shame to wake 'em. But duty must be done."

Tenderly with his boot he roused each sleeping exile. With cheerful dialogues they limped to the stables. Lawyer and Insurance went to the manure yard with Hodge. Advtg. Agency and Conf. Trust took the harrows and the drill.

The afternoon was the forenoon multiplied by weariness. Manure in the morning is one thing; in the afternoon another. Anyway, Hodge found a difference. The forenoon had taken much of his tuck. He stabbed at the afternoon loads doggedly under the whip of his own self-imposed determination—to bush that entire gang and teach them who

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