

In the Nick of Time

An Old Fashioned Story of the Western Plains

By John Thorndike

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There are oceans of land just as there are oceans of water. At least beyond the Mississippi river there are regions which, viewed from the tops of the mountains looking eastward, have the appearance of great seas. Descending, one finds a vast level plain through which run few streams, and those that exist, having no foliage on their banks, are without beauty. The ground, which is often rolling, is usually covered with no dora except cactus, whose spines are like bayonets.

One afternoon a young man wearing trousers of buffalo skin, a woolen shirt and a sombrero sat on his horse, shading his eyes from the sun with his hand, peering at something in the distance. He was on the crest of one of the land rollers and managed to make out, a couple of miles away, the white top of a plains schooner.

A little puff of smoke appeared near it, followed by a faint crack, then another and another at intervals. He heard responsive cracks, but the land lay so that he could not see from whom they came. But he knew that he was in the country of the Apache, and persons firing from behind a wagon meant white men defending themselves from the most savage tribe of Indians. The picture told him more than this. One wagon did not indicate many whites, whereas there were plenty of Indians about. Again, a wagon was almost surely indicative of a moving family in which there were likely to be women and children.

These conclusions did not require reasoning process. They came to Jim



WILL JONES

RENEW THEIR ARMS ABOUT EACH OTHER.

Ruckers like a flash. Had he been especially interested in his own welfare he would have beaten a retreat, for the picture that he could see, taken with what he could not see, told him that the travelers' bones would soon be whitening on the plain and if he should go to their assistance his own bones would whiten with them.

But, in the first place, Ruckers put no great value on his own life, and, in the second, he was not the man to run away from such a responsibility. He was like a rudderless boat tossed about upon the waters. Plains life is not conducive to homemaking, especially when there is little to do except punch cows, and there are few women to tame the men and make them fit for homes. Indeed, the prospect of a fight, even in a losing cause, was not unwelcome to Ruckers. Quickly descending into the hollow between two rollers, he rode with all haste toward the wagon till he knew by the loud cracking of rifles that those firing were near by on the other side of one of the rollers. Dismounting, he ascended the slope, crawling as he neared the summit, and, lying flat, he surveyed the scene on the other side through cacti.

A family consisting of father, mother, several boys ranging from twelve to eighteen years old and a girl of twenty were using the wagon as a rampart by which to protect themselves against three or four times their number of Indians, who were approaching from comparatively level ground, the redskins being widely scattered with a view to preventing their enemies concentrating their fire and that they might take the party on the flanks as well as the center.

That the whites had sufficient arms was evident from the fact that every one of them, including the two women, held a breechloading rifle, a comparatively new gun in those days. He who was evidently the father of the family was giving his little army orders as to the direction of their fire so that it would be properly distributed. They were doing their best to pick off the redskins, but the latter were so wary in exposing themselves that it was difficult to hit them.

Ruckers returned to his horse, unhooked his rifle and, removing all the ammunition he had in his saddlebags, placed it in his hat. Besides this ammunition, his belt was full of cartridges. Taking his load up to the crest, he shoved the muzzle of his gun

out between the cactus and was ready to commence operations.

Meanwhile the Indians had changed their tactics. They were concentrating on their center preparatory to charging the wagon. It was plain to the whites that they were lost. In a quick dash of the Indians some of them might be killed or disabled, but there would be plenty left to toss back their enemies. The father's voice trembled as he said:

"Let us die hard."
But at that moment a surprise occurred to both whites and redskins. The former heard a crack behind them, and the latter saw a puff of smoke on the crest. One of the Indians fell dead. Ruckers instead of firing again from the same spot scrambled to a point a few yards to his right and from there sent another bullet. Without waiting to see what damage he had done he moved and fired again.

The Indians paused in their advance. Ruckers had produced already the impression that there were at least several persons on the crest, and since he kept up a fire from different points it was impossible for the savages to tell how many there were in this reinforcement.

