

["Jim" Higgins]

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2 Higgins

"Jim" Higgins, former knifemaker who has been turned by force of circumstance into a mill hand, is at leisure today, and is on his way to a baseball game, he declares, when I meet him on the street.

"I found somethin' up to the house I been savin' for you," says Mr. Higgins. "About the old knife company in Hotchkissville. I was cleanin' out some stuff the other day and I ran across it and I says to myself I says I'll save that for Donovan. You want to come up to the house with me now, I'll get it for you."

Mr. Higgins amiably reverses his course and we proceed to his boarding house. "You see this animal followin' me?" he says, indicating a large, powerful looking mongrel. "Best damn rabbit dog you ever see. He don't look like a rabbit dog, does he? Yoy'd think he was too big, wouldn't you? Not a bit of it. He's the best rabbit dog I ever had.

"Give him to a fella down to the Bridge when we moved up here, but he must of run away. First time I see him since we moved was today. He see me on the street and he run up and jumped all over me. Now I can't get rid of him. Makes me think of a story about Jim Perkins, used to be a blade finisher in the shop I worked in Bradleyville.

"Jim had a dog he sold him to a fella for a coon dog. Got five dollars for him. Fella took him out huntin' and the dog was no good. Wouldn't hunt. Fella brought him back to Jim and he says, 'that dog ain't no coon dog.' 'He ain't?' says Jim. 'By God, I thought he was. He won't hunt nothin' else!'

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"I seen the time I could go out in back of where I lived 2 and got four-five rabbits in no time at all. Over in Hotchkissville, place where this clippin' I's gonna give you tells about. Well, here we are. Come on in and sit down a minute, and I'll get it for you. I found a couple of old Reynolds Bridge school pictures, too, but I guess you wouldn't be interested in them. Here's the clippin'."

The description of the knife industry in Hotchkissville follows:

"A short distance further down stood the leading industry of the village, the American Shear and Knife Company's factory, small at first but subsequently enlarged to enable the company to fill its constantly increasing orders. The principal mover in the enterprise was Edward Cowles, a Bethlehem farmer, who had faith in the enterprise and secured control of a major portion of the stock, and placed his son, Edward, Jr. in control. "Make the very best grade of goods possible," was the slogan of the concern and the shears and knives turned out by the company soon obtained wide renown for their excellence, and the business prospered. The employes were many of them natives of England, experts in this line of products, and wages being satisfactory, never but once in a long period of industrial life was the company hampered by labor troubles and that came about durin' the latter and of the company's industrial life, after Edward Cowles, Sr., and Edward, Jr., had dropped out of the management of the concern.

"By this time competition in this line of manufacture had become more keen and the quality of the product suffered, the business suffered at the hands of less competent officials³ and one night ruthless hands set fire to the factory and in a short time there was nothing left but a heap of twisted iron and ashes to mark the site of what had for more than a generation been a thriving industrial hive employing more than 150 hands. Prolonged investigation and inquiry failed to fix the responsibility for the fire upon the minds of the jury sworn to do its duty, but the larger jury, the public, held its own opinion as to the correctness of the Jury's findings. No one had the courage, or the means to resurrect the business of knifemaking in Hotchkissville, and the splendid dam, neglected and having no

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further excuse for its existence succumbed to the ravages of the frosts and floods and has become a thing of history, likewise the old sawmill which for many years stood nearby and was active in converting logs to timbers and boards for local use.”