

Home With the Old Folks

by "PIC"

WHEN I was fourteen my grandfather told me that the German word for glove was *handschuh*. *Handschuh*, he said; hand-shoe, see? I was impressed. He was a great one for languages, Grandfather was, Cosmopolitan. He would say *Caramba!* or *Gott im Himmel!* at the slightest provocation, and once he shocked my grandmother terribly by making French Toast. Grandmother was ill in bed for three days afterwards. She had been very delicately brought up.

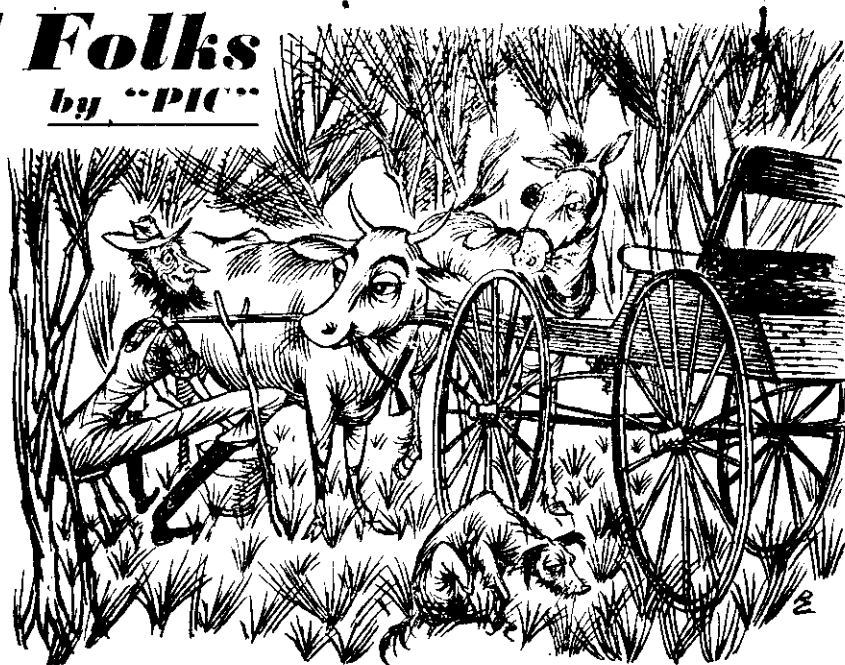
Grandmother always went to bed when things went wrong. Always. Once Grandfather had a very bad time with her. They had a quarrel about who should make Grandmother's bed. Grandmother said Grandfather ought to because she had quite enough to do around the house as it was. Grandfather said that he had enough to do, too. So Grandmother went to bed. After a day of it Grandfather found that there was far too much altogether for one to do, so he asked Grandmother to get up and let him make her bed. Grandmother refused. She had given her ultimatum and she was going to stick to it. It was a fortnight before Grandfather hit on the idea of ignoring Grandmother and making the bed as if she was not there. Even then Grandmother nearly went back to bed after she had got up because she felt that Grandfather had cheated in some way.

Grandmother's bed was a very fine one. It was made out of heavy oak with lots of carving. Grandmother always called it her goose-feather bed, in spite of the fact that the mattress was stuffed with kapok. When she was asked why

she would look at Grandfather and say, well, I plucked a goose to get it. Grandfather never saw the joke.

GRANDFATHER only saw jokes when he wanted to. One spring, after he had been bottling the home brew, Grandmother asked him to take the buggy down to the store for fifty of flour. Grandfather went, but it must have been a stronger brew than usual because he ended up by taking the buggy into the store with him. The storekeeper was annoyed, naturally. Particularly when he found that Grandfather couldn't remember what he had come for. He called the John Hop, and the John Hop arrested Grandfather for being drunk in charge. Grandfather was highly amused. He took the John Hop's arm and led him back to the lock-up. Then he unlocked the cell door for himself, locked it again from the inside, and handed the key through the grating. He chuckled all night, and nearly collapsed with laughter the following morning when the J.P. fined him two pounds and costs.

But Grandfather disliked extravagance. Never get anything new, he said, when you can make something old do in its place. He took a pride in being able to put one thing to half-a-dozen uses. The buggy, for instance. There was never a cowshed on the farm. Every milking-time Grandfather would hitch up the horse to the buggy and go charging into the ti-tree looking for the cows. When he found one he would take the horse out of the shafts and bail the cow up in its place. Resourceful. Grandfather was. It took longer, of course, but Grandfather didn't mind. He didn't even mind when he bailed up the same cow twice. There was something



He would bail up the cow in the shafts

about going through the scrub in the buggy that appealed to his sense of romance.