Equally interested in Ruckers were the party directly beneath him. They were casting quick glances over their shoulders, hoping to see a party of armed whites come over the crest to their assistance. But when Ruckers called to them to keep up their fire, that he was alone, there was disappointment. But there was hope. The father, seeing the advantage of Ruckers' strategy, encouraged his family, at the same time admonishing them not to fire except at an especial redskin.

But by this time the Indians had taken themselves behind a slight rise in the ground, where they remained out of sight. They had evidently withdrawn for consultation or with a view to getting the strength of their new enemy. Ruckers and the whites below ceased to fire since they could do no damage. Ruckers called to their commander, suggesting that it might be well to direct one of the party to crawl through the cactus to the crest; that by firing from different points at the same time the two above might further make it appear that there were not more than one person there.

It appeared to the father that whoever succeeded in separating himself from the party might have a better chance for his life, and, desiring to give this advantage to his daughter, he directed her to do as Ruckers had suggested. The redskins detected her and sent a shot at her which raised the dust only a foot from her, but she succeeded in her attempt.

When Ruckers saw an attractive girl who had come to fight with him for her life and the lives of all concerned a new resolve came to him that they should win. There was an eager light in the girl's eye as she asked what she should do. Ruckers, who since she had been fired at in joining him had lost confidence in his ruse, told her to lie flat beside him and wait for orders.

The Indians appeared again, scattering at first in order to distract the whites, then suddenly making on converging lines for the wagon. Ruckers called to those behind it to aim at the savages nearest the center, told the girl beside him to fire at those on the Indians' right, while he would cover the left and any such individuals as he thought it an advantage to put out of the fight.

This dividing up the enemy between them proved to be very effective. The savages had not covered half the distance between their starting point and the wagon when a dozen of their warriors had been dropped. They hesitated, broke and scurried for cover.

There was a shout, and a dozen cowboys came galloping toward the wagon. Ruckers turned and looked at the girl beside him; she turned and looked at him. There are moments when our emotions sweep away conventionality. These two had met for the first time half an hour before. Death had then stared them in the face. Now all were safe. Yielding to an impulse that seized upon both at once, they threw their arms about each other's neck, and the man covered the girl's face with kisses.

Ruckers had not been on the crest an hour, but he had been there long enough to save the lives of the family. When his first shot cracked the savages were about to make a charge that would have been successful. He had stood them off just long enough for the cowboys to come in and make the safety of their intended victims certain.

Night was coming on, and the cowboys threw up an earthwork in a circle about the wagon and the stock, and pickets were put out for the night, but morning dawned without an attack, and not a redskin was to be seen. Then under a sufficient guard the family who had so narrowly escaped death moved on.

The adventure brought a great change to Jim Ruckers. For him and for the girl he loved it stood in lieu of a long courtship. When Jim told her he wished her to be his wife she could not well say him nay, for had it not been for him she would not have had a life to give any one. The family stopped at a settlement, entered land and built a home. Jim stopped, too, and never moved on. He had found an anchor, and the spot where his stake entered the soil is now the center of a prosperous farm. He is much interested in the crops he raised, but one crop he has raised to beat all the rest—eight children, now mostly grown.

All this happened years ago, when the buffalo still roamed on the plains and the redskin was a terror to emigrants and settlers. Yet it was not so long ago after all, since it is within the memory of middle aged men.

JIM SULLIVAN IS ON THE WARPATH

Former A. A. U. Head Would Revolutionize Amateur Sports.

RECOMMENDS SOME CHANGES

Thinks Drafting by Big Clubs Should Be Done Away With—New Plan Would Concentrate Responsibility of Registration Committee.

Jim Sullivan, secretary-treasurer of the Amateur Athletic union, is on the warpath. Needless to say Jim Sullivan means business. When the genial though dynamic, good natured yet aggressive emperor of amateur athletics yanks his six feet of energy out of the revolving chair in his throne room in New York city and, hurling his perfect out of the window, fervently opines that such and such a thing for the betterment of sport is going to happen events generally shape themselves in conformity with his remarks.

