[*Written for the Christmas Number.*]

IKE AND BETSEY AT THE RACES.

IKE and Betsey, his wife, with their sturdy son Jim, who turn the sod in daily toil near Sparta, Wisconsin, joined a company of their friends, who were going to the races.

As the sun was peeping up in the east, Ike hitched up Mag and Belle to the old wagon, and was soon on the way with his faithful spouse beside him.

The fever was running quite high, and the road was never more crowded with vehicles than on that race day. The cracks were all entered and great sport was anticipated.

Betsey, his wife, was shrewd and sagacious, and had prevailed on Ike to take the two fat hogs in the wagon and sell them when in town, thus saving the trouble of coming in again. Ike did not at first cherish the idea, as being out for a good time, he did not care to mix business with pleasure. However, Betsey insisted that they would be killing two birds with one stone, and, as she generally does, woman carried the day. Our good friends were somewhat delayed, and arrived later than they had intended, and at once proceeded to dispose of their hogs, intending to place the money in the bank to swell their already comfortable accumulation. They found the town adorned in gala attire, and business at a standstill. No one would purchase at even a moderate price.

Our friends decided, therefore, to wait until next day, when better prices might be had. After Ike and Betsey had consumed their home-made repast at noon, they fed their team, and soon were on their way to the track. As they pulled up at the entrance, a slick-looking young man with a fancy cap and coat approached Ike, and looking at him with a grin, said:

"Ho, there, old fellow! There's no hogs to be sold here, but I'll let you in for one dollar."

"Eh! you young rascal; one dollar, did you say? Hully gee! You can't fool me; them hogs go in free," said Ike.

"You can't go in with those hogs, unless you pay me an even dollar for two tickets; and be quick about it, too," said the ticket seller.

"Well, I guess I'll see the boss, anyway, you young scalawag; this is the first time I ever heard of two hogs needing two tickets to go in. We've never seen the races before, so I guess I'll pay you, and if you've fooled me, I'll break your head," returned Ike.

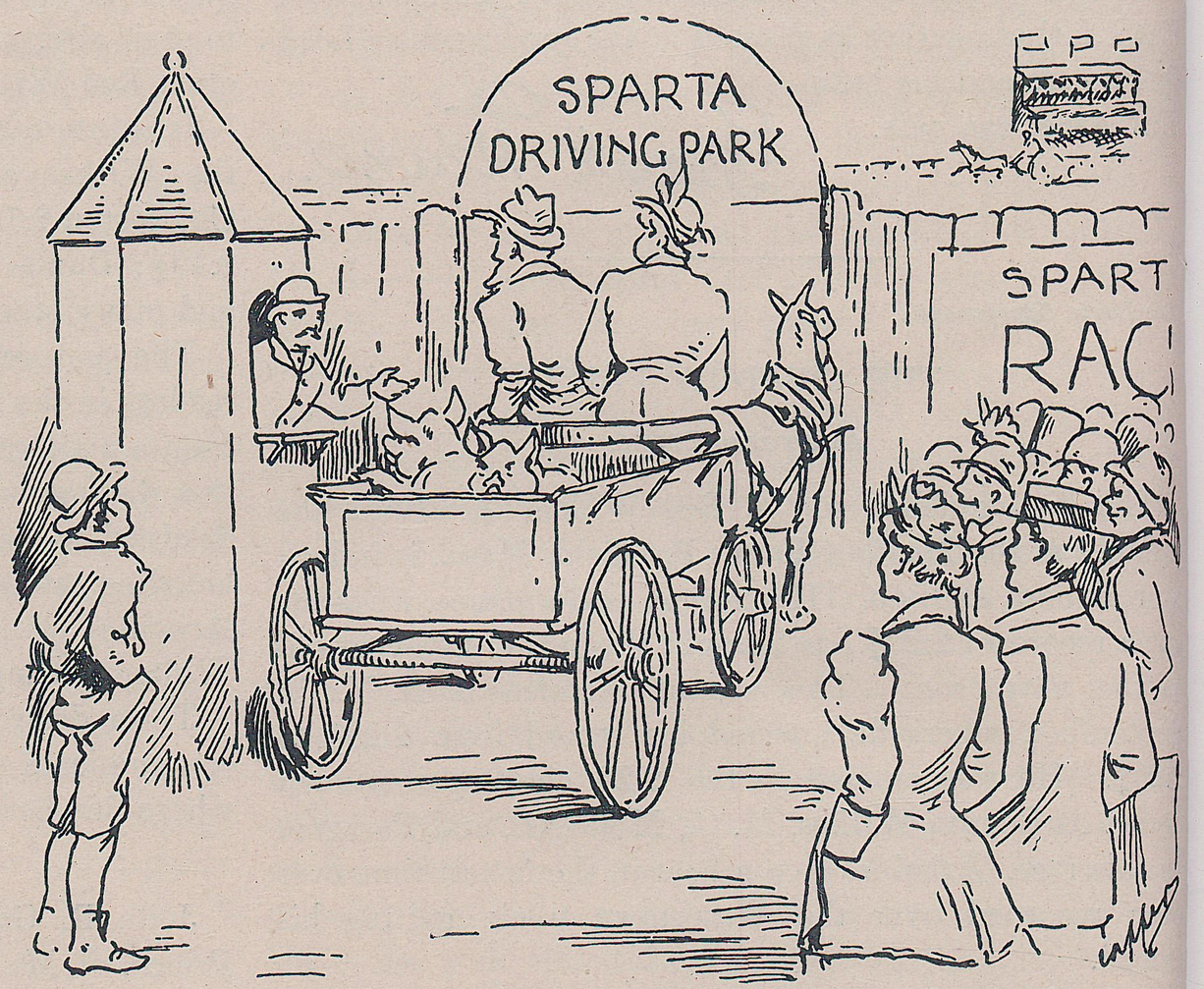
"It's real mean of you, young man; you had better look out for my Ike! I've heard of hogs being let in a circus on tickets, but they were two-legged rascals, like you; so you had better look out!" chimed in Betsey, as Ike whipped up his team and drove quickly through the entrance.

The great crowd and the fast-flying horses, as they were being warmed up were too much for our honest farmers, and soon they were heart and soul in the game.

Ike and his wife lived quite a long way from the town, and seldom ever came even to the county fair, so the bustle and noise, the merry clatter of hoofs, the ringing of bells, and the yell of the pool sellers all caught their fancy.

No two were fonder of money than they, and they wondered at the rapidity with which a nice young fellow made money from a dapper gentleman with a small table and three shells.

"It's the simplest thing out," said Ike to his wife, "you double your money every time, and you cannot lose.



"You can't fool me; them hogs go in *free*," said Ike.

I don't see how the little man can be such a fool. However, a fool and his money are soon parted, and, Betsey, we might as well have some of it as any one else!"

Betsey then took a peep at the unwary youth, and agreed with Ike. It was just as easy as picking it up. "But," said she, "poor man! he must be drunk or crazy, and I would not like to take his money."

Ike, by this time, was at fever heat, and, edging his way in, said, "Can I get in, boys, till I try the thing?"