

**UNCLE IKE**

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Uncle Ike by John Farrar

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**JOHN FARRAR**

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BY

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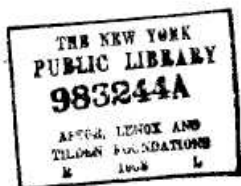


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*Uncle Ibs.*

# UNCLE IKE.

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## PART I.

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### CHAPTER I.

ON a bright, early morning in June, 18—, an athletically built man of six feet in height, and between sixty and seventy years of age, passed along the main street of Jayville, a village in northern Pennsylvania.

Entering the "store," wherein everything in the line of ordinary groceries and dry goods was to be had, he went straight to the delivery window of the post-office, bought a stamp, and placed it on a letter which he dropped in the letter-box. On turning away from the window, a cheerful "Good morning, Uncle Ike," came from all directions.

The old man declined all invitations to stay

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and await the mail, with the excuse of having "too much work at home."

Uncle Ike had a large, clean-shaven face wholly free from wrinkles. His broad-brimmed straw hat rested upon a head of thick grey hair, and his blue eyes were well set beneath heavy iron-grey eyebrows. He had held the office of Town Justice for many years, and was highly respected throughout that section of the country, while his good humor made him a general favorite in the village. In years gone by the apple "bees" and corn huskings were considered incomplete without him.

With his violin he used to stir the hearts and feet of old and young, but an accident having once stiffened two of his fingers, prevented its further use, and the instrument had for years lain as silent as the harp on Tara's walls.

Yet sometimes even now, maintaining that "if he couldn't fiddle, he could hoe her down with the best of 'em," the old man joined in the merriment. On the day of which we have spoken, when about a quarter of a mile from home, a voice behind him called:

J. G. V. M.



"Hello, Ike; hello, Ike!"

He did not turn, and the voice again sounded forth, growing louder with each call. Still no answer.

At last the driver of a passing team called his attention to some one following him.

"Well, you *did* condescend to stop when somebody stopped you; but I'd have followed you to the house if I'd got no answer any other way."

Uncle Ike looked in the face of the speaker with an inquiring glance.

"Hello, Samantha, was that you a-hollerin'? Fine day, ain't it? I wish I'd a kept on. The women-folks 're workin' hard this mornin' an' a little from you helps wonderfully; it goes a ways further than you might think."

"Come, quit that, Ike; you didn't *want* to hear me. You're not deaf and I know it."

"Well, that's accordin' to how the wind blows."

"Yes, we're all built that way when we choose, but there's not so much wax in your ears, and your tongue has a streak of fat and one of lean in it when there's an axe to grind."

"Now, Samantha," replied the old man, putting

his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, "don't be hard on me. I've got a lot o' hard work to-day. Say, what's the news? Any births, weddin's, or deaths? What's bearin' heavily on yer mind, anyhow?" And he laughed heartily.

"Say, Ike, I've got something else to do than to stand here gossiping in the road. What I want is for you to carry a message that don't directly concern you, but yet a very little stretching would make it fit your case. I want you to tell Nancy we are going to hold a meeting at the minister's next Thursday night, for the purpose of discussing the question of getting up some sort of an entertainment to raise money for foreign missions." Detecting a smile on the face of the listener, she added: "My own idea is that the money could be better spent at home, trying to bring such heathen as yourself into the fold."

"Very true; but when do yer want to start?"

"Look here, Ike Newton," replied the woman with a laugh, "I can't for the life of me see what the men are thinking of when they put a fellow like you in the office of Town Justice. There's plenty of God-fearing men both able and willing

to take it. If the women might vote, you'd never have got it."

"I shouldn't have much show with you, that's a fact, Samantha; but you're all right. We need women like you," he replied, with a twinkle in his eye.

"We'd clear the heathen from office, anyhow."

"Yes, I'll stand fer your doin' that, if able. You're thoroughbred an' 'll make your way in the world. But how about the next? If you land in heaven, the female angels 'll have to stand around."

"Now, Ike, that everlastin' smile of your'n gets the better of me, and that slick tongue finishes it up. Go along home and carry the message straight; if a notion sets in that way, you'll twist it out of shape before you get there."

"No, I won't; it ain't every day I've got such a message to carry."

The woman stood in the road and watched him out of sight, then went into her house.

Uncle Ike passed on until he reached an old-fashioned four-barred gate with hinges made when strength was gauged by size. The old man reached between the bars and unfastened the chain, then