Recently Jim threw away his perfect, got down the big stick and said things that warrant certain parties taking to the cyclone cellar. Mr. Sullivan will recommend changes in three rules which if carried out will affect clubs, colleges and officials in all parts of this country and Canada.

He will send a letter to every member of the national body recommending that the union abolish all district registration committees, prohibit any athletes from joining and competing for one club until two years after he shall have been released from another club and prohibit any college man from competing for a club until after his graduation from college.

"In my mind these changes are essential to good, clean sport," said Mr. Sullivan recently. "The little clubs must be protected. The time has come now when we must stop the unscrupulous recruiting by the big clubs if we want to encourage sport among the little fellows."

Big Clubs Draft Youngsters.
"For several years the little clubs throughout the country have been developing champions. And what has been the result? As soon as a boy displayed good form a recruiting officer from a big club would drag him off with promises of this and that kind, with the result that the little club had struggled hard to develop him lost his membership just when he should have been earning them fame."

"I believe, and I think every fair minded man is of the same opinion, that the big clubs should not be allowed to persuade an athlete to leave the club in which he has been developed."

In regard to the college rule Mr. Sullivan said:
"I think that rule will be best for all concerned. Being a member of a college team does not mean that a collegian shall not be allowed to compete in open competition. To the contrary, the Amateur Athletic union invites him to compete. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred an athlete prefers to compete in his college colors, but some of them like to compete both for a club and a college. This is what they are allowed to do now."

"During the summer vacation they are allowed to compete for any club. As it is during this period of the year that most of the championships are held, many college men are recruited by the big clubs. They remain with the club during the summer season, win championships and points for it and then are rarely seen again in its colors. This also helps to discourage the small clubs. They cannot offer sufficient inducements to get the champion collegians to run in their colors, with the result that they are further handicapped in the championships."

Responsibility Divided.
"There is too much divided responsibility with the registration committees. Time and again claims are made by athletes and clubs that they are not getting justice from the committees in their districts. When traced they invariably result in one committee man placing the blame on another. My plan is to concentrate responsibility. If each district had one man as a judge of its athletes' actions there would be no way in which that man could evade his responsibility."

"He should be a high class man, a man of integrity and one who knows the rules thoroughly. I think it would be a good scheme to pay him a salary. He could then be held accountable for his actions and if found wanting could be removed at a minute's notice. Under the present rules if I would take weeks to bring charges against a committee, and then it would be mighty hard to remove it."

Mr. Sullivan's scheme might work well in the east for a time, but it will not be tolerated in the west. In the east some of the clubs that have not the proper facilities for bringing out the best that is in a boy will fight to have such a rule made, but they will soon tire of it. Fewer youngsters will join their ranks because they will be deprived of eventually joining one of the world famous organizations.

In the west the clubs are made up almost entirely of college men. The Chicago A. C., Illinois A. C., Olympic A. C., Seattle A. C. and Multnomah A. C. are represented almost entirely by university men. To put through a rule prohibiting college men from competing for a club until after their graduation would mean the end of athletics in the west.

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OWEN G. THOMAS
Cor. Main and Fourth Sts., Oregon City

THE THIRD AUTO

By MIRIAM ELDRIDGE
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"Your name, sir?" asked the clerk of the marriage license bureau.

"Edgar Clark Stewart," replied the gentleman.

"The lady's, please?"

"Cynthia B. Geddes."

The clerk filled out the license and handed it to the prospective groom, a pompous man, who laid down a five dollar gold piece in lieu of a fee and drew the lady away without waiting for the change.

A few days later the clerk asked the usual questions of a couple standing at his window:

"Gentleman's name?"

"Willis D. Rathbone."

"Lady's?"

"Cynthia Geddes."

The clerk looked aside at the lady. It seemed to him that he remembered giving a license for one of that name before. Not recognizing her face, he turned back the leaves of his book till he came to the names of Edgar Clark Stewart and Cynthia B. Geddes, noticed the "B." in the lady's name, concluded that it was a case of coincidence, wrote the certificate and handed it to the man.

