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A Good Squash Trade.

SQUIRE HAPGOOD had the prettiest daughter and biggest squash of any man in the town in which he resided.

His daughter was plump, buxom, and eighteen, and bore the name Maggie.

His squash was of that variety known as the Hubbard, and he intended to exhibit it at the ensuing autumnal Town Fair, where he fondly hoped and believed it would be awarded the first premium.

On his daughter and his vegetable the squire lavished all of his affection, but—alas! that my pen should record it—the vegetable got by far the larger part. He loved Maggie as Brutus loved Caesar, but he loved the squash as Brutus loved Rome.

Now, in my opinion, a pretty girl is of more value than a squash, however big the latter may be; and so thought Hiram Hardy. He was a young farmer, and was a neighbor of the squire. He was dead in love with Maggie, and Maggie was dead in love with him. He visited her twice or thrice a week, but he might about as well have staid at home for any pleasure that he derived from his visits. Not one time in twenty did he get a chance to exchange more than a dozen words with her. No sooner would he make his appearance at her home, than the squire would take him out into the garden to see "that squash," and there he would keep him hour after hour talking squash to him until his brain would fairly reel.

At length, one day, Hiram was fortunate enough to find his beloved alone. Here was an opportunity to propose, and he was not slow to avail himself of it. Maggie, blushing and radiant, referred him to her father.

That very evening Hiram called upon the squire. He found the old gentleman toasting his heels before a cheery fire. Beside him stood a pitcher of cider, and in his hands was his weekly paper, a journal devoted to agriculture. Hearing the young man enter, he lifted his eyes from the page, first taking care to mark his place with his finger.

"Howdedoo, Hiram?" he cried in his usual loud, hearty voice, as he recognized the visitor. "Take a cheer."

Hiram returned the salutation, and then deposited himself in a chair which Maggie hastened to bring him.

"Have some cider?" asked the old man.

"Well, I don't care if I do," returned Hiram, nothing loth.

Maggie filled a large tumbler with the refreshing beverage, and handed it to her lover, who drained it in a business-like manner.

"You've come just in the nick o' time," said the squire, turning to his paper.

"Eh?" said Hiram.

"Just in time to hear an account of a new-fangled way of killing squash-bugs. I'll read it to you."

Hiram cast a despairing glance at his charmer, and received a sympathetic one in return. Then he tipped his chair against the wall, clasped his hands together above his head, and resigned himself to the inevitable.

Squire Hapgood prided himself on his elocution. It was of a jerky, explosive nature. Every word leaped from his lips like a bomb from the mouth of a mortar. He paid no attention to the punctuation marks with which an article was interspersed. He used but two stops,—a short one and a long one. The former he used after every word, and the latter whenever he wanted to clear his throat with a drink of cider.

The account of the new-fangled way

of killing squash-bugs was quite lengthy. It took the squire a full half-hour to read it. When he reached the end he turned to his visitor, and exclaimed,—

"Now, what do you think o' that, Hiram?"

Alas, poor Hiram! He knew not what to say. He had not been listening to the article: he had been watching his sweetheart pare apples. But the old man's eyes were upon him, and he had to say something.

"I think that—that"—he stammered, "I think that—that it's all moonshine!" he ended, becoming desperate and a little angry.

Without knowing it, he had hit the nail squarely upon the head.

Squire Hapgood struck his knee emphatically with his hand.

"You're right, Hiram," he cried approvingly. "You've got some sense about you, you have! It's all moonshine! The idea of putting pison on the vines to kill the bugs! Why, it would kill the vines, too. Any fool ought to know that. That editor is a donkey! I'll write to him to-morrow to stop my paper! I go in for the old-fashioned way of killing squash-bugs, I do. Just catch 'em and mash their heads with a stone,—that's the way to kill squash-bugs!"

"That's so!" cried Hiram, recovering his self-possession, and winking, unperceived by the old man, at Maggie.

