

# Fate and Humpy.

.....By Charles Calverson.

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"What does the lady look like?" demanded Humphries.

Colton regarded him coolly.

"I don't think that there will be more than a dozen or two ladies clamoring for transportation to the Twin Hearts," said Humphries' employer. "Even your benighted intellect might appreciate that fact."

Humphries nodded and turned away. Curtis Colton, owner of the Twin Hearts, was peculiar. Above all, he wanted men about him who could carry out brief orders without demanding an elaborate amplification of the same. Humphries had supposed that in this case the question was justifiable, but if Colton thought otherwise he had no comment to make.

He went down to the corral and hitched the blacks to the buckboard, one or two of his fellows lounging over to see what was up.

"Goin' to town, Humpy?" demanded Ben Tyler, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"No," said Humphries, with asperity, "I'm goin' to drive over to China to hire a new cook. What makes you think I was goin' to town?"

Tyler grinned amiably.

"You'd think he was the old man if you could hear him talk with your eyes shut," he commented musingly to Buck Byers. "By the way, I wish you'd stop on the way back and bring out some makings."

He tossed a silver dollar to Humphries as that worthy climbed into the seat and started the team. Humphries pocketed the coin, with a grunt, and devoted himself to his thoughts.

That something was doing up at the big house was clearly apparent. The minister from Silver Forks had driven over that morning, and now he was sent to Brayleys for a young woman, with orders to return her to the ranch with all speed. He grinned as he observed the brand on the flanks of the blacks, the twin hearts from which the ranch took its name.

"Ought to put a cupid's arrow through 'em," he told the blacks. "Then you'd look like valentines. Wonder who it is goin' to get hitched?"

He ran through the list of probables, but could not decide until the Overland paused at the little flag station to deposit a young woman and a trunk. As the girl raised her veil Humphries sprang forward.

"Miss Bess," he cried, a note of real welcome in his voice, "I've got the buckboard here."

He held her hand an instant in greeting and then strapped the trunk behind the seat before helping her in. The year before he had been working on the Circle Z when Bess Farley had come to spend the summer with her brother, his employer. Even then there had been talk of a marriage between her and Colton, but the gossip had died down, and it was supposed that there had been a quarrel. Now she was here, the preacher was here, and there could be no doubt but that she would become queen of the Twin Hearts as well as the heart of every rider on the range.

Humphries engaged her in conversation, supplying bits of local news and listening with an amiable grin to her tales of "back east." Almost before they knew it they had come to the gate of the ranch inclosure, and Humphries was about to jump down and open it when she laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Why stop here?" she asked. "Circle Z is only five miles ahead."

"Circle Z?" he echoed. "I thought you were coming here."

"Did my brother say so?" she asked.

"I haven't seen Mr. Farley in six months," he said. "I'm working here now, and Mr. Colton told me to go and get a lady. I asked what she looked like, and he cut me off short, like he always does. I supposed it must be all right. You was the only lady to get off."

"I didn't know that you had left my brother's ranch," she explained in return, "and I thought, of course, it was all right. I wrote him three days ago that I was coming."

"I guess the letter's there at the house," commented Humphries. "You see, he went up to Denver about a week ago, so nobody knows that you're coming. Better turn in here. The Circle Z house is all closed up while your brother's away."

Humphries climbed out of the buckboard and opened the gate, driving the team through and closing it again before he climbed back to the seat.

"You will be better off here," he continued comfortably, "and there's the minister from Silver Spring to be your chaperon."

"What is the minister doing here?" she demanded. Humphries blushed.

"I did think he came over to do a job of hitchin'," he explained, "but I guess now that I was in wrong. Here's the boss," he added as Colton came out

on the porch at the sound of the approaching vehicle.

It was a puzzled Colton who came down the steps to assist Bess from the buckboard.

"This was the only lady that got off the trap, so I brought her," explained Humphries defiantly as he unloaded the trunk and drove off to the stables.

"I did not know that Humpy was working for you," explained Bess as the buckboard disappeared around the corner of the house. "I supposed that he had been sent for me, since I wrote Ned several days ago that I was coming. I learn that the house is closed up, and I could not explain to Humpy that I would rather live in the closed house than—here."

"You will be sent right on if you wish it," he said stiffly. "I sent to the train for a woman who is to marry the cook. He was anxious to have the ceremony over before the boys would find out, and I did not explain to Humphries who was coming."

"Quite a complication," she said, with a faint smile. "I am sorry to put you to the additional trouble of sending me on."

"At least you will stay to dinner," he urged. "I cannot let you go on before you have eaten. Dinner will be ready in half an hour. Meanwhile you can wash up and rest on the piazza."

He took her acceptance for granted and led the way to a spare room, where he saw that she was provided with toilet accessories. He did not show up until dinner time, when he and the minister enjoyed the meal the more for her gracious presence at the table. Colton followed her out upon the piazza at the conclusion of the dinner and stood beside her under the heavy vines that screened the porch.

"I shall send a man around presently," he said softly. "If you insist upon going, but, Bess, dear, can't you reconsider your determination?"

"I could not very well stay here," she answered indifferently.

"As my wife?" he asked. "Are you going to hold against me that one silly moment last summer when I lost my head and my temper and through that lost you? If you could know how bitterly I have repented."

"Penitence does not efface the scar of the wound you inflicted," she said. "I, too, have suffered, but I have taught myself to forget."

"And will you not forgive as well as forget?" he pleaded. "When I saw you at the head of the table just now and realized that but for my impetuosity you would always be at the head of that table, it was all I could do to keep from crying out for forgiveness. Won't you forgive?"

