

WHETHER COMMON OR NOT. The "Merger" at Four Corners.

No one knew just when or how the hostilities between the "North Siders" and the "South Siders" had begun. But through long years it had been accepted as a fact that there should be no social or business communications between the people who lived on the south side of the main street of Four Corners and those who lived on the north side of the aforesaid street.

Incidentally it might be remarked that Four Corners boasted of but one street, which ran east and west, which was due to the fact that it was impossible to run anything other than a bridle path north and south because of the steep hills.

The feud smoldered as a rule, each side remaining unto itself, but every four years it burst into flame because of the postoffice. So intense was the feeling of hostility that a South Sider would, as a rule, refuse to subscribe for a paper or correspond with friends when a North Sider held the postoffice, because that would necessitate crossing the street and doing business with an enemy. It was the same thing when a South Sider held the office. Naturally this resulted in a rather meager postoffice business.

When Postmaster Jed Bilkins' term was about to expire the regular quadriennial fight blazed up. Jed took no hand in it, save to lend his aid and assistance to Lem Huggins, the son of Squire Huggins, and Lem was asking for the office on the ground that he had been a volunteer in the Spanish-American war and had come home with a limp, due to a Mauser ball that caught him in the hip while he was scampering up a hill near Santiago and saying unprintable things about the Spaniards.

"It stands t' reason," said Postmaster Bilkins, speaking oracularly, "that Lem air entitled t' th' honah. He has fit undah th' flag, is able t' read an' write, an' is a No'th Sidah. Th' last qualification, I may say, is th' chiefest."

"I hear Sack Rickett's daughter, Sally, is goin' t' try t' get the office," remarked Putnam Shattuck, called "Put" for short.

"Yep; heard that when I druv ovah t' Blossville with Majah Slocumb t'other day. Th' majah said he heard about it at Blossville while he was a-waitin' f'r his mail."

"Well, if a South Sidah is t' git it I guess Sally Ricketts is all right," said Pete Hensel. "I've seen her acrost th' street several times an' she's a powahful likely lookin' gyrl."

"Look a hyar, Pete," angrily exclaimed Put; "I ain't ust t' hearin' no No'th Sidahs braggin' about South Sidahs, an' I'm hyah t' say that I ain't goin' t' stand f'r it."

"Wall," drawled Pete, "I guess I'm purtv able f'r t' say what I please an' make it stick."

"If you mean that f'r me, Pete, guess we'd better adjourn behind th' blacksmith shop an' settle it f'r fair."

But nothing came of the threatening incident. For more years than Pete and Put cared to recall they had been threatening to fight and settle the dispute as to which was the better man, but so far they had not come to blows. This fact was deeply regretted, for the reason that a considerable quantity of dog-leg tobacco and moun-

tain dew had been wagered on the result when they did come together.

As the days wore on Lem Huggins was busy. He secured the signatures of all the North Siders on his petition, and then rode far and wide to the north to secure the signatures of those who sympathized with his side of the street.

"It'll be mighty funny if I can't beat a gyrl f'r th' place," said Lem to a friend whom he met up in the hills.

But Sally Rickett was also busy. Sally had been down to Sharpsburg to school, and her horizon of information was much larger than the average of her friends on the South Side. She wasted but little time in securing signatures to her petition. Being wise in her day and generation Sally made use of her knowledge of politics and beset the congressman from her district. She knew that often a pair of bright eyes and a rosebud mouth carried more weight than a huge and ungainly petition.

The fight waxed warmer and warmer as the summer grew, and as September drew near—the time set for Postmaster Bilkins to step down and out—physical encounters grew frequent. Squire Wheeler's son met Judge Pollock's son down on the creek, where both were fishing, and as they lived on opposite sides of the street fishing was sadly neglected for a time and a fight engaged in that resulted in sending the participants home in sadly deranged conditions. This led to a heated argument—across the street—between the squire and the judge, and another physical encounter might have resulted had not both squire and judge been too proud to step across the dividing line.

When Put Shattuck remarked that "One was afeerd an' t'other dassn't," the judge withdrew into his judicial dignity and ignored the remark.

By strange and perverse fate Lem and Sally had decided upon the same date for their final appeal to Congressman Selkins. Thus it was that they met on the depot platform at Blossville, where they boarded the train for the distant city of Hawksville. Having never been formally introduced, and being staunch partisans as well as rivals for a postoffice appointment, they did not greet one another. Lem took a seat in the forward part of the coach and Sally snuggled up in a seat near the rear.

Something hurt inside of Lem's breast. He knew what it was, but dared not admit it. As he sat by the window and watched the landscape slipping past he recalled how often he had allowed his eyes to follow Sally's trim figure as she tripped down the other side of the street; also, how often he had wished—silently, of course—that Sally had been born and bred on his side of the thoroughfare. He managed to withstand the temptation to look back at her, but it required the exercise of all his will power.

With Sally the situation was not vastly different. She had announced her candidacy before Lem had entered the race, and when she thought of his limp and remembered the first time she saw him in his brown uniform, when he was limping upon crutches down the other side of the street, her heart failed her. She would have withdrawn had she not been impelled by pride and patriotism to remain. She kept her eyelids demurely down, but not so far that she could not catch occasional glimpses of a mass of dark brown hair and the curve of a sturdy

neck set upon square shoulders.