Squire Hapgood laid down his paper, and shoved his chair back from the fire. Hiram knew by sad experience what was coming, and determined to make an effort to prevent it by unfolding at once the object of his visit. He hemmed two or three times, and began,—

"Squire Hapgood, I called here to-night to—"

"To see that squash. Yes, I know you did. I was intending all along to show it to you, but I thought you'd like to hear me read that piece first. Maggie, my boots," and the old man nimbly kicked off his slippers.

"Don't put on your boots squire. I didn't come here to-night to see that squash. I won't put you to the trouble!"

"No trouble at all. I'd as soon accommodate you as not. Maggie, my hat."

"But, squire, it's darker than Egypt out."

"Maggie, my lantern."

"And it rains, too. I can hear it beat against the window."

"Maggie, my umbrella."

Hiram groaned, and gave up the contest at once.

"Come along, Hiram," and out into the garden they went.

"It's grown wonderfully since you were here last: don't you think so?" said the squire, as they came to a pause beside the mammoth vegetable.

"Should n't have known it was the same squash," said Hiram unblushingly.

"Come around and take a look at it from this side. Jerusha! a'n't it a monster, though?"

"You bet!"

"Deacon Sykes thinks he's going to take the first premium on squashes this year, but he'll find himself most mightily mistaken."

"That he will."

"His squash a'n't nowhere near as big as this."

"Of course not."

"Just look at that stem, Hiram. There's a stem for you!"

"I should say so."

"And just look at them vines. Did you ever see the like?"

"No, never."

"They're as big as a hoe-handle."

"Full as big."

"What a lovely color it's got."

"Well, you're right."

"I tell you, Hiram, it would take a heap of money to buy that squash of me."

"I suppose so."

"A hundred dollars would n't be no sort of a temptation."

"No, I suppose not."

"There a'n't a man in the town that don't covet that squash."

"I believe you."

"You yourself would like to own it; now wouldn't you, Hiram?"

"Of course I should, squire, but you've got something else that I'd much rather have than that squash."

young companion, accompanying them with a look of intense astonishment.

Hiram began to grow red.

"Do you really mean to say that I've got something you'd rather have than to have that squash?" demanded the old man, thinking that perhaps his ears had deceived him.

"Yes, I do," said Hiram, shifting uneasily from foot to foot.

"Well, that beats me! Something that you value more than that squash! What can it be? Do you mean that old speckled rooster with the lame leg?"

"No!"

"Then you must mean that old yaller cow with the crumpled horn. Well, my boy, I don't blame you for taking a shine to her, for she's reely a tiptop animal. I don't want to sell her, and would n't sell her to any one else; but seeing you've taken such a liking to her, I don't know but what I'd part with her to you, if we could agree upon the price. Make me an offer."

"It a'n't your cow that I want, Squire, it's your daughter," said Hiram, coming directly to the point.

"My daughter?" "What! Maggie?"

"Yes, Maggie. I love her, and want her to be my wife. Can I have her?"

"I can't spare Maggie, Hiram. She—be keeful, be keeful, you're stepping on the vines,—she helps me take care of the squash. She helps me cover it up cold nights so that the frost won't nip it, and helps me keep an eye out day-times to see that no cattle don't break in and eat it up."

"But you're going to take it to the fair in a couple of weeks, and when that is over you will of course put it in the cellar. You won't need Maggie to take care of it then. Can I have her then?"

"I shall need her all through the winter to make squash pies."

"Well, can I have her in the spring?"

"I shall need her in the spring to help me plant squash-seeds. That squash will have the whoppinest seeds you ever set eyes on, and from them next season I'm going to raise a squash as much whoppin' than this as this is whoppin' than Deacon Sykes's."

"Can I have her a year from now?"

"I shall need her a year from now just as much as I do now."

"When can I have her?"

"Some time, Hiram, some time. But don't be in a hurry. There's plenty of time. I can't spare Maggie yet a while."

