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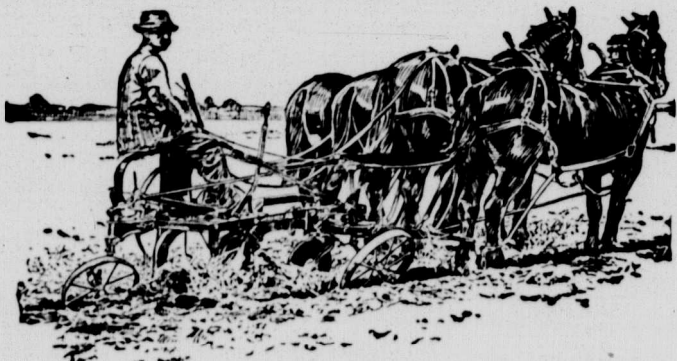
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rage, and grandpa could hear him roaring the news to Martha. Tears stood in his eyes, and his throat felt twisted and sore—sore, like his heart—that he should be treated with such indignity by his own son.

"Seems as if old folks ain't got no right to be!" he whispered.

VI

James Papkin and his wife conferred heatedly with Aunt Purvis's daughter. The upshot was an agreement that the families should regard the marriage of their respective parents as being wholly null, void, and without binding force or effect. Neither family would consent to keep the old couple together, or to contribute toward their support.

"Father'll live with us, and your mother'll live with you, same as usual, and we won't have no nonsense!" James summed it up.

This ultimatum was conveyed to grandpa and his wife.

"Don't you worry, Mary, not a mite," grandpa consoled her. "Them divy-dends'll be comin' in less than a week, and then we kin snap our fingers at the whole kit and bilin' of 'em!"

From that day Grandpa Papkin all but took up his residence at the post-office.

"The money won't come till Tuesday," he told himself; "but it might, and I want to be here to get it first off."

On Tuesday he arose early, donned his Sunday best, and appeared at breakfast happy and confident.

"Divy-dends is comin' to-day, Jimmy," he explained, and James snorted scornfully.

The old man took his stand at the delivery window a full hour before the mail arrived, "to be there first." With his elbows on the sill, he peered expectantly through the grating. When the letters were distributed, and the postmaster stepped forward, he asked, his voice quivering with excitement:

"Anythin' for Ben Papkin?"

"Nope, not a thing this mail, grandpa."

For a minute the old fellow was staggered, but he bethought himself that other mails arrived that day. He inquired:

"Two more—twelve forty and three thirty," was the reply.

He sat on the office steps, not going home for dinner. The second mail brought him nothing, and his face lost something of its expression of confidence. He paced uneasily up and down, and mopped his forehead many times with a gaudy handkerchief.

"It's got to come!" he muttered. "The young feller promised. His eyes was honest. It's got to come!"

How the time dragged to three thirty and the last mail of the day! Yet, somehow, grandpa dreaded the hour. If the dividend check failed to come, what would he do? He tried to think it out, but the future was blank; he could not limn it in.

The bag arrived; he heard the postmaster sorting its contents, saw the line form at the window. This time he was not first; he feared to ask the question that meant so much—*independence, a home, a wife, old age spent in comfort.* But he must, he knew he must, and he forced his feet to carry him before the grating.

There his tongue refused its office, but the postmaster did not await the question. "Nothin' for you, grandpa," he said cheerfully.

Grandpa bit his under lip, and made believe he failed to hear.

"What say?" he demanded.

"Nothin' for you."

So he had been tricked! Not only had he been robbed of his own store, but Aunt Purvis's little fund, the dollars that were to provide the sort of funeral she planned, had gone as well. And with the money had disappeared the dream of independence, the little home, the peaceful days to which they had looked forward together.

Grandpa Papkin's was a brave old spirit, and he did not groan aloud. With shoulders sagging, eyes dull, he tottered from the office, tottered up the road, tottered out of sight; and his years were multiplied and laid with crushing weight upon him.

The family were in bed when he stumbled up the walk and into the house—in bed, but not asleep.

"Let's see them divy-dends!" jeered his son.

At the cruelty of it grandpa crept up the stairs stifling a sob. But this was not the worst. What he would bear; condemnation he could endure; but what would Aunt Purvis—no, not Aunt Purvis, his wife—what would she say? He fell on his knees at the side of the bed, clutched



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