

"I LOVED HIS MOTHER."

An Episode in the Life of an Old-Time Mississippi Gambler.

"I am a believer in a man's natural goodness," said the colonel, as the Merrill Record quotes him. "I had the pleasure once of knowing an honest gambler. I liked him, too, for he was a gentleman. The days of this class of gamblers are past, however, and today they seem to be a scurvy lot."

"Moore, when I saw him, was a Mississippi gambler. He traveled, in fact lived, on the big river steamboats. He never attempted to conceal the truth about himself. It was simply: 'Gentlemen, I am a gambler by occupation, and a good one. If you care to have me play with you it will give me great pleasure. If you don't it doesn't make a particle of difference.'"

"I got to know Moore very well, and I soon discovered that when playing with the average man, luck being equal, he would win ninety-nine times out of a hundred. I never touched cards, but I used to like his society. He was a wonderfully entertaining talker. On summer nights the stewards used to serve dinner on deck for those who preferred to have it there. After dinner we would go up to the hurricane deck, and when Moore was on board he would bring out his flute and play for us. When the moon was out and threw a thin blue veil over the water, or when the boat carried the darkness, swept so close to the shore that it brushed the dark willows on the bank, the rising and falling notes that came from his instrument were gentle music to the ear. I never knew him to propose a game of cards. He would play there until some one suggested a game, when he would take his instrument apart and put it away in an indifferent manner."

"I watched him at play one night, when Satan seemed to throw every card to this calm, self-possessed man. There was a cool, matter-of-fact way about him which froze the ardor of every one else, except a young man about 25 years old. This player was feverish, eye he made his bets furiously, only to lose every time. It soon became evident that he was playing beyond his means. Moore must have noticed it, for he ceased to bet heavily against the younger man. This angered the other."

"There was a pot of \$300 once, and every one had dropped out except Moore and the young man. Moore had been playing his hand like a wolf in sheep's clothing, and he was not to be taken in. No man but his opponent perhaps could doubt that he held the winning hand. Suddenly when his rival had bet \$50, Moore laid down his hand, saying: 'I won't bet. I have nothing. You played that hand well.'"

"The young man reached out feverishly for the pile of money and then his hand lay on the table. 'That is not true,' he said. 'You have a good hand and are afraid to play it against me.'"

"Moore shot a hot glance across the table at him, and two red spots flashed into his cheeks. 'I lay down my hand,' he said, slowly, but with a slight tremor in his voice. 'And I say,' added the other in a low tone, 'you are a gambler and therefore a coward.'"

"'Hush,' I said, laying my hand on the young man's sleeve. 'You don't know what you are saying. He is not a coward by any means.'"

"The young man shook off my hand vehemently. 'He is a coward,' he repeated, 'and I will answer for my words at the next landing.'"

"I looked at Moore. He sat stiff and motionless, with a terrible fire in his eyes. I was amazed at his next words. 'Does the game go on?' he asked quietly."

"Not with you," said the young man, swelling. 'Not until I prove that you are afraid to bet,' and with a sudden motion he threw his hand across the table and seizing Moore's hand, turned the cards face upward on the table."

"I was on my feet at the instant to arrest Moore's right arm, for I felt that he would draw his revolver at the insult. But a hush fell over those around the table and the hot-headed young man was gazing stupidly at the cards before him. Four aces lay there—an invincible hand, for straights were not played. There was a blue tinge in Moore's white lips and the young man looked bewildered and burst into tears."

"We can't play together any more," he cried. "You threw money in my pocket because I was losing too much. I can't take it," he said arising from his chair."

"You can't," said the gambler in an even voice. "I laid down my hand. The money is yours. Besides, my hand with a shiver, 'I held out an ace on you.'"

"Every man at the table knew that Moore had lied. We all got up and left the young man sitting there before his money. I found Moore shortly afterward on deck looking into the darkly whirling water."

"Give me your hand," I said. "What in the world did you mean? You never cheated at cards in your life."

"That, tut," he answered, with a little laugh that was slightly harsh, he is only a boy and I loved his mother once."

RATIONS OF THE REDS.

INDIANS WHO RECEIVE GOVERNMENT FOOD.

The Number of Wards Fed by Public Money for Less than Generally Supposed—When and Where Issued and How It is Issued.

The Indians are often spoken of as paupers dependent upon government bounty for the food that keeps them alive. But there are in round numbers about 70,000 red men in Indian Territory, belonging to the civilized tribes, that do not receive rations from the government. There are also many Indians elsewhere who are self-supporting, such as the Pueblos of New Mexico, numbering more than 3,000; the Six Nations and St. Regis Indians of New York, more than 5,000, and the North Carolina Cherokees, about 2,900. Then, on the reservations are many who support themselves by hunting and fishing, by farming, herding, or horse raising, by lumbering and the sale of timber, and by other occupations."