Hiram felt that it would be useless to press his suit further, and determined to make immediate tracks for home. He bade the old man good-night, and refusing an invitation to re-enter the house, took his departure.

"Confound the old fellow!" he soliloquized as he plodded along the muddy road. "I'd like to wring his old neck. He thinks more of that old squash than he does of his daughter. I should think she would get tired of hearing him talk so much about it. If I were in her place I'd buy some of that poison he was reading about to-night and sweeten his coffee with it,—I vow I would! Did n't she look lovely to-night, though? Ah, you may bet she did! And must I wait a million years for her just to please her old donkey of a father? No, sir! She shall be mine this very fall! But how am I going to get her?—that's the question. I must study up some plan."

He fell to thinking.

Presently he clapped his hands together, and cried jubilantly,—

"I have it! That'll bring him to terms if anything will! I'll do it this very night. How lucky it is that it's so dark and rainy!"

Early the next morning Hiram went over to Squire Hapgood's to borrow a hoe, ignoring the fact that he had no less than a half dozen of his own. He found the squire in a high state of excitement. His squash had been stolen!

Who had perpetrated the base deed?

The old man was confident that it was Deacon Sykes!

"He has stolen it so that his squash can take the premium at the fair," he explained.

"Well, perhaps you're right, Squire," said Hiram, "and then again perhaps you're wrong. It may be he, and it may be somebody else! It's hard telling."

"I shall never see that squash again," moaned the old man.

"If 't was my squash that was stolen, I think I should see it again. I have never had anything stolen yet, but what I succeeded in recovering it. I think if I should set myself about it I could find your squash."

Squire Hapgood grasped the young man convulsively by the hand.

"Set yourself about it, Hiram; set yourself about it!" he cried. "Find that squash, and I'll give you!"

He paused to consider what reward to offer for the recovery of his treasure.

"Find that squash, and I'll give you that cow you wanted to buy of me last night," he said, after a moment's reflection.

"I don't want your cow, Squire, but I'll find your squash if you'll give me Maggie."

"I'll do it, Hiram."

"When will you give her to me?"

"Some—"

"That won't do, Squire. I must have her within a month."

"Find my squash, and you shall have her within a month."

"Honor bright, Squire?"

"Honor bright, Hiram?"

The young man took his departure in a high state of elation.

On the evening of the same day, Hiram drove up to Squire Hapgood's door with the missing vegetable in his wagon.

Oh, what a scene was there, my countrymen! The squire embraced the squash, and Hiram embraced Maggie. It would be difficult to say which of the two felt the more ecstatic.

"Where did you find it, Hiram?" asked the old man, when his transport had begun to subside a little.

"Don't ask me, Squire. I can't tell you. I've promised to hold my tongue about it."

"You'll tell me where you found it, won't you?" asked Maggie coaxingly, when she found herself alone with her lover.

"If you'll keep it a secret from your father."

"I'll never breathe a word of it to him."

"Well, then, I found it in one corner of my barn floor, covered with straw!"

"Oh, you wicked!"

What more Maggie was going to say I am unable to inform the reader, for at that precise moment Hiram stopped her mouth with a kiss.

Two weeks later Squire Hapgood's squash was awarded the first premium at the Town Fair, and a few days subsequent to that event Maggie Hapgood became Maggie Hardy.

An Editor Who Used His "Pl."

ENGLAND can boast one editor at least who might be trusted to run a country newspaper in the United States.

In his youth Sir Richard Phillips edited and published a paper at Leicester, England, called the *Herald*. One day an article appeared in it, headed "Dutch Mail," and added to it was an announcement that it had arrived too late for translation, and had so been set up and printed in the original. This wondrous article drove half England crazy, and for years the best Dutch scholars squabbled and pored over it without being able to arrive at any idea of what it meant.

This famous "Dutch Mail" was in reality only a "pl."