"H'm," remarked the recipient.

"All's well that ends well."

The same morning men were at work putting up an awning before a handsome dwelling in a residential portion of the city, and in the evening guests were to assemble for the reception after the wedding of Edgar Clark Stewart and Cynthia B. Geddes. The wedding was a notable one, for the contracting parties both stood high in social circles, the groom was rich, and the bride's parents were also blessed with a fortune. Automobiles were in attendance to convey the bride from her home to the church, where, as had been especially arranged, she was to meet the groom. Miss Geddes insisted on planning the affair to suit her own fancy, and it is a bride's privilege to have her own way in all things pertaining to her nuptials. She declared that her father and mother should proceed to the church in one auto, the others in another, while she and her sister, Miss Esther Geddes, would go in a third.

No one understood this whim, but no one thought of making any opposition to it. Indeed, the father and mother of the bride were only too delighted to give their daughter her own way in the matter of the wedding so long as she was yielding in marrying the man of their choice instead of her own. Mr. Geddes had worked hard for the fortune he had accumulated, and it is a well known fact that wealth accumulates with wealth. Mr. Stewart could match the pile of his father-in-law's expectant.

At the door stood three autos. Into the first Mr. Geddes handed in his wife, then got in himself. Into the second entered two of the bride's aunts and a younger brother. Into the third stepped the bride and her sister. Usage required that the order and the disposition of persons be reversed, but the little procession started as stated.

The first auto drew up at the church, and the second auto did the same. But where was the third? Mr. Geddes stepped out on to the sidewalk and handed out his wife and looked about for his daughters. He sent the others present into the vestibule of the church and waited outside. If he had waited till the arrival of the third auto he would have been there to this very day.

But the third auto. The procession had no sooner started than it began to lag. At every street crossing the chauffeur seemed disposed to give place to all vehicles in his path. Finally, after quite a lengthy halt, starting up, at the next corner he turned aside and, being well out of sight of the autos in front, put on speed. There was a sputter, and the auto dashed away, leaving behind a fine odor of old lamps.

Half an hour later this third auto drew up before a parsonage ten or fifteen miles from the church where the wedding was to have taken place. The chauffeur handed the bride and her sister out, the three went into the parsonage, and the chauffeur handed a marriage license to the parson. It read Willis D. Rathbone and Cynthia Geddes.

And so it was that while the gentleman of the first license was waiting at the church for his bride the gentleman of the second license was wedding the lady in a different part of the town. When the bridal party returned from the church and Mr. Geddes was telephoning to the police of the disappearance of a bride on the way to her wedding Miss Geddes junior rode up to the house in the third auto and reported that her sister had been kidnapped by the chauffeur.

Mr. Geddes fumed and swore that he would never forgive his daughter and all that, but when she returned from the honeymoon he thought better of it and gave her his blessing.

Now, there is no intention to recount this affair as being justifiable. It depends upon the standpoint from which one looks at elopements, especially where one lover is left in the lurch, whether it is justifiable or not. There is an adage, however, which was invented to cover such cases, and it does away with all criminality. It is "All's fair in love and war." Why love and war, which are the antipodes of each other, should be brought under the same rule is a matter that has never been satisfactorily explained.

Services at Mountain View.

The services at the Mountain View church will be conducted next Sunday evening by E. C. Dye. The sermon will be upon, "The Stone That the Builders Rejected." Services begin promptly at 7:30.

Card of Thanks.

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to the many friends who so kindly assisted us during our late bereavement in the loss of our loving husband and father, the late John Pettis Hill, and for the beautiful floral offerings.

MRS. IDA HILL and Family.

Salt on the Bird's Tail

Story of a Mardi Gras Masquerade
By SAMUEL E. BRANT
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"Who is the biggest fool you ever met?"

"Man or woman?"

"Woman."