In California, for one Indian who receives rations there are ten who do not; in Oregon and Washington the Indians are self-supporting; through the lake region of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota the same is true. In short, out of an Indian population, excluding Alaska, of 244,000 about 186,000 are self-supporting. This leaves only about 58,000 who receive rations, or fewer than one-fourth of the whole. Of these more than half are in the Dakotas and Montana."

The next important fact to notice is that the Indians who do receive rations in nearly every instance have paid full value for them, and generally more than value. They deserve to be called paupers as much as a man would who should sell a piece of land for \$10,000 and place the proceeds in the hands of trustees to be invested by them so that the interest should come to him in the form of food and clothing. Make the trustees the purchasers of his land at a very good bargain for themselves, and the analogy would be still closer. Why should the Indians under such circumstances be represented as receiving rations? This queries the New York Sun, which continues as follows:

Still, every year the question comes up whether the ration system is not really at best a makeshift which should be abandoned at the earliest practicable moment. The annuities furnish an opportunity for a great deal of swindling, which has frequently been utilized. Reliance on rations no doubt tends to keep up the idle and lazy habits to which the Indians are by nature inclined. The periodical issue of food does not even teach them frugality, since they feast and are wasteful just after ration day, and perhaps go hungry before the next distribution. The government makes matters worse by its wretched system of giving out the rations, which is often at long intervals and at a single central agency. The consequence is that those who attempt farming may have to leave their crops uncared for and their stock untended, while the long journey to and from the agency becomes a picnic, arriving home perhaps to find the crops in a discouraging state."

Indeed, so primitive is the official machinery in regard to rations that at some agencies, such as Anadarko and Darlington, the habit, according to Commissioner Morgan, is still kept up of issuing live cattle, so that the Indians may chase them over the prairie in imitation of the buffalo hunt of former days, amid the howling of dogs; and when the poor beasts are shot, the squaws are allowed to do the work of butchering, while the children look on."

Perhaps some day a substitute for the present system may be found in the establishment of several sub-agencies instead of a single central one, each provided with a store in which food and clothing can be had, and with shops for blacksmithing, carpentry, and so on. These could be managed by the Indians themselves, and annuities could be paid largely in money instead of goods, and without the need of long journeys to get it. Then, with more facilities furnished for work outside the reservations and for marketing their products, the present annuity and reservation system would gradually be changed. The Indians might still have their head money or individual pensions, but would no longer make these an excuse for a life of idleness. Meanwhile the evils resulting from the bad quality of goods and from injurious methods of distribution should be corrected."

The English traveler stood on the slippery dock at New York, ready to board the steamer for home. His American friend took him warmly by the hand and bade him farewell. "Be careful in going up the gangway," said the latter. "It is icy. For that matter, however," he added, "it will be 'igh sea all around you for the next six or seven days.'"

The Englishman, with a sad, dreamy, preoccupied look on his face, went aboard the ship. The American, now a gray-haired old man, was sitting down to breakfast one day when a cablegram, just received was handed to him. It was from his English friend, and contained these words: "Ha! Ha!"

It had bowed its way through his skull at last. A foreign textile journal records the invention of a new kind of looped fabric, which has a novel and beautiful effect with a durability never before attained. The peculiarity about it is that it is woven in such a way that the threads forming the figure of the design, and also the ground for the design, form the ground for the design. The contrast between the lustrous and beautiful threads of the motif and the unadorned ground is an effect that is strikingly novel."

The Russian sat, on an average, says a contemporary, once in every two hours. The climate and custom require such frequent meals, the digestion of which is aided by frequent draughts of vodka and tea. Vodka is the Russian whiskey and made from potatoes and rye. It is fiery and colorless and flavored with some extract like vanilla or orange. It is drunk from small cups that hold, perhaps, half a gill. Vodka and tea are the inseparable accompaniments of friendly as well as of business intercourse in the country of the czar. Drunken men are rare. Russia and Sweden are the only countries in which the double dinner is the rule. When you go to the house of a Russian, be he friend or a stranger, you are at once invited to a side table, where salted meat, pickled eel, and appetizing viands are urged upon you with an impressiveness that knows no refusal. This repast is washed down with frequent cups of vodka. That over, and when the visitor feels as if he had eaten enough for twenty-four hours, the host says: "And now for dinner."

