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Tales of the Town and the Times

BY RED BUCK

This story could, and perhaps should, be left untold, but after I am dead and gone some enemy might tell it. At my ripe old age it is permissible for me to become a reminiscence as all elderly persons do. I was born a sucker and a sucker. My father, who is a man of fine horse sense, the best kind in Providence, has declared, ever since one day he sent me to buy a hog, providently the hog was a hog, provided by the anxious owner, and I bought it that I was born a sucker—which, of course, means a fish that will bite at anything—and had relapsed once at anything—had relapsed once at anything—admit my brother Badger, who had too much gumption to leave the farm to practice law, take up journalism, inasmuch as, preaching or anything else that would send him gadding about the country, said, one day, not long ago, in the shop, to the boys—my associate reporters—that I was always mean and ciled, as an example of my viciousness, a case in which a stubborn mule and I were at war. He swears now that I looped a breast chain around the beast's lower jaw and plowed him with it instead of a bit I may have done this. But, kind readers, I have reformed. My disposition is sweeter, my heart softer. A sucker I was born and a sucker I will die. Therefore, those who do not like the part I took in an episode that I am about to uncover must know that suckers will be suckers.

To the best of my ability I am going to stick to the truth in telling this tale.

THE FIRST ROUND.

Saturday night before Christmas, 1885, I had a desperate fight at Monroe, as Bob May, Policeman Ashcraft, Sheriff Horn and other citizens of that town could testify. I was on my way home from Moore county, where I had been to report to The Observer the facts of the fire-damp explosion in the Cameroo coal mine, which resulted in the deaths of about forty men. For three days and nights I had been among dead and dying, and had had but little food or sleep. My work over, I was on my way home for the holidays. Having had no opportunity to see the daily papers for nearly a week, I devoted my spare moments to catching up. The newsboy, a bright, sprightly little fellow, with a cock eye, and a cut in his lip, was liberal with me, letting me exchange certain papers for others without requiring anything to boot, and I felt very grateful to him as my money had about given out.

me; I would be good to him. I took the watch, went forward and saw the man. The offer, as suggested by the boy, was put in a most appealing way but the prospective purchaser crawled. He did not want a watch—didn't need it—wouldn't have it. That let me out. I had done a turn for Butch. This ended the first round.

THE SECOND ROUND.

Returning to the first-class section I turned over the watch, told the newsboy what had passed between the second-class passenger and I, and forgot the past. I sat well back in the car and busied myself studying the people in sight, speculating on them. It was nearly 11 o'clock and I was hungry, tired and sleepy. Somewhere and at sometime, that evening, Mr. Allen Tedder, then going home from Wake Forest, where he had been in college, came and sat down by me. We did not know each other, but soon struck up an acquaintance. I had graduated from the State University in June, and Mr. Tedder and I discussed college life. It was while thus engaged that I heard some one say loudly and distinctly: "Fonder is the d—d scoundrel." I knew from the tone of the man's voice that he was angry. Craning my neck a little I saw three men, standing in the front door of the car. The one in the middle was tall, angular and well built, wore a black shirt, without collar, and looked fierce. From the grime on his face and clothes I took him to be some sort of mechanic.

He was the man who uttered the oath. His companions were smaller, and quieter.

"There is trouble brewing for somebody," said I to myself. "That chap means business—cursing and swearing in the presence of ladies."

"It is none of my watch," said I. "The newsboy said it was, and I want my money."

"Get the newsboy and I will tell him that," said I.

"I can't find him, and I must have my money before you leave this train."

The train was then slowing down for Monroe, where I changed for Charlotte, and the news butcher must have been in the baggage car, packing his goods preparatory to leaving the train.

"I asked you if you would give \$5 for the watch and you said that you would not; that is all I had to do with the trade. I did not know that you bought it. See the newsboy! Make him give you your money!"

"No, damn you, I will have my money, or I will lick you."

I had been a halfback on Mike Hoke's football team at Chapel Hill, and was as active as anybody of my weight in the State. I felt my muscles knitting.

"Friend, I am not going to fight you if I can help it, but if I do have to do it, I will whip you or kill you."

The savage was rising in me. I could feel it, but I did not want to fight under the circumstances, realizing that the butcher had taken ad-

vantage of my being a sucker. "I will take care of you all right," said the indignant fellow. "Fish for your dough, or it will be too late."

