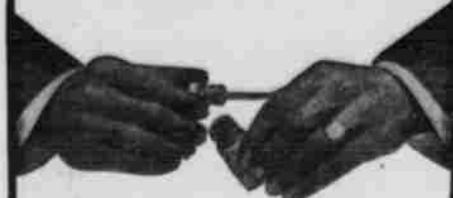


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# Mr. Pitcher Bucks the Game

(Continued from Page 4)

with the notion that he was ready for business; whereupon he stepped forth into California street to look for it.

Now it was characteristic of Rube Pitcher that he should commence business at exactly seven minutes after three. Any other man would have called that day wasted. He would have made up his mind to start in business for himself at eight o'clock the following morning. Not so with Reuben K. Pitcher.

At the corner of Battery and California streets an old customer, one Cyrus P. Keating, of the Tuolumne Flume & Irrigation Company, hailed him.

"Hey, Rube," he shouted. "Hello there, Mr. Keating." Pitcher crossed the street and shook hands. Everybody called him Rube; but while he had known Cyrus P. Keating four years, and was on a perfectly friendly—almost fraternal—footing with him, he had never called him Cy.

"What brings you up to town?" he inquired of Keating.

"I'm buying lumber, Rube. Let's ooze into a thirst parlor and hoist one."

"What! While there's lumber to be sold? Never! Wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging—say, what do you mean by being untrue to me, Mr. Keating? A month ago when I was in Fresno didn't I hang ten carloads of rough common on you on the representation that the market on rough common was going up? And didn't it go up fifty cents? And wasn't I in your office less than a week ago, and didn't you turn me down without an order? Yet you're up here buying lumber and I don't even get a look at your specifications. Tell me what I've done to deserve this?"

KEATING took him by the arm. "Not a thing in the world, Rube. But last week you were selling Oregon pine and I'm here buying California redwood."

"Oh-h-h," said Mr. Pitcher, apparently mollified, "that's different. When did you get into town?"

"Just arrived."

"How are you, anyway?"

"Thirsty. About that drink," and Keating jingled money in his pocket. "Thank you, no." Reuben raised his nose and sniffed, after the manner of a bird dog. "I smell an order over at North Beach and I've just got time to land it before the five o'clock whistle blows. Thanks, Mr. Keating. Some other time," and shaking hands again he was off.

But not to North Beach. Young Mr. Pitcher wasn't that kind of a free lance salesman, for Opportunity in the shape of Cyrus P. Keating had struck him fairly in the face and his first big deal was on.

Keating was Vice President and General Manager of the Tuolumne Flume & Irrigation Company and was in town to buy redwood lumber. That meant that his company was about to build a large flume, for redwood is one of the few woods that never deteriorates in water. Very well. Then they would want fluming—inch and inch and a quarter by twelve and fourteen-inch stock, and considerable of it. Fluming, eh? They could use a lot of short stock, and short stock of any grade is always a drug on the market.

In a little book which he carried with him, Pitcher had a list of the Humboldt and Mendocino County redwood mills and their San Francisco sales offices. He was well acquainted with the manager in each office, so he hurried to a telephone booth and called up each office in succession. Invariably he repeated over and over the same conversation.

"This is Rube Pitcher speaking. I've quit the Arago Company. No, thanks, I don't want a job. I'm tackling the game as a free lance, and be-

sides it's easier to sell fir than redwood, so I wouldn't work for you anyhow. Say, got any accumulation of shorts—clear or fluming stock?"

Invariably they had—anywhere from one hundred thousand feet to half a million, and it had been on sticks for periods running from six months to three years, so it was quite dry—just the kind of stock for fluming.

They made Pitcher an astonishingly low figure, as he thought they would, and as this fluming deal had driven from his mind all thought of possible lesser deals, and calm in the knowledge that at least ten options on stock aggregating more than three million feet would be mailed him that night, he returned to his office and for an hour gave himself up to reflection upon ways and means of purchasing approximately thirty thousand dollars' worth of lumber, on a reserve cash fund of thirty dollars.

VIEWED from every angle, it was a tremendous order, yet the contemplation of it did not stagger Mr. Pitcher. On the contrary, he went home to his boarding house that night, stepping high like a ten-time winner; ate his dinner with his accustomed relish, slept well and, bright and early next morning, was at his office ready for business. Ten envelopes lay on his desk, and after perusing them all, and finding them quite satisfactory, he went out and rustled furiously around the city yards all day long without getting close enough to an order to tag it with a buggy whip.

However, he was not discouraged. As a matter of fact, he was merely marking time, for at nine o'clock the following morning the casual observer might have noticed Reuben K. Pitcher leaning negligently against a cigar stand across the street from the hotel where he knew Cyrus P. Keating always put up when in town. At nine-fifteen Keating emerged from the hotel and walked down the street, and a block from the hotel, quite by accident, he bumped into Rube Pitcher.

"How're you coming on with that fluming order?" Pitcher inquired, as the usual common places over, they walked downtown together.

"Not very fast," Keating complained. "Somebody has taken an option for ten days on all the Mendocino County stock. If these options lapse, I can, of course, jump in and grab the stock. I'd like to get about three million five hundred thousand feet of it."

"What prices did they quote you?" inquired Pitcher innocently.

"Thirteen dollars F. O. B. Oakland Long Wharf."

"The burglars!" Mr. Pitcher, in his rage, permitted himself a little promiscuous language somewhat stronger than the circumstances seemed to warrant. "They'll hold you up now, Mr. Keating. They know you're in the market for it."

"It can't be helped, Rube. And at that, I'd gladly pay thirteen dollars for it. I'd still be ahead of the game."

"Well, there's no use paying thirteen dollars when you can get it cheaper. Now, look here, Mr. Keating, I'm the boy that's holding the options. I'm in business for myself now, and when you let it slip the other day that you were in town to buy redwood, I doped the exact situation out in about three seconds. You hadn't reached your hotel before I had those mills tied up and written confirmation of the options deposited in the mail. They're asking you thirteen dollars in the hope that my options will expire before I can close my deal, and the stock will be free again. Now, I'll sell you those shorts on a basis of twelve dollars F. O. B. Oakland Long Wharf, plus actual loading charges to place the stock on cars and the estimated freight to

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