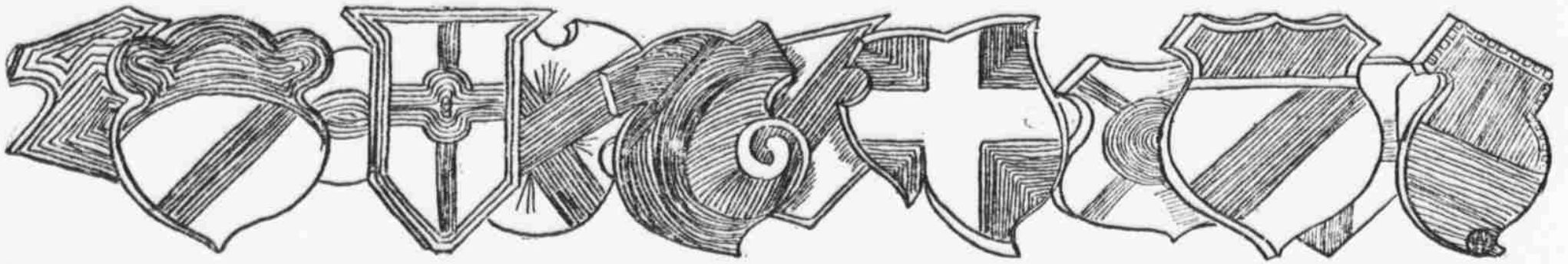


O'Keefe, Akoond of Swat: A Tale of Modern



Methods and Luck of a Lucky Man--By Wm. H. Osborne

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CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

BUT O'Keefe, as they supposed him to be, or Constitutional Smith, as he really was, had other fish to fry. For as he neared the shore a portion of this thin, black cloud descended upon him and upon his oarsmen, and immediately both were enveloped in a thick, black covering of mosquitoes—plain, old-fashioned Jersey mosquitoes, nothing else. Immediately they, too, set up a yelling. They, too, commenced to beat their hands and breasts and faces.

"Mosquitoes!" yelled Smith. "Good Lord, let's get out of this."

But a half dozen men rushed into the water and placing in the hands of Smith and his man some fresh green boughs they dragged the boat upon the beach.

"Oh Keefe," they cried, patting him upon the back. "Oh Keefe."

And then Smith observed a phenomenon. He noted that the instant the green bough was placed in his hand the mosquitoes deserted him. Not altogether, for now and then one braver than the rest would swoop down upon him and Smith would find it necessary to make a vicious dive with his hand every other second. He noted that the men all about him were engaged in doing nothing more nor less than waving the green boughs and killing stray mosquitoes.

Smith and his man were covered with bites. One of the natives, however, crushed a few of the green, tender leaves in his hand and rubbed them upon the affected spots. The relief was immediate.

Smith, of course, did not understand the language of these men, but he did recognize two words, "O'Keefe" and "Swat." And he knew that for the present time he was in good hands, save when the mosquitoes became unusually fierce. But gradually he learned to do as the others did, and so to manipulate his green bough in such manner as to keep the insects at bay. He examined one or two of the mosquitoes and found them in every way of the same kind as the American variety. But there was one distinguishing feature—they were much smaller and much more vicious, too.

The inhabitants were noisy. But even when their mouths were still, Smith's ears were assailed with the constant swish and slap of hands against faces, breasts and sides.

"Swat, swat, swat," said Smith to himself, "that's all I seem to hear." Suddenly he smote his thigh.

"By George, I've got it!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Swat, that's how they named the place. Damned if it ain't."

Smith was right. The derivation of names is usually an unknown quantity. In this case it was very simple. The island upon which Smith had landed had ever been the home of the mosquito. Its inhabitants naturally were compelled constantly to slap and slap and slap. The sound which they made was swat, swat, swat. Now some sounds are difficult to express in spoken language. But Charles Reade, in a bit of fiction called "The Box Tunnell," has written into the English the sound that is made by a masculine-feminine kiss. He says that that sound in plain English is nothing else than "pweep." Perhaps he is right, though the sound varies according to temperament and ardor. But he, and he alone, has turned it into a written word.