"Pl," it may as well be explained, is a jumble of odd letters gathered up and set on end so as to save their faces from being scraped, to be distributed at the leisure of the printer in their proper places. Some letters are upside down, often ten or twelve consonants or as many vowels come together, and the whole is peppered with punctuations, dashes and so on until it might pass for poetry by a lunatic Choctaw. The story Sir Richard tells of the particular "pl" he had a whole hand in is this:

"One evening, before one of our publications, my men and a boy overturned two or three columns of the paper in type. We had to get ready some way for the coaches, which at four in the morning, required 400 or 500 papers. After every exertion we were short nearly a column, but there stood on the galleys a tempting column of "pl." It suddenly struck me that this might be called Dutch. I made up the column, overcame the scruples of the foreman, and so away the country edition went,

with its philological puzzle to worry the honest agricultural reader's head. There was plenty of time to set up a column of plain English for the local edition."

Sir Richard tells of a man whom he met in Nottingham, who for thirty-four years preserved a copy of the *Leicester Herald*, hoping that some day the letter would be explained.

A Dangerous Adviser.

THE leading religious and fashionable society of Cairo has been much disturbed by an atrocious series of crimes just brought to light. There was a sheik, much esteemed by the aristocracy of the Egyptian capital for his sanctity as well as for his general wisdom and his medical skill. Whenever any one of the ladies moving in the highest society was out of sorts, mentally or physically, it was usual to have recourse to this person, as a species of cross between a spiritual and a medical adviser.

It appears that the wife of a high Egyptian official visited the saint and did not return. The husband became alarmed and made the authorities search the house. The good man was found upon his small strip of carpet deep in his devotions, and rocking himself backward and forward upon his knees. The officials did not dare to disturb him, but as soon as he finished he was asked whether his fair penitent had gone. At first he denied all knowledge of her whereabouts. But the officers insisted upon searching the house, and soon discovered her clothes. Further search brought her jewels to light, and in the garden was found a well filled with corpses; uppermost floated that of the latest victim. The murder being thus brought home, the sheik confessed a series of crimes which, for cool wickedness, exceeds almost anything on record.

He was in the habit of calmly taking stock of the jewelry which each of his visitors wore, and then, when he found that the amount was worth while, of choking them with a scarf and concealing their bodies in the well in his garden. The explanation of the possibility of carrying on such a nefarious trade is quite curious. In many instances the husbands of the missing women took it for granted that they had eloped with some favorite lover, and never thought of accusing the holy man.

Curious things Revealed by the Census.

Among the curiosities of the census, which has developed no end of curious things, is a native of Arkansas who was never twenty miles from his birthplace, and never saw a locomotive, yet is still a citizen of France, having been born in Arkansas three years before the cession of that territory to the United States in 1803. Another curiosity is an Alabama giant, only twelve years of age, who weighs 380 pounds, and is six feet in height, while both his parents are of medium size. Fulton county, Georgia, furnishes, in the person of Mrs. Lavinia Cobb, a lady who has seen her five score years and ten, but if we mistake not, Missouri has a veteran who was born in 1769, or four years in advance of the venerable Lavinia.

A Good Dog Story.

A dog owned by a man near Macon, Ga., is remarkable for his cuteness. The dog is regularly sent after ice, or to carry notes or other errands. His master has an account with the ice-man, and sometimes, but not always, gives the dog the money for the ice tied up in one corner of a towel. Having no account with the butcher, he always gives the dog money when he sends him for a piece of beef to feed him. One day the dog was sent for ice, a nickel being given him. When he reached the ice-depot, he crouched down into the gutter, untied the towel with his teeth, scratched a little hole in the ground, buried the nickel, took the towel, went in and got the ice on credit, and carried it back to his master. Then he skipped to where he had buried the nickel, got it out, took it to the butcher's, got his piece of raw beef, and brazenly carried it into the presence of his master before eating it, that gentleman being under the impression that somebody had given the dog the meat.