"Guess he don't deserve my sympathy," whispered Sally to herself. "He might make way for a lady."

But even this did not quite satisfy her mind.

"Guess I'll stop thinking about it and read," said Sally to herself, and suiting the action to the words took a novel from her handbag and settled back against the cushions.

She read for a time and then fell into a doze. How long she slept she never knew, for the awakening was awful. With a crash and a roar the coach left the rails and toppled over into the ditch. When the first shock was over, the groans and cries of the injured filling the air, Sally, waiting only until she discovered that she was uninjured save for a few severe bruises, set bravely at work to give assistance to the less fortunate. The uninjured passengers, assisted by the train crew, worked with a will and the wounded made as comfortable as possible on the green grass of the right-of-way.

"Guess we've got 'em all out," said the conductor.

But Sally, looking around the circle of faces and then glancing at the wounded lying upon the grass, missed one face and form.

"No, there's another—Lem—Mr. Huggins—where is he?"

"Who's he?" queried the conductor. "He was a passenger on the train," replied Sally, starting towards the wreck.

They soon found him, insensible and pinned down by a beam that cruelly pressed across his breast. It was Sally who wiped the blood from his face. It was Sally who held the cup of water to his lips, and it was Sally's face that met his gaze when he opened his eyes and groaned with pain.

"What's the matter?" asked Lem in a feeble voice.

"Only a wreck and you were hurt a little," said Sally. "Now remain quiet, Mr. Huggins. You mustn't talk."

"Why?"

"Because—because—well, because I say so."

"All right," whispered Lem, sinking back into unconsciousness.

A month later Postmaster Bilkins handed Lem a huge envelope bearing the postoffice department seal and stamp.

"Guess we got 'em licked again," chuckled Bilkins.

"Guess so," said Lem, but without much enthusiasm.

"Ain't appearin' t' feel very gay about yer victory, Lem."

"Huh?"

"I said yer don't seem t' me—"

But to the postmaster's wonderment Lem walked away and actually crossed the street. Postmaster Bilkins could hardly believe his eyes. Lem Huggins, North Sider and prospective postmaster, actually crossing over to the South Side. Bilkins shuddered and crouched as if expecting the very heavens to fall.

He had not yet recovered from his amazement when Put Shattuck rushed up and shouted:

"Heard th' news?"

"No; what is it?"

"Lem Huggins is goin' t' marry Sally Rickett."

"No!"

"Yes!"

"I don't believe it."

"Fact jus' th' same. Sally nussed him when he got smashed up in that wreck, an' then drew out o' th' race so Lem could git th' postoffice."

"It's a mighty strange purceedin'," said Postmaster Bilkins.

"No, it's puffedly nateral. It's git-in' common these days."

"How's that?"

"Why, it's only another o' them mergers we've been readin' so much about in the city paper's lately."

Aiding the Beef Trust.

Unfortunately for future security, congress seems to be at least a passive sympathizer and supporter of the beef trust. The prohibitive tariff, under the Dingley act, alone made it possible for the meat packers to combine and force the price of meats beyond the point justified by the condition of the cattle market. The government reaped no benefit from the tariff, because it was so high that meats could not be imported from Mexico and other foreign countries and sold at a profit. Thus the trust felt that it had the people at its mercy, and attempted to take advantage of its power. Congress has displayed no intention of lending a helping hand. It could, if it would, effectively crush the power of the beef trust, and hurt no other interest, by removing the tariff on imported meats. Individual members have introduced bills with this purpose in view, but these excellent measures have all been referred to committee, where, it is frankly declared, they will be allowed to slumber to the end of the session. This is the most effective means that congress can employ to assist the beef trust out of the difficulties in which it now finds itself, and to enable it to recover to some extent from the enormous financial losses it has sustained.—Philadelphia Public Ledger (rep.).

On the Defensive.

It is unfortunate for the country, and still more so for the republican party, that the debate in the senate on the Philippine bill has taken a partisan turn. The democrats have succeeded in putting the administration on the defensive, and the republicans must defend it before the world. In such an enterprise the government should not need to be defended; its political antagonists should have no chance to accuse it of any misconduct.—Philadelphia Public Ledger (rep.).

AN APRIL BRACER

Grape-Nuts Food Gives Spring in the Spring

Teachers require nourishing food more than the average person, for their work is nerve destroying, and unless the food taken will surely rebuild the lost gray matter nervous prostration will set in.

A lady teacher writes, "For the benefit of my fellow teachers and all brain workers who expend daily an amount of nerve energy I want to tell just what I know personally about Grape-Nuts Breakfast Food."

When I was teaching in a boarding school at P— in '98 one of the day teachers ate Grape-Nuts regularly for breakfast and supper, and appeared so well and strong in all her work.

Miss R— used to beg me to join her and give the food a trial, but for some reason I never would try it until the spring of the present year. Then one day in April when I was very much in need of something bracing and was on the point of buying the usual tonic, she prevailed upon me to begin using Grape-Nuts. So we ate Grape-Nuts together from then until June.

Previous to that, every spring I had been compelled to take bottle after bottle of tonics and then go home much run down, but this year June found me well and strong after a most trying month of work, with never a thought about tonics other than the nourishment received from Grape-Nuts. Naturally I believe heartily in the merits of the food.

Since leaving that boarding school, I learn that nearly every teacher in the school from the principal down uses Grape-Nuts. Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.