GRANDMOTHER had a sense of romance, too. She read a lot. Books Grandfather would say in disgust; who heard of anyone ever getting anything out of books? But Grandmother went on reading. Marie Corelli and people like that. Sometimes when she was feeling too romantic for books she would pretend to be someone. Grandfather would come home and find her sitting on the table being the Princess in the Tower, or else wandering around with a kerosene lamp being Florence Nightingale. Once she was being Lady Godiva in Grandfather's white combinations when the Lands and

Surveys man came. She never pretended to be Anybody again after that.

Grandfather did read a book once. It was the talk of the district for months afterwards. The book was about gold-mining, and Grandfather read it at a time when he was fed up with farming. He decided that it would be a fine thing for him and Grandmother to go and be gold-miners. Grandmother quite liked the idea. She said she'd care for a breath of fresh air. So they got Grandmother's bed out of the bedroom and put it on the back of the buggy, and while Grandfather was stacking flour and sugar and vegetables underneath it, Grandmother baked some scones for the journey. Then they pulled down the blinds and locked the house, leaving the key on a hook by the door so they'd know where it was when they got back. Grandfather tied the dogs to the back of the buggy and away they went.

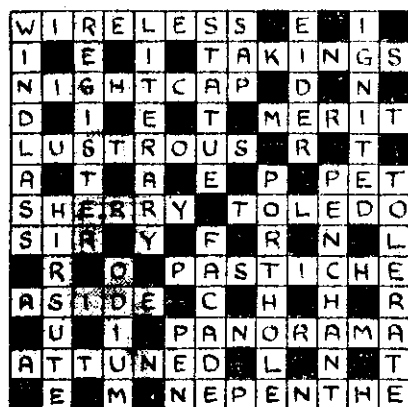
They had only gone about three miles down the clay road when Grandmother realised that she hadn't fed the chooks, and that they ought to have a bit extra because she and Grandfather mightn't be back for a while. Grandfather turned the buggy around and they started up the road again.

By the time they got back it was milking time, and Grandfather had to take the bed and food off the buggy so that he could go for the cows. And by the time the following morning came the wood-box was empty and the chooks needed feeding again, and the cows had wandered across to the other side of the farm, so with one thing and another there didn't seem to be time to go gold-mining at all.

THERE never was very much time to spare on the farm. Often I would drop in after school and find Grandmother sitting in front of the range, staring at nothing. If I asked her what she was doing she would say, thinking. Then if I asked her what about, she'd tell me she was thinking about the things she'd do next. Don't waste my time, she would say; I've got a lot of work to get through.

Grandfather had a lot of work to get through, too. But he took a lot more interest in my education than Grandmother did. Particularly languages. I was going to French classes, and I taught Grandfather quite a lot of words before Grandmother caught us, at it.

(Solution to No. 585)



Clues Across

1. Needs cat bursts into song.
5. It might surprise Lionel Tertis to find an instrument in the flower-bed.
- 8 and 22 across. Sausages are sometimes rolled in these before frying.
9. If you wear this you could say you'd eat your hat without fear of the consequences.
10. Associated with downs.
11. One form of 23 down 25 down?
12. Official count of the Saracens usual population?
13. Found near the radius.
15. Suitable home for man of means?

Clues Down

1. Brides among the wreckage?
2. Ocean dandy.
3. Laborious.
4. Pits for the unwary punter?
5. "Hang there, my —, in witness of my love" ("As You Like It," Act III).
6. Contrary.
7. A 5 down is a synonym of 6 down.
12. Coverall.
14. One spider has as many as two horses or four men.

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

17. They don't live in their house.
20. Plug backwards.
22. See 8 across.
24. Insect in a photograph I saw in a shop.
26. What some people will take if you give them an inch.
27. Nine met in confusion, although distinguished.
28. Accustom.
29. "I will — daggers to her, but use none" ("Hamlet," Act 3, Scene 2).
30. Sea legs (anag.).
16. How I feel about a bus I've missed?
18. Iridescent.
19. Means of approach.
21. Value.
- 23 and 25 down. Novel by Dickens.
26. Neat volcano?

No. 586 (Constructed by R.W.C.)

