

Personal Philanthropy

What Befel Four City Chaps Who Went to the Aid of a Sick Farmer

By ARTHUR E. McFARLANE

THE camp by the "Tarpeian Rock" was at the northern extremity of that Quebec fishing preserve. And across the Lake, half an hour's row through the islands encircling the "Rock," stretched the Dorsey place, the only farm for six or eight miles around. From it "the old stag four" got their bread and eggs and butter; and there was a young orchard, too, which promised to make its contributions in due season.

On that particular sultry day in the last week of June, Dr. Fergusson had ended his trolling by having Ciprien pull into Dorsey's bay to see if he could not get a blanket option on the Red Astrakhan yield. And when he got back to camp he brought some rather bad news with him—Dorsey had been knocked out by the heat. He had cut the hay in his "upper ten," and that afternoon he had persisted in finishing the raking of it; now he would have to stay on ice for a week, or maybe two.

Vanderdecken and the Colonel dropped the tackle they were working on, and looked at him concernedly.

"And his hired man's skipped out to take up some guiding job, hasn't he?" asked the Judge, lifting his large obesity from the grass under the cedars.

"He has, and Dorsey doesn't seem to know where under heaven he'll get another, either. But he'll be 'round all right before long. I'll go over and see him again to-morrow morning."

He did; and he could return with further reassurances. Also, on the way back he had passed the Judge's skiff.

"Where is Foxy Grandpa going?" he inquired.

"Up to Narrow Channel."

"Well, it'll be the 'broad road' with him, one of these times, if he isn't more careful. I hope the bass at least will have the sense to stay in till the thermometer drops a few."

Evidently they had, for the old gentleman came back with an empty creel. He took his ill luck with uncommon equanimity, however.

Next morning, although the thermometer had most patently *not* "dropped a few," Vanderdecken "thought he'd drag a spoon around Painted Island and see if he couldn't tempt a 'lunge from bottom.'" He came back as trophyless as the Judge.

But neither of them appeared discouraged. "Foxy" went off immediately after luncheon. And an hour later "Vander" took the other single skiff and followed in his turn.

The Doctor had expressed his scientific opinion of both of them. But, none the less, a few minutes afterwards he announced that for his part he was going over to see his patient.

The Colonel reddened somewhat and reached for his hat. "Oh, oh—Doctor," he said, with awkwardness. "I dare say you'll consider me all sorts of a Quixotic ass, but I think I'll just pull over with you, and see if I can't pile up a little of that hay Dorsey's been raking in his 'upper ten.'"

When the prow of the double skiff grounded in the cove at the end of the lane, Vanderdecken had just gone into the Dorsey barn to get a pitchfork. When he came out again he walked squarely into the arms of the two latest arrivals.

Their jeers were unlimited. But at length the Colonel turned his eyes towards the pine-bordered fields. "What is there to do out there, anyway?" he asked. "Let's go and see."

They climbed through the bars and followed the lane along a field of oats and another of buckwheat. When they had pushed through the last thick green windbreak, they all stopped short together and stood rootedly agape. Ponderously wielding a fork in the centre of that "upper ten," the round rubicundity of his countenance blazing more lambently than the sun itself, was Foxy Grandpa.

WITH outraged war whoops they descended upon him, seized his arms, and roweling him behind with his fork, rushed him back into the nearest shade.

He puffed and deprecated indignantly. "Pshaw, boys—I suppose I've arrived at years of discretion."

"You have—and passed them!" avowed the medicine man.

For a space they fanned themselves with their hats in silence.

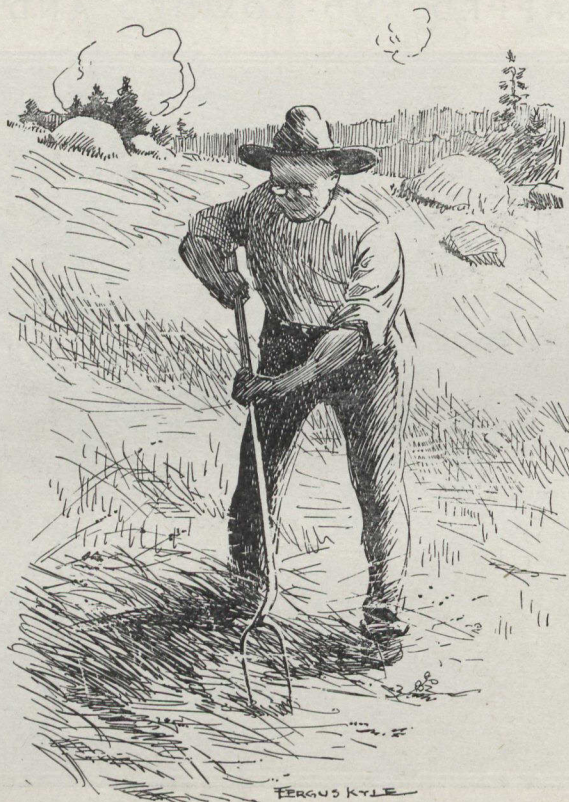
"Of course," said the Doctor, after a time, with a grin, "I don't say that a little hay-making need be an absolutely sure-death proposition. With proper precautions one or two of us might survive

the experience. But why not offer Cip's services instead?"