Such assurance made me quail before this giant, six inches taller, twenty pounds heavier, and much harder than I, but I could not run. Once more I argued.

"You are laboring under a wrong impression, young man," said I, in the softest of tones. "If you will get the newsboy he can settle this trouble. I had nothing to do with the watch. He asked me to get you to say what you would give for it. I failed. That is all there is to it. I have no \$5, if I were to be swung."

"Then, you sorry rascal, I will beat you. You are a cur anyhow."

The moment he said that I dropped the bag that I had in my hand, doubled my fist and started to strike him in the face, but, seeing that the ladies in the car had become frightened, I picked up my grip, brushed my accuser out of the way, and walked to the front of the car, which had almost come to a standstill in the yard at Monroe. My movements were so quick that lanky Tom, or whatever his name was, did not realize that I was going until I had passed him. I had two purposes in taking this step: First, I did not wish to cause a commotion in the car; second, I had quaded up my mind to kill the fellow if he got me down, and by making him follow me, I would put the law on my side. Like flashes these things passed through my mind.

THE THIRD ROUND.

As I stepped off the train I asked the conductor where I would find the Charlotte trail.

"Go to the station and wait there," replied the captain. "It has not come yet, but it will be in a few minutes."

We were about one hundred yards from the station. I turned to go, when I saw the three men coming down the steps. One of the smaller men said to the tall one: "Give him hell, Tom."

I was the "him."

Before I could make away my antagonist caught me by the left thumb, with his right hand, and said: "You need not be in such a hurry; when you go away from here you will need a stretcher."

I was sorry for myself and wished that Badger, or Hugh, or my father was here. A lonesome feeling crept over me. I did not see a person in the little circle that had formed, that I could call a friend. At that time I was unknown outside of Providence township and Chapel Hill.

But, there was but one thing to do. I had to fight or take a whipping. While the bully held my thumb, I reached in my coat pocket, pulled out a roll of manuscript, handed it to a man whom I had seen buy a ticket to Charlotte, and told him to give it to Mr. Caldwell, at The Observer office, and tell him that I would be there by and by.

THE FOURTH ROUND.

Having disposed of my manuscript I stepped close to Tom, if that be his name, and asked in as polite a tone as possible, under the circumstances, if he intended to fight me whether or not after I had told him what I had about the watch deal.

"Yes, damn you," shouted he, still holding to my thumb, "I'm going to lick you."

Before the words had left his mouth my right fist cut him over the left eye and he fell at full length upon the ground. The fight was on then, for the brute in me asserted itself. Like one bull terrier throttles another I throttled Tom. With my elbow in his chest, my feet one way and

his another, I fastened my fingers in his throat and choked his tongue out. Although he had been brave in denouncing me he tried to yell "police." Not satisfied I drew myself in a knot, pounced upon his breast and started to run my thumbs in his eyes, and would have done so to my eternal disgrace, if a traveling man, Mr. William B. Meares, whom I did not know at that time, had not grabbed my hands.

"Don't maim him," said Mr. Meares. "I am your friend in the fight, but he has holleged, get up."

"Certainly, I'll get up," said I. "I did not want to fight him anyway."

I rose and walked across the track, turned with my back to a freight car and conversed with Mr. Meares.

THE FIFTH ROUND.

I had been there but a second when my adversary, with coat off, came running at me hissing: "Yes, damn you, you knocked me down just now before I knew you would fight."

"I am turning my right hand to my face but I sidestepped, struck him good and hard, on the left jaw and he went whirling to the ground, with his shoulders supported by the car. I dropped down on him and made a pass for his neck but slipped and, when I recovered, he had closed his jaws on my left eye brow and was chewing as if he liked the taste of my teeth. Blood trickled down my cheek and the cavity made by his teeth stung. I was on top but he had me good and fast. I felt as if the entire brow, hair and all, would be lifted out in an instant. The thought was not a pleasant one.

But I had no time to lose. Feeling the predicament I was in I bowed low, brought up my hands, and closed them about his wind pipe. It was not long after that that he turned loose and struggled to free himself from my wiry fingers, fatally bent on stopping his wind. Being strong, muscular and alert he got to his feet by bracing his back against the car. We had lost our original holds—he with his teeth and I with my hands.

"Now, by—see who hits the ground first," said one of Tom's associates, as we turned and twisted for the advantage in a catch-as-catch-can wrestle.