IN AFRICA. Experience of a Young Scandinavian in the Wilds. If a young man is really bound to go to Africa, he can find an opportunity one way or another, and if he doesn't mind roughing it in a savage land and an unhealthy climate, he has plenty of experiences and adventures that are sometimes exciting if not always agreeable and does not regret his visit to the new world. Mr. Carl Steckelmann is a Scandinavian who lived in Indiana, is an example of this sort of a young man. He went to Africa a poor boy when he was hardly out of his teens. He was determined to go and see something of the land which Stanley and others had so eloquently described. Casting about for an opportunity, he finally succeeded in securing employment at the station of a Liverpool firm in the West African trade, and a short time after, found him at Mayumba, some way above the mouth of the Congo. Here he lived for about three years, during which time he learned the Flote language, studied the natives carefully and collected a great deal of information about their habits, and folk-lore, made an overland expedition through the little known valley of the Kwilu-Niari to Stanley pool, and finally returned to this country with one of the largest collections of African curiosities that has ever been brought here. His fine examples of native carvings, cloth and many other manufactures have been seen by many thousands of our people, particularly in Indiana and Ohio. Steckelmann had no intention of remaining here very long. Nearly two years ago he returned to the west coast again, and is now at the head of the large trading station where he was originally employed as a clerk. When he was passing through New York two years ago on his way back to Africa, he said he loved that country very much, and that it was the ambition of his life as soon as he had accumulated money enough, to do something in the way of original exploration."

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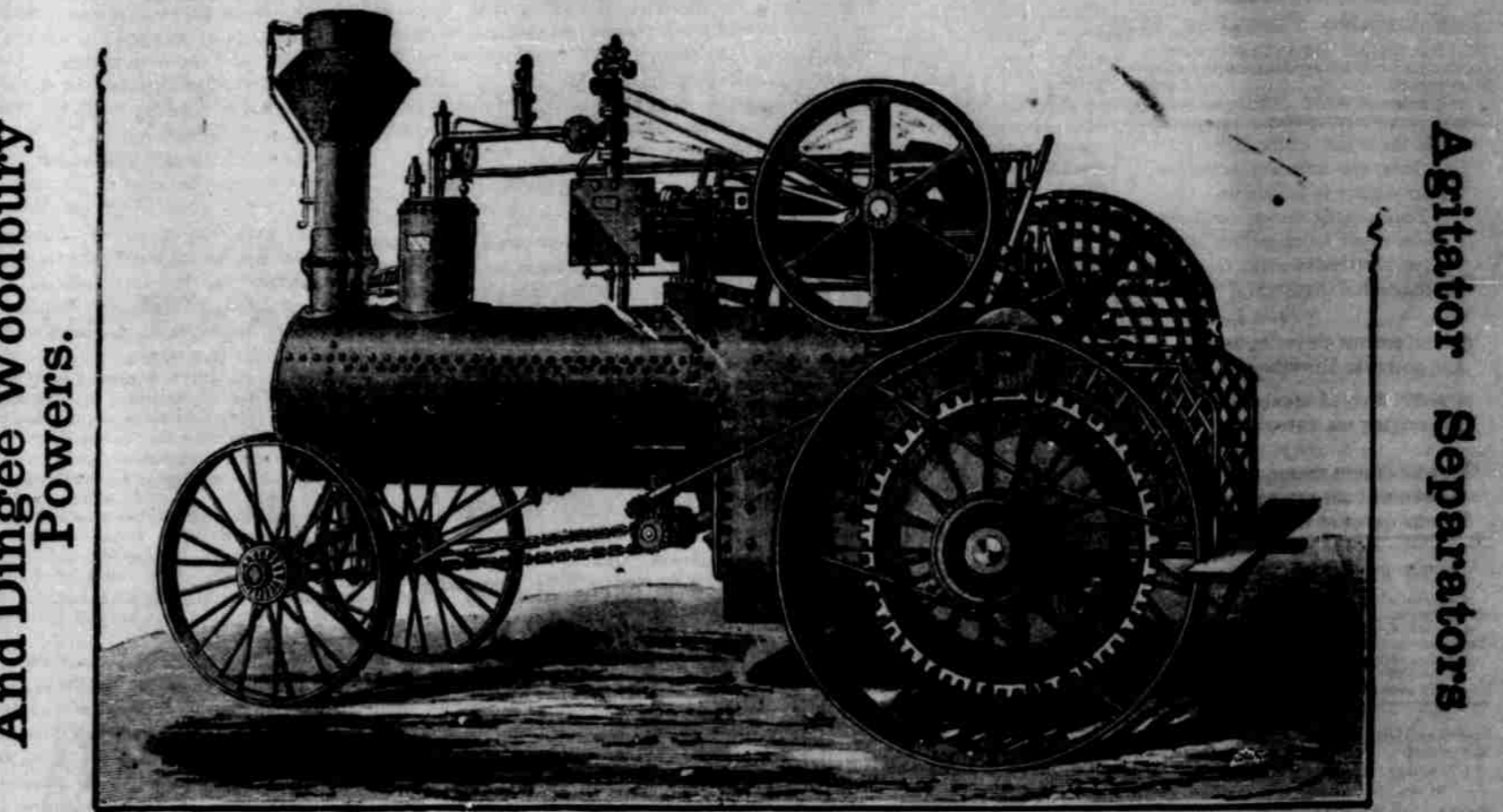
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