"Yes, and try doing our own camp work again?" derided Vanderdecken. "Oh-h no!—Oh-h no! Not in little Willie's!—Besides, Doc," and he dug him benignly in the ribs, "your heart being professionally nickel-plated, you are essentially incapable of comprehending that this is one of those occasions which palpably call aloud for personal philanthropy—for the good angel con game."

"Well," and Fergusson beamed, "it certainly isn't every day that you get the chance to be a blessed Santa Claus in midsummer. And if you are willing to remain under my orders—"

The thing was settled. "We'll have the hayrack out before seven to-morrow," said the Judge; "and



"Foxy Grandpa ponderously wielding a fork in the centre of that 'upper ten.'"

in a day and a half we'll have the whole crop in the barn."

On the way home and during the evening they did a good deal of joking about that "good angel con game." But generosity will not be mocked. They fell asleep that night with hearts sweetly beatified by that inward guerdon, the consciousness of prospective virtue. And it gave them dreams from which they were hardly awakened by the thunders of a midnight downpour.

Owing to the Judge's having refused, with adjurations, to get up when he was called, it was considerably after nine when they pulled into Dorsey's bay next morning. But that "it is always better for hay to have a little sunshine on it before it is handled," was something which, in Foxy Grandpa's opinion, could not admit of argument.

The Doctor left them still arguing about it, and disappeared up the lane to see the owner of the hay.

And they had only got the team and rack through the first bars when he returned. For the Colonel alone had been able to bring to bear any actual knowledge of double harness with which to buckle together his intuitions. But, after having let down three successive fences, they at length entered the "upper ten."

FILLING their hats with basswood leaves, they prepared to go to work. The Colonel said he supposed they would want him to build the load. They let him, but they put the Doctor up in front to drive and to look after the bow end of the enterprise.

Vanderdecken and the Judge followed the windrows to the right and left of the waggon, and heaved up the uncocked bunches. And after the first five minutes that timothy did not go aloft "unsalted." As for the two on top, they were in the full solar focus; and to add thereto they had a job upon their hands which was as exasperatingly

tricky as it seemed profoundly simple. Again and again the Colonel flounderingly piled up the rear end of the load, only to have it avalanche back upon the twain below.

"Wouldn't you be wiser," said Foxy Grandpa, beginning to lose his temper, "wouldn't you be wiser to make its hind quarters squarer—to give it some supporting angles—sort of like a cow's back, you know? That's the way I've been used to seeing loads built."

"Like a cow's back!" panted the Colonel, sliding and wallowing anew; "there's some bony structure in a cow's back. This thing's like some cursed monument of feather-beds!"

However, the load was built at last. But before starting for the barn the driver steered his team into the grateful shadow of a big "islanded" elm. The two on the ground sank without comment into the cool of the grass. They had no mind to hurry the caravan.

And, for the matter of that, they got finally under way again only after a slight controversy up above. "But, if you observed," the Colonel could be heard repeating with great politeness, "the bridge into the barn is unusually steep and narrow, and I did a little gun-and-wheel driving in the artillery, you know."

"Well, if I've never done any of that," replied the Doctor no less politely, "on occasion I've tooled my 'bubble' along a rippled chalk line. It's awfully good of you, old man, but really I think you deserve a rest while we're going in."

So the Doctor drove, and he drove very well indeed. But, just as he swept down the barnyard with ever-gathering speed, a flying column of chickens attempted, with frenzied squawkings, to cross his bows—and the last two of them were juggernauted clean and clear!

The Colonel did not say anything, desiring to acquire merit. Also he knew well that the Doctor would be aware of what he was *thinking*, anyway.

He was allowed to take the next load in himself. And he did nobly, too. He "shaved the gates," he went through those successive gaps as if they had been the barriers of the tan-bark ring. He sent the team up the lane in a lilting canter, mounted the slope to the barn on the gallop, and stopped as squarely in front of the mow as if it had been the judge's box.

AND when at length it came to the third load, it was plain that his performance was going to be even more brilliant. Once out of the lane he began a kind of wheeling rush. He took the bridge with the speed and sweep of a cavalry squadron, and, inside the door—ran over one of Dorsey's juvenile Berkshires!

For a moment the warrior remained fixedly where he was. Then with better feelings he began to climb down to the succor of his victim. It was only a very small Berkshire, and at first glance one might well have thought that the vital afflatus had been squeezed entirely out of it.

"Poor piggy! Poor old *fel-low*! But, good heavens, why couldn't you have taken warning when I shouted?"

Even as he grasped at it, with an anguished squeal it kicked out and scuttled for the barnyard.

The Jehu was still giving an almost tremulous pursuit when the two others came up and offered their commiserations.

"Really, really," he panted, "I don't think it damaged him—so *very badly*."

He made another dive, which the vociferating piglet again eluded.

"He seemed extremely well padded—he did, indeed. It was much—much like running over a Bologna sausage."

He made one more breathless raid after it. And for a moment it looked as if he had successfully cornered it in the angle between the horse trough and the chicken coop. But once more it dodged like a half-back and was away! "All right, then—all right!—Don't listen to reason! Don't let us do anything for you!—And don't shut your yap either!"

He turned red-eyedly to the others. "If Mrs. Dorsey comes down here, you can tell her I'll square for the brute—when the Doctor squares for his chickens. But I'm not going to stay around and be made look like a fool! I'm going back to the field!"

In the wish faithfully to chronicle the incidents of that morning, all too little has been said of its