"The girl I'm engaged to."

"Well, I like that. What kind of wife do you expect her to make?"

"How should I know her qualifications for a wife? Marriage is a lottery. Other men may marry for qualifications, but we youngsters don't pretend to forecast what a girl's going to be. And I don't believe the old ones hit it any better than we."

"What makes you set your fancies down as a fool?"

"I'll tell you, but I must begin back a little way. She's Madge Whirledge, only it should be Madge Wildfire instead. Not that she is so wild as she was. She's been quieted down a bit by a certain little happening that came near resulting disastrously. She nearly caused my death."

"You don't mean it! Not intentionally, I suppose."

"Well, whether there was a spark of intention in it I don't know. You never can tell what a woman is going to do or why she does it. We can't be sure she knows herself. If Madge had caused my death any prosecuting attorney might have made a very good case against her of doing it with malice aforethought. And to tell the truth I'm not sure but she did."

"And you're going to marry her?"

"You bet—that is, if she doesn't shake me for another fellow, though I don't think she would do that now. She might have done it before this thing I'm going to tell you about happened; but, as I said, it sobered her, and she's quite tame. That's the time I chose for putting salt on the birds tail."

"There's more appropriateness in this simile than you may imagine, as you'll see in a moment. But for the incident. We 'door gliders,' as one called our dancing club of young people—there was not one over twenty, and some of the girls weren't over fifteen—concluded we'd celebrate the Mardi Gras with a masquerade ball. I'd been getting sweet on Madge—Wildfire I may as well call her—and about the time the costumes were being arranged I was sitting up to her like a sick kitten to a warm brick. In fact, we arranged to have corresponding costumes for the ball."

"This was after Rostand's play of 'Chantecler' came out, and everybody was talking about it. You know that the leading lady chicken in the play is the hen pheasant, the leading gentleman being the rooster chantecler. We concluded to get ourselves up as these two birds. I was a month arranging my outfit—I did it all myself, you know—but when I got it done it was a corker. I made the body of a rooster, which I strapped under my arms, with an elegant head and comb in front and a fine display of cock's tail behind, the tail being made of tissue paper of different colors. You couldn't have told it from the real thing."

"I went to see Madge the afternoon before the ball. It so happened that we got to quarreling, and I went off in a huff. This was unfortunate, to say the least. We had spent a lot of time getting up our bird rigs and expected to make a lot of fun billing and cooing during the ball, and the worst of it was, now that we were in just the opposite condition from what we expected, we hadn't time to get other rigs."

"What was the cause of the quarrel?"

"We tried on our costumes in advance, and when she walked I told her she waddled like a duck. That made her mad, and she fired back, and we soon were in for it hot and heavy."

"When the ball came off, instead of walking about together, I strutting, she crouching up beside me, we were as far apart as possible and when we met glared at each other. After a while I saw her sitting in a window with Ned Tucker. This made me all fired jealous as well as mad, and to show my spleen what did I do but go up near where they were sitting and whisk around with the intention of turning my back on Madge. I didn't calculate how near my tail feathers were to them, but it seems they brushed their faces. This made Madge madder than ever. Ned had just struck a match to light a cigarette, Madge jerked it out of his hand and held it under the tip of my tail."

"In a second the whole of it was in flames. I tried to get the rooster part of me off, but it was tied on so well that I couldn't do it. The flames ran from the tail to the wings and from the wings to the rest of the body. The whole roomful of people rushed toward me, scared out of their seven senses, every one crying, 'Put him out!' Whether they meant to put out the flames or put me out to prevent my setting them all afire I don't know. I was howling with the burns and with fear when a Roman senator took off his togs and wrapped it about me."

"I was taken to a carriage and home. I wasn't burned at all, but just to punish the confounded girl that applied the match I gave out that I might die. She was knocked clean out, and when I let up on her she wailed. She had put a match to my tail; I put salt on hers and caught her."

"You mean she caught you. There are lots of men who think they do the catching when they are caught themselves."

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