Had not the friend given this significant hint of Tom's ability to wrestle I might have let him fasten his arms around me but when I heard this I made a desperate and successful effort to get hold first. Catching one hand in the collar of his shirt and the other in the waistband of his trousers I mule-dogged him. That eye I pulled him close to me, picked him up on my right knee, swung him to the right, stopped suddenly, and threw him to the left. I had been holding the mule dodge by a negro boy on the farm, where my first (fall) broke me up so badly that my mother had to send for a doctor. I knew the mule dodge and the possibilities in it.

Tom fell between two railroad rails ten feet from me but by the time his back touched the ground I was in his throat and, this time, I am ashamed to say, before any one could stop me I had gouged the fellow in the eyes until they bled. It was then that Tom yelled so loud that Policeman Ashcraft, who was on duty five blocks away, heard him. The savage—the brute—in me was aroused and I would have blinded the man for life had not Mr. Meares interceded again. Withdrawing my hands I sat straddle of my prostrate opponent and told him that if he followed me again I would shoot him. Turning to his friends, as I got up, I said: "Gentlemen, if you can do anything with him you had better do it, for

if he comes to me again I will have to kill him."

Something like one hundred people had assembled by this time. The fight had been going on several minutes—it seemed an hour to me.

Mr. Meares offered his arm, I looked it and walked away, going toward the station. Allen, the odder had my grip and Peter Holmes, the negro porter, my hat.

"Give me a pistol!" said Tom as I turned my back. "A knife! Anything to kill him with!"

THE SIXTH ROUND.

Having made up my mind not to touch the fellow with my hands again I walked on without looking back. "Look out he will stab you!" cried the crowd.

This I heard but did not heed.

"Reddy, he will cut you!"

"Reddy," that was the call that turned me, for I knew some acquaintance was warning.

Hearing the feet of the running crowd approach I wheeled just in time to save myself. Tom and his two friends, running side by side, were coming. In Tom's uplifted hand was a long, keen bladed knife.

In the twinkling of an eye I drew my revolver, a .38-caliber, and thrust it in Tom's face, striking his nose with the muzzle.

"My God, don't shoot," said Mr. Meares, dropping to his knees.

My finger was on the trigger, my mind made up, but Tom whirled and ran. I lowered the gun, stuck it in my pocket and walked into the waiting room. Tom just had time to catch the Atlanta train and I mine, I had never seen him before and I have not seen him since. The last word he said, as he climbed in the car, was thinking of me again. He meant ever he met me again. He meant it. I should go many miles out of my way to miss him for I have nothing against him. In this year, when I am turning gray about the temples, I wish Tom and his well. I may have done him an injustice but I did not intend it. I now apologize for fighting him and ask the mule, that I brought with a chain for a bridle bit, to forgive and forget.

Had it not been for Mr. William Meares on that bitter cold night, at Monroe, I would have been tried for maiming or killing a man. The little scar that needles above the corner of me how close I came to shedding the blood of a fellow man.

I can't help being a sucker, but I will try not to be a savage.

Excursions Run From Many States to Asheville.

Correspondence of The Observer.

Asheville, Aug. 14.—Many excursionists from Charleston, S. C.; Columbia, S. C.; Atlanta, Ga.; Savannah, Ga.; Norfolk and Richmond, Va., rolled into Asheville on special trains this evening. Train No. 9 from Spartanburg was operated in three sections, each section heavily laden, while train No. 13, also from Spartanburg, was operated in three sections. The Mississippi valley excursionists from Mobile, Birmingham, New Orleans, Shreveport, Pensacola, and Memphis will come Sunday and Monday. The Jacksonville special train is due to-morrow evening. The excursionists are traveling on ten-day and fifteen-day tickets. The summer season in Asheville and western North Carolina is now at its height and there are probably as many visitors in the mountains at this season as at any other one time for years.

PARTY AT HONEYMOON LODGE.

Mr. and Mrs. John W. Kennedy entertained at the Beautiful Mountain Home Near Tryon—A Pilgrimage Made to the Recently Erected Monument in Howard's Gap.

Special to The Observer.

Tryon, Aug. 15.—Mr. and Mrs. John W. Kennedy entertained at an enjoyable picnic house party Thursday afternoon and evening at their mountain place, Honeymoon Lodge, Honeymoon Lodge is situated in the thermal belt on the south slope of Tryon mountain at an elevation of nearly 2,000 feet overlooking the beautiful Faeolet valley, the famous vineyards of the thermal belt and the Towns of Tryon and Lynn.

