

Ballad of Hardin Town

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of the great lakes of Chicago was situated, not that Lake Michigan in itself was important to him, but Johnny had fallen down on his geography lesson. There is, of course, a happy medium between the possible needs of the future and the immediate needs of the here and now. But a few facts and money in the bank are still useful reserves for a rainy day.

As I write this in 1950, with another war on, I have before me a drawing by Oliver Herford which appeared in a January 1926 issue of a popular monthly magazine. Father Time is standing on a nebulous cloud, pointing out the planet Earth to the infant New Year. Lost in the realms of space, amid all those stars, 1926 couldn't see where he was to go and asked the question which is the caption of the picture, "Father, which one is the Earth?"

God forgive us for what we have done to this planet in the quarter century since that drawing appeared. We seem determined to destroy it, to make it only an insignificant, barren star in the Universe. Pray that before too long we regain our sanity. I can think of no better way than to go back to the country. Would that I could be again a Country Teacher.

Ballad of Hardin Town *

By KATHLEEN M. HEMPEL, ELKADER

I'll tell you a tale of Ioway
 That only the old folks know
 About a crime in Hardin town
 One hundred years ago.

The Indians roamed our forests then
 The wily Fox and Sac
 And lived in peace and harmony
 Upon the Neutral Tract.

And there the white men built the town
 Right smack against the border
 In all the West and wickedest
 With neither law or order.

And there they built two grand saloons
 Called Sodom and Gomorrah
 That lived up to their evil names
 And caused a world of sorrow.

One night an old chief asked to see
 Their owner Graham Thorne
 And said "My daughter crys all day
 Twixt shame and sorrow torn."

"And now I would see Taffy Jones
 Who also owns this place
 That I might closely question him
 About my child's disgrace."

A shot came thru the window pane
 A shot came thru the door
 And in the lamp light all could see
 The chief die on the floor.

Then silently his son strode in
 His eyes were wild and wide
 "Confess, who killed my father, sirs,
 Shall vengeance be denied?"

He fired then a single shot
 But it was done most viley
 Alas! He missed both Jones and Thorne
 And killed poor Patrick Riley!

They did not know who killed the chief
 But he had murdered Pat
 They threw him into prison
 Yes! He got ten days for that!

Gone are those wild and olden times
 Gone is the old frontier
 Gone are the white men and the red
 That I have told of here.

The railroad soon spelled Hardin's doom
 It died with none to mourn
 Where Sodom and Gomorrah roared
 March silent fields of corn.

*Hardin was situated about three miles west of the town of Monona. The lawless incident described occurred in 1847, and occasioned the first court trial in Clayton county. An old Indian was shot, and no one knew who did it. His son, in turn, fired a shot in the saloon and killed Patrick Riley. With recourse to poetic license the old man is made a chief and the words about his daughter put in his mouth. At the trial the young man was defended by Samuel Murdock, later a district judge and a legislator. Among the records in the Clayton county courthouse, at Elkader, appears an account of this happening, with further notation that the sheriff charged a fee of fifteen cents for arresting the young Indian. For many years all that remained of the town of Hardin, was a little white church with pointed windows of a later era, but finally utilized for a bank, appearing so pathetic to those driving by. It, too, may have later vanished.—K. M. H.

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