

John Henry's Happy Home

By GEORGE V. HOBART

Bunch's house in the country that I had borrowed and couldn't give back because Clara J. thought it was hers, was hanging on me like a millstone necklace. Clara J. thought I had bought it with the money I couldn't produce on pay days, but the missing numbers were really in the jeans of the race-track bookies, and I hadn't the heart to confess it. But a glimmer of hope was shining for Uncle Peter had offered to buy the place from me. He liked it.

Early one morning I broke camp and took the trail to town, determined never to come back alive unless Bunch agreed to sell the plantation to Uncle Peter.

The old gentleman had crowded his check for \$20,000 into my trembling hands the night before with instructions to deposit it in my bank, and at my convenience I was to let him have the deed to the place.

I soon located Bunch, and to my surprise found him more inclined to josh than to jolt.

"Ah! my friend from the bush!" he exclaimed; "are you in town to buy imitation coal, or is it to get a derrick and hoist your home affairs away from my property? Why don't you take a tumble, and let go?"

"Bunch," I said, "believe me, this is the cruellest game of freeze-out I ever sat in. My throat is sore from singing. Father, dear father, come home with me now! and every move I make gets me a new ornamentation on my neck. Why didn't I tell the good wife that the ponies put the crimp in my pocketbook, instead of crawling into this chasm of prevarication and trouble?"

"You can search me!" Bunch answered, thoughtfully.

"And that phony wire you sent me yesterday almost gave me a plexus," I said, bitterly. Bunch had wired me that "the two queens" were coming, meaning his sister and niece, and it had spoiled the day for Clara J.—and me. To make it worse, two Swedish cooks had followed the wire, and I hadn't known the difference! Tabla!

Bunch blinked his eyes solemnly, but when I told him all about the trouble his telegram had caused he simply rose up on his hind legs and laughed to a sit down.

"Well," he gasped, after a long fit of cackling, "sister did intend going out to Jiggersville and the only way I could stop her was to suddenly discover that her health wasn't any too good, so I chased her off to Virginia Hot Springs for a couple of weeks."

After all, Bunch had his redeeming qualities.

"I sent you that wire before I took sister's temperature," Bunch explained, "and I quite forgot to send another which would put a copper on the queens." Once more he laughed uproariously.

"Oh, quit your kidding," I begged, and then, suddenly, "Say, Bunch, will you sell the old homestead?"

Bunch stopped laughing and looked me over from head to foot. "Is this on the level or simply another low tackle?"

"It's the goods," I answered. "I simply can't frighten, coax, scare, drive or push my home companions away from your property, so I'd like to buy it if you're game enough to cut the cards."

"Been playing the lottery?" he snickered.

"No, I have the Pierponts, all right, all right," I replied; "will you put \$14,000 in your kick and pass me over the baronial estate?"

"Fourteen thousand!" Bunch repeated, slowly. "Sure, I will. If you can Morgan that amount I'll make good with the necessary documents, and then you and your family troubles may sit around on fly paper in Jiggersville for the rest of your natural lives for all I care."

I explained to Bunch that I wanted the deed made out in the name of Peter Grant for the reason that Uncle Peter was a bigger farmer than I, and in short order the preliminary arrangements were completed to the satisfaction and relief of both parties concerned.

That evening I went back to Jiggersville feeling as light as a pin feather on a young duck.

Uncle Peter would have the property; Bunch could buy his sister another castle, and I was ahead of the game just \$6,000, more than enough to square me for all the green paper I had torn up at the track.

Two days later Bunch had a certified check for \$14,000 and Uncle Peter was the happy owner of the country estate.

A week later the second anniversary of our wedding would roll around, and although Clara J. was a trifle hard to win over, I finally coaxed her to let me have Bunch out to spend a few hours with us on that occasion.

At the appointed hour Bunch arrived and Clara J. greeted him with every word of that telegram darting forth darkly from her eyes.

"Mrs. John," said Bunch, "I'm simply delighted to know you. I've often heard your husband speak well of you."

She had to smile in spite of herself.

"Mrs. John," Bunch went on, with sputtered assurance, "you should be proud of this matinee idol husband of yours, for, to tell you the truth, he's all the goods—he certainly is."

You surely have a wonderful influence over him," the lad with the blarney continued. "A week or so ago I threw some bait at him just to test him and he didn't even nibble. You know, in the old days John and I often trotted in double harness to the

only pulled the cass out of his clothes and then let him go with a hand-basti."

"The ton-spot is for the clothes you pulled him out of," Bunch said, picking up the garments and handing them to me. "Keep them, John, as a souvenir of your first burglar—and true friend, Bunch!"

I took them reverently, and said, "For your sake, Bunch, they'll be handed down from generation to generation."

Clara J. blushed and said, "Oh, John!" and I thought Uncle Peter would chuckle himself into a delirium.

"Good night, Mr. Ananias!" Bunch called, as Diggs made a farewell bow and turned to go.

"Good night, one and all," replied Diggs; then a thought struck him and he turned with, "Say, who's this here Mr. Ananias? Seems like the name's familiar, but it ain't mine."

"Mr. Ananias is the first detective mentioned in history," Bunch explained, and Mr. Diggs beamed at him.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Officer," Aunt Martha piped in; "have a drop of refreshment before you go. Tacks, run in and pour Mr. Officer a drink from that bottle on the sideboard!"

