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## HODGE DISCOVERS *His* DIAPHRAGM

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*Dedicated to all masculine city folk of agricultural age who can't go to the front, but may go to the trenches in the harvest fields of Canada*

HENRY HODGE never dreamed he had such a strange, subconscious ego as began to waken in him those first days of spring, second year of war, 1916. Neither did Mrs. Hodge and the Misses Hodge, all of whom he scandalized by his behaviour.

We must remember that Hodge is the son of an Ontario farmer who spent his early days clearing a bush farm. He had, therefore, inherited a bushwhacking instinct, besides having spent his own boyhood on the farm. When it became necessary for the Governments of Canada to shout for increased production, as they did last year, and are doing still more loudly this year, Hodge's productive conscience was stung. His letters to the editor, printed in last week's issue, were the first evidence of his aroused state of mind. His pitching on of the load of hay capsized across the street-car tracks was the second. The performances to be narrated in this article are the third. And on the expectation of these regenerative antics Hodge called down upon himself the satires of Madam and the Misses Hodge.

"I'm sure he's daft, dears," said Madam.

"Ridiculous!" said the daughters. "Outrageous!"

"We're the talk of the neighbourhood," bemoaned Mrs. Hodge, knitting. "It's dreadful. For myself, I don't mind, dears. I knew Henry when he was fresh from the farm. In fact, when he courted me he wasn't sure but he'd become a vet—"

"Mercy on us!" chimed the twins.

"But I pinched him off it, dears. He often says now he wishes I hadn't. He could have gone to the front as a Blue Cross man. Oh, dear! He perfectly yearns to go back to something he used to be. Says it's atavism or something. Dears—look up atavism in the encyclopaedia."

Which of course they did all unconsciously to Hodge, who in the attic that morning had begun his rebaptism into the world of beef, brawn and diaphragm. He had long ceased to argue with the feminine Hodes on the matter. In the attic every morning as he rose from a straw tick on the floor and in nature's sublime altogether, began his personal crusade against physical inefficiency, he regarded himself as a cityized degenerate inspired by the war to become a real man again.

"The trouble with this whole business of decreasing production," he argued to himself at the open window, "is that thousands of men like me years ago went on strike against farm labour. We left the farm because somebody told us we

had brains enough to make a better and more picturesque living in town. It's all tommyrot. I haven't been picturesque in twenty years. I'm nothing but a citified drudge. Now, by George!

I'll be picturesque. This summer I'll be both picturesque and useful on the end of a pitchfork. But before I do I'll have to get these kinks out of my muscles and re-discover my diaphragm."

"Well I'm sure I

But they're fussing themselves up so with togs that they don't even know it's possible to stretch themselves an inch most any direction and stay stretched all day."

Up in the attic Hodge put his creaky joints through a variety of exercises. The chief items on his attic programme were:

No. 1. Bending forward to touch the floor with finger-tips, knees remaining unbent.

No. 2. Bending backward till floor was touched by a stick long enough to reach from his nose to end of his arm; said stick being hoisted like a flag-pole at tip of nose and then swung slowly backwards.

Under ordinary conditions, when Hodge had conquered a manoeuvre like that he would have told everybody down at the office and the club the very same day. But under his new covenant with himself Hodge put a mysterious embargo on communiques from the attic, even to members of his own family.

Mrs. and the Misses Hodge might bait him with innuendos at breakfast and cumulative sarcasms at dinner. Serene in the conquest of his own dorsal vertebrae, having persuaded his liver and all adjacent organs thereto not to swing out of place with the violence done to his vertebrae in getting to the floor with No. 2 after a week's trial, Hodge could afford to wear the calm strength

of a self conqueror.

But No. 2 had been a terrible wrench.

He had done it only by giving himself a good two inches of wand to the good and gradually decreasing that to nil.

don't want to know anything about diaphragms," said Mrs. Hodge. "If that's what makes your father act so I think he'd better have his removed."

Like all thoroughly converted people, Hodge had his troubles. From the day that he rediscovered his muscular nervous system pitching on that load of capsized hay, he had never ceased to cultivate it.

"I don't care if I'm as ridiculous as old Doc. Faust," he said again and

again. "Besides, I'm not doing this for any Marguerite or to sell my soul to the devil. This is the way I beat out the devil. I wish those girls of mine would take a little gymnasiumizing in their boudoirs before they dress in the morning. They're a pair of fine specimens.

HAVING bent himself both ways, fore and aft, Hodge was now in a condition to take up his No. 3. Remember, these were all originated by Hodge, who diligently avoided all text books on hygiene or calisthenics. Every man his own Sandow, was his slogan. The joy of thinking out the various exercises and arranging them in order was in itself quite as stimulating as ever he had found Euclid or the war psychology of the United States. No. 3 was getting down like a salamander and with his toes touching the floor, raising the rest of his weight a cumulative number of times by means of straightening his biceps. He began at three and collapsed. In a week's time he increased the maximum to seven.

Hodge carried this on simultaneously with No. 4, which aimed to give an equal development to those very similar muscles, the calves of his legs. These were different. Hodge discovered that since mankind abandoned the simian stage he had made far greater use of his biceps than the flexors and extensors on his calves. His No. 4 aimed to overcome some of this handicap. Any man with an ambition to make his physique useful to a real farmer on end of a pitchfork in haytime must give as much attention to one set of muscles as another. In fact he must revert to the muscular standard of the savage who never had to develop his muscles in sets