For a moment the girl searched the eager face before her. It was a face good to look upon, and her own heart cried out in surrender, but still she paused. Then from around the corner of the house came Humphries' rich barytone. It was a "cow song," crude as to words and simple in its melody, a song sung to cattle on the night watches to reassure the timid animals. She remembered that he had been singing it the night that Colton proposed, and a great wave of tenderness swept over her as she recalled those happy days of last summer. The white hand stole out and slipped within Colton's browned fingers.

"Since fate—and Humpy—seem to will it so," she said softly.

## Squirrels in Missouri.

Squirrels are generally thickest in the heavy hickory timber in the big tracts of overcup oaks. When these crops have borne but slightly the squirrel transfers his feeding grounds to the willow oak flats, where an abundance of these small acorns makes up for the lack of other dainties. But if a farmer has plowed up a tract of rich swamp land and planted it in corn, then the gray squirrel feels as though the nut crop was but a very common diet and levies tribute day after day on the farmer who has had the audacity to invade a territory that has been sacred to him for centuries.

Gray squirrels are out stirring from the first gray of dawn until the hour of 10 a. m. After that they are not seen again until 4 p. m. On very windy days few stir about. During the nutting season they are very gentle, and during the latter part of January, while watching the mallards drop into the willow oak flats, they scampered all around us, and hardly a tree but held a band of these running varmints. Often they boldly returned within ten yards of us. In the fall they are more wary of man and make good shooting as they run and jump from tree to tree, as they seldom lie still and permit one to walk all around their tree, like the fox squirrel of the hills.—Forest and Stream.

## Tobacco Tongs.

The tongs, the size of a wishbone, were of rough gold, studded here and there with turquoises.

"They are tobacco tongs," said the antiquary. "They date back to Elizabeth's time. This pair belonged to Raleigh—at least I have been told so, and who is there to contradict me? In Elizabeth's time they had no matches. When a man wanted a light, therefore, he took his tobacco tongs from his girdle and nipped out of the fire a red-hot chunk of wood. This glowing

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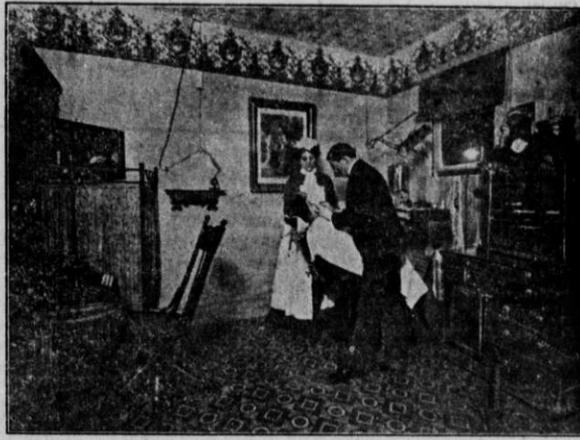
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coal, held in the tongs, gave a beautiful light. Tobacco tongs, as my pair witnesses, were often very costly and ornate. Of gold, of silver, of ivory and decorated with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and so forth, they were pretty trinkets to dangle upon silken coats. They are being revived now. Cigarette holders are being made in their shape. That is why I keep this old pair in my window.—Los Angeles Times.

## Ancient Sweetmeats.

Some sweetmeats have for centuries remained unchanged in their composition. The custards and omelets of 500 years ago still remain unchanged. Again, centuries ago slices of apple, parsnip, etc., were dipped in batter and fried just as we make our belgnetts. In the fifteenth century "to mak payn pardieu" the cooks fried "paymayne or freshe bred" and soured it with yolks of eggs sweetened. In the cookery books of today we find "pain perdu" means slices of stale bread soaked in milk, then dipped in beaten egg and fried in boiling fat and served hot in custard.—Blackwood's Magazine.

The moment there is a lull in war alarms Vesuvius begins to throw out "disquieting rumors."

Credit is due to the Vanderbilt family for making peace without aid from The Hague.

Earthquakes that do not get any farther than the seismograph are the right sort.

## A MARTYR.



The Boy: "Don't you get awful tired doin' nothin', mister?"  
The Man: "Terrible! But I never complain. Everybody has his troubles."

# Keep It at Home

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"Crime blindness" is a new disease discovered by a Berlin professor. He has evidently been observing some of our American souvenir hunters on the job.

In the matter of that dash to the north pole in a sledge drawn by polar bears the bears have yet to be consulted.

Perhaps Roosevelt passed by scores of nature fakes in the Louisiana jungle and held his load for real "bar."

The delegates to The Hague ate over \$500,000 worth of dinners and yet adjourned peacefully.

# Keystone Bar

for  
**Straight  
Whiskies**

and  
**Straight  
Business**

The London Economist calculates that Marconi's wireless service across the Atlantic cannot handle more than 3,000,000 paying words annually, which would be equivalent at most to the laying of a seventeenth cable between this country and Europe. Probably this helps to explain why the cable companies are not frightened at the prospect.

This news that the Russians have voluntarily discontinued their persecution of the Jews must mean that the Jews have more or less voluntarily quit Russia.

"Divine Right" Ruler Francis Joseph was consistent in refusing medicine to prolong his life. When divine right gets tired backing a favorite he'd better go.

The statement that gold in South Africa is "going for a song" must mean that Kipling has cornered another gold mine with a poem.

"Early rising is a mistake," declares a prominent physician. That is one mistake the average small boy is doing his best to avoid.