Diggs stood there swallowing his palate in delightful anticipation until Tacks handed him brimming glass from which the brave thief-taker took one eager mouthful, whereupon he emitted a shriek of terror that could be heard for miles.

"Water! water! quick! I'm burning up!" cried the astonished Diggs.

When, finally, the old fellow was revived he faintly declined any more refreshment, and with a sad "good night," faded away in the twilight.

"Gee!" exclaimed Tacks, as he watched the retreating form, "I'm afraid I upset some tobacca smoke in that glass by mistake."

Presently Bunch went off to the depot to take a train back to the city, and for some little time we sat in silence on the plaza.

"Grand, isn't it?" Uncle Peter said, breaking the spell.

"Couldn't be any nicer, now, could it?" Then he went over and stood near Clara J.

"Little woman," he said; "ever since we first talked of moving out here I noticed how worried John was."

"So did I," she answered, taking my hand in hers.

"A day or two ago I found out that the trouble was," the old gentleman continued; "this property was too heavy a load for a young man to carry, especially when he's just married, so I bought it from him!"

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"As we entered the car a tall, dark woman passed us, with a glass of water in her hand, and I vaguely remembered her. She was amazingly like Blanche Conway."

"She, too, thought the man with

the notes was in lower ten, he explained a lot, including that piece of a woman's necklace. She was a fury, Blanche Conway, capable of anything."

"Then why did you counterman that message?" I asked curiously.

"When I got to the Carter house, and got to bed—I had sprained my ankle in the jump—I went through the alligator bag I had taken from lower nine. When I found your name, I sent the first message. Then, soon after, I came across the notes. It seemed too good to be true, and I was crazy for fear the message had gone."

"At first I was going to send them to Bronson; then I began to see what the possession of the notes meant to me. It meant power over Bronson, money, influence, everything. He was a devil, that man."

"Well, he's at home now," said McKnight, and we were glad to laugh and relieve the tension.

Alison put her hand over her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of the man she had so nearly married, and I furtively touched one of the soft little curls that nestled at the back of her neck.

"When I was able to walk," went on the sullen voice, "I came at once to Washington. I tried to sell the notes to Bronson, but he was almost at the end of his rope. Not even my threat to send them back to you, Mr. Blakeley, could make him meet my figure. He didn't have the money."

McKnight was triumphant.

"I think you gentlemen will see reason in my theory now," he said. "Mrs. Conway wanted the notes to force a legal marriage, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Uncle Peter; "that gentleman certainly needs some one to look after it."

Clara J. was crying softly and hugging Aunt Martha.

My own eyes were damp and I yearned to have somebody run the lawn mower over me.

"I'll race you down to the gate and back," I suggested.

"You're on," laughed Uncle Peter; "I believe I do need a little exercise." (Copyright, by G. W. Dillingham Co.)

The Gravy.

A certain Dr. C.—was once reading very strenuous paper on total absence before a clerical club—so the story goes—when the entertainer went out to tell his wife how many she was to provide for at supper.

"What are they doing?" she asked, and was told the subject of the essay. "What shall I do?" she cried. "Here I have brandied peaches, and it is too dark to change."

"Make no change," said her husband. "It will be all right."

The essayist had the post of honor at the right of the lady of the house, and she presented him with a dish of the peaches. After a while she said to him, "Dr. C., won't you allow me to give you some more of these peaches?"

"Thank you," he replied. "They are excellent."

A little later she said, "Dr. C., may I not give you another peach?"

"No, I thank you," said he apologetically, "but I will take a little more of the gravy."—Harper's Magazine.

When Taft Went Swimming.

One morning last summer President Taft, wearing the largest bathing suit known to modern times, threw his substantial and ponderous form into the cooling waters of Beverly Bay.

That afternoon Jesse Conway, a newspaper correspondent, sent the following to his paper:

"There was mighty little swimming along the North Shore today. The President was using the ocean."—The Popular Magazine.

"What's that for?" inquired Diggs, somewhat taken aback.

"That's my contribution to the reward for the robber," Bunch told him.

"Well," spluttered Diggs, "it doesn't seem exactly right, seemin' as how I

had to swim in spite of herself.

"Mrs. John," Bunch went on, with sputtered assurance, "you should be proud of this matinee idol husband of yours, for, to tell you the truth, he's all the goods—he certainly is."

You surely have a wonderful influence over him," the lad with the blarney continued. "A week or so ago I threw some bait at him just to test him and he didn't even nibble. You know, in the old days John and I often trotted in double harness to the

track—bad place for young men—sure!"

Bunch surveyed the property with a quick glance and said, "Yes, I sent John a telegram. 'The two queens will be out this afternoon.' I wired, meaning two horses that simply couldn't lose. They are good girls, so treat them white," I told him, meaning that he should put up his roll on them and win a hatful; but, Mrs. John, I never touched him. He simply ignored my telegram and sat around in the hammock all day, reading a novel, I suppose. I apologize to you, Mrs. John, for trying to drag him away from the path of rectitude, but, believe me, I didn't know when I sent the message that he had promised you to give the ponies the long farewell!"

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