But the sound made by the open hand coming into contact with any other portion of the human body (except when administered in a certain form by prudent mothers; in which case it may be called "whack") is always the same. It is plain "swat." And it sounds the same in English as it does in Choctaw. The people of Swat, having from time immemorial been bothered by mosquitoes and having always indulged in this slapping process, gradually became to be known as the people of Swat. And Smith had discovered it, and he was everlastingly right.

"Swat," he said, "is their name, and Swat is their nature, too."

But there is ever a compensative element in nature. Providence tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. In marshes reeking with malarial germ and miasma he has placed the plant that yields the drug quinine—the thing that cures malaria. In the Island of Swat, swept as it was by the larger germs, mosquitoes, he had placed an antidote. This antidote consisted in the green trees from which the boughs used by the natives had been torn. Like curves like. The Island of Swat was a breeder of

mosquitoes, but it was death to them at that. But the mosquitoes, always just a little ahead of the game, as they had given rise to the sound of swat, had given rise also to the name of Swat.

Later Constitutional Smith had time to revolve all these curious things in his mind. In the meantime, however, he was busy with the things at hand.

Smith found that the more prosperous in the island kept their bodies covered during the mosquito season. He, therefore, was able without comment to keep his tattoo marks and the sticking plaster

how to work and how to play. They were stupid, but they were appreciative.

The Akoond was all too pleased with this disposition on the part of his people. He had disposed of O'Keefe in secret some months ago. He would be only too glad to do it in public. He strutted about with a smile of triumph on his face. He did more. He egged on the followers of O'Keefe. He urged that O'Keefe become a candidate. He was magnanimous, even to the point of suspicion. He sent men into the field to "root" and howl for O'Keefe. And they rooted and howled to

Constitutional Smith spent his time in the interim in prospecting the island. He was looking for gold. He did not find any. He found nothing—nothing at all, but a superabundance of this fresh, green vegetation that seemed death to the mosquitoes. And he found marsh after marsh which was life to the mosquitoes. And he found nothing else. The Isle of Swat was indeed a Godforsaken place.

But Smith did not repine. He did not rail at O'Keefe. He knew that O'Keefe had done him, but he did not acknowledge that fact himself. There were worse



ABOVE THE PAIL HOVERED A DARK CLOUD THAT APPEARED TO BE SMOKE.

which still covered them in spots, well hidden. O'Keefe had been there in the winter season. As he left, it will be remembered, he, too, had been bitten by a mosquito—the first harbinger of spring. Smith had arrived in the height of the summer season.

He found himself socially and politically a lion. And there were still vague whispers in the air that sounded like "Oh, Keefe—akoond." These whispers grew into a murmur and then rumbled on into a shout. The cry again was long and loud, "Oh, Keefe, akoond of Swat."

It was the tribute of savagery to civilization. It was the compliment of a people who had roughed it for centuries, to a man who had taught them to enjoy life,

their heart's content, and so did everybody else.

Constitutional Smith soon understood the situation. He acquiesced. He said he would run. He did not care how soon. Neither did the Akoond. The Akoond did not even prepare himself as he had been wont to do.

But the thing was arranged and a day was set. This time, thought the Akoond, O'Keefe's day had surely come. This time it was just as well, perhaps, to make a complete finish of him. The Akoond was a fair man, but his rival had become persistent. This time he would kill him and have done with it. It was easy enough. Then there would be an end to this vague unrest.

things than being upon the Isle of Swat, and for the time being he was content. He loafed and lived, and for the present that would do.

He almost forgot about the great battle that was to take place. One day he heard a number of shouts in the village and he saw men scurrying in every direction. He was sitting under a tree.

"O'Keefe! O'Keefe!" they shouted, "O'Keefe!" Then one of them saw him as he stood up, and ran toward him, and dragged him toward the village, shouting probably that O'Keefe was found. Smith entered the village and found that the army was drawn up about a spacious ring. On one side of the ring stood the Akoond, puffing out his black chest. Smith made as