After the large number of guests had enjoyed a most beautiful picnic supper in the dining hall, all repaired to the spacious veranda and promptly at 9 o'clock Madam Luna appeared for the evening and by the light of her countenance and the strains of a violin by an "old-time fiddler" the younger set enjoyed the Virginia reel, and awaited the school along the mountain sides with "Seewanee River," "My Old Kentucky Home" and other old favorites. In the afternoon a number of the guests visited the Howard Gap monument, erected in June by the Dr. G. H. M. to the memory of Captain Howard, who defeated the Indians and their Tory allies at the beginning of the revolution, in the battle of Round Mountain. The bathing took place near this spot and the gap was named for Captain Howard. The monument was to have been unveiled on the fourth of July, but rain prevented the programme from being carried out and a date for the unveiling has not been set. The monument can be seen from Tryon.

Tryon is a cosmopolitan little city and to show from what widely different sections of the country she draws her visitors it may be mentioned that among a guests present at the house party were, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Gordon, Jr., Baltimore; Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Mosley, Columbia; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Hall, Norfolk; Mrs. Arthur Smith, Washington, D. C.; Mrs. F. E. Corcoran, Albert Corcoran, Charleston; Mrs. Mandeville, Miss Williams, Miss Moore, Jesup, Ga.; Miss Florence Clark, Chicago; Mrs. Marquis, Chester, S. C.; Miss Minnie and Sallie Arledge, Messrs. J. E. Shipman, Buford F. Williams, Charlie H. Williams, Columbus; W. R. LaCompte, Corydon, Ida.; Misses Bessie Stevenson, Carolyn Smith, Hattie Hester, guests, B. L. Ballenger, C. W. Ballenger, Curtis Arledge, W. C. Corcoran, Richard Ballenger, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Hill, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Hester, Mrs. H. J. Garrigue, Tryon, and Master "Buster" Sallee, of Saluda.

Simpson and Bennett Lease Star Warehouse.

Special to The Observer.

Winston-Salem, Aug. 15.—Messrs. John T. Simpson and Arch Bennett have leased the Star Warehouse, corner of Main and Sixth streets, and will open it for business on September 1st. Mr. Simpson will not sever his connection with Brown's Warehouse, of which he is part owner. Messrs. Simpson and Bennett are popular gentlemen, hailing originally from Rockingham county, and that they will make a success of their venture seems undoubted. The warehouse will be improved greatly to meet the demands for comfortable business quarters for the tobacco farmers.

WHOLESALE FAMILY WASHING.

The price of our service is based upon the weight of the clothes sent. Five cents per pound. At this rate the average family wash costs no more than the expense of having a woman by the day and furnishing coal, soap, starch and meal. If you allow for the doing away of the annoyance of wash day our plan is much the cheaper. Most of the ironing is included at this price.

SANITARY STEAM LAUNDRY.

A Challenge

From Mr. J. A. Smith to Mr. E. Y. Webb.

Bessemer City, N. C., Aug. 13, 1908.

Mr. E. Y. Webb, Shelby, N. C.

Dear Sir: Some one has handed me a copy of your home paper, The Cleveland Star, in which I understand you are a prominent stockholder, and in said paper is published an article very scurrilous and abusive of me, saying that a joint canvass, which I had announced would not be made between us was wise on my part, as your going around the district with me would be like "dragging a dead ass after you."

I hereby challenge you for a joint discussion of the issues of this campaign, and any personal abuse your henchmen or you may choose to bring against me, on-to forestall any objection to this joint discussion, if you will publish an article saying that you do not approve of said scurrilous article published in The Cleveland Star or any other paper, I hereby agree not to allude to it, as far as you are concerned in the campaign. Said discussion to be held in the Auditorium in Charlotte, N. C., at any date we can agree on, between the fifteenth of October and the first day of November, and, as you are the one that is to do the dragging, you to lead off in a speech of one or two hours and me to reply within four-fifths of the time consumed by you, and if you choose you to have ten minutes for a rejoinder and me five minutes, final rejoinder.

You to pay one-half of the rent of the Auditorium and me one-half. I publish this letter in The Charlotte Observer and The Bessemer City Messenger, and you can reply through the same channels, if you reply at all.

Yours faithfully, J. A. SMITH.

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