

HUMOR



H. L. Davis

(1894-1960)

from *Honey in the Horn* (1935)

A man run down by a bunch of sharp-shod horses has a tendency to scatter around badly...

According to Simmons' own representations, which he spun off by the mile when he felt good, he was a considerable hand as a stud. His gray whiskers didn't match up with his claims, but he explained that they had been caused by the strain of watching women try to kill themselves over him. He also had one lop-lidded eye which, by his account, had been disabled by a female lodge-organizer to keep other women from falling in love with him....

"Leave them horses alone or I'll cut your whang off..." The Indian boy didn't know for sure what a whang was, but he didn't want his cut off.

The notion of a woman enjoying anything would have hurt old Meacham as much as seeing a man win money on a horse-race without getting struck by lightning afterward....

She put one arm across his neck and caught hold of the bed-rail and straightened it flat, holding him as one holds a rattlesnake with a stick when one has a taste for such knick-knacks. They lay side by side, and whenever he tried to get up she clamped down and shut off his wind, and in that romantic and unescapable position she made him her offer of marriage....

He laid the frying-pan down in the middle of the floor and stalked it dramatically to show how he had edged around the fox. Then he got down on his hands and knees and showed how the fox had glowered up at him. To complete the performance, he picked up the frying-pan and whacked himself across the head with it and keeled over with his eyes walled up and a big black patch of soot on his bald spot where the frying-pan had landed. It was spiritedly rendered. The Indian boy remarked that a fox dying usually kicked his legs, so Simmons lay down again and kicked his....

One thing that had kept those mountain people from developing any sort of community life, probably, was the fear that they would all talk one another to death the first time they got together. Loneliness is supposed to make people reserved and taciturn, but it didn't work that way with them, except when they happened to be of Scandinavian stock and therefore unable to think up anything to say....

And besides old Farlow, there was also Mrs. Yarbrow, who raised bees in the fireweed slashings on Upper Thief Creek. She was so enslaved to the practice of unbosoming herself before strangers that she deliberately worked into a lawsuit regularly every year so she could explain to the jury, from the witness stand, what a hard life she led, and how worthless her last four husbands had been, and how much trouble her children had given her to raise, and how her roof leaked and her cow had run off with a stray bull and her bees swarmed when they weren't supposed to and stung her when she went after them, and how her female disorders (which she described in minute detail) gave her hell all the time and no doctor in the country had been able to do them a lick of good....

Sometimes Mrs. Yarbrow's lawsuit would come off before a strange judge who would undertake to make her confine her testimony to the lawsuit instead of rambling along about which intimate organs were almost killing her. But no judge ever tried that more than once. It merely made her get mad and yell, and when that was over she would be unable to recollect where she had left off, so she would have to back up and start her story all over again from the beginning.