

Jim-jam Johnny And His Partner

"Thanksgiving," orated the Old Time Mining man this morning, as he spread his coat-tails and backed up to a raidator in the Hotel Sumpter lobby—"Thanksgiving differs from all other national holidays, in that it comes oftener than once a year. It is a season, which like the poor, is always with us. My friend Roosevelt has proclaimed tomorrow as a day for all people to give thanks. It is safe to assume, however, that hardly more than one-tenth of the hundred million American citizens of this republic will observe the day in any other spirit than as an occasion for a big feed on turkey.

"I have been mining for forty years. It is with no vain-glory that I say that during that period of time I have made a couple of fortunes. Sadly, however, I admit that I lost 'em. And yet, during all those forty years of ups and downs, of poverty and affluence, of dress coats and mackinaws, there has hardly been a single day when I failed to be thankful—that it was no worse. I never owned a tear-jug in my life, and when my time comes to pass over the divide; when the Great Engineer stops the pumpa in this anatomy, and orders my soul into the mill of the gods for a final panning, to determine the existence or non-existence of fine gold—even that occasion will be one of Thanksgiving—for my enemies.

"I am an optimist because I dearly love that sort of cheerful animal—a man who can fix his gaze on a will-o'-the-wisp or glow worm in the blackest midnight, and persuade himself and others that it is high noon—that the world is 'dark with excess of light.' Sure 'tis better to laugh than be sighing—Democrat is preferable to Heraclitus. Why should a man gaze into a cesspool when he may look at the stars? Why explore the foul sewers of a great city when he may sun his soul amid the fragrant pine forests of these wonderful Blue mountains?

"The optimist is the brass band in the thanksgiving torchlight procession. Were old Sol to go out of business the optimist would proclaim it an unmitigated blessing and prove it by sanstroke statistics.

"During the forty years of time in which I have been rampaging up and down the mining camps of the Pacific coast I have met many optimists. Most of them died poor but happy—and therefore rich. Of all the optimists I ever knew, however, the greatest of these was 'Jim Jam Johnny' Sloane, original locator of the Dominion mine, in the West Kootenais. Johnny has been dead over ten years, but his example will live forever in the hearts of those with who he came in contact.

"I first met Johnny in Victoria in '81. He was at that time convalescent from an attack of blue turkey gobblers with purple sun bonnets and crimson-bellied lizards with flaming wings and tails—a peculiar sickness which afflicts people of bibulous habits. It was the periodical recurrence of these attacks that gave Johnny his nick-name.

"Johnny had been prospecting in the Frazer river country—he and his partner, Bill Ferd, who was as

mean a man as ever lived—a liar, a thief and a rotten-hearted coward. It was the attraction of opposites which kept Johnny and Bill together. Dozens of times Bill tried his crooked work on Johnny—robbing sluice boxes and laying it to Chinamen; 'rolling' Johnny when the latter was too drunk to know what was happening; cheating him at draw poker; et cetera and so forth. Johnny never suspected that Bill was crooked—he preferred to believe that all men were good, and honest and true, created in the image of a God whom Johnny but dimly understood, but whom he worshipped silently and unostentatiously at all times and under all circumstances.

"Johnny never prayed—at least aloud—but yet after he and Bill stumbled onto a big ledge of galena ore in the Coeur d' Alenes, along about '84, Johnny "sorter" wished that their luck would hold good a little while longer until they could sell out and settle down comfortably somewhere and quit roaming around the hills like lost souls.

"Johnny and Bill opened up their galena mine, took a couple of sacks of samples to Spokane and entered into negotiations for a sale of the property. Bill conducted negotiations—"You are too easy going," he said to Johnny, "to dicker with these money sharks." Johnny left everything in Bill's hands and started on one of those flamboyant sprees for which he was famous and which were the only objectionable trait in his character. When good and drunk, Bill secured his signature to a deed to the galena mine, and just about the time Johnny began to see bottle-green snakes with pink eyes and those old familiar turkey gobblers with purple sun bonnets—a sure sign that the spree was at an end and that Johnny would be good for at least another year—about this time Bill, playing a lone hand, sold out the Coeur d' Alene mine for \$20,000 in cash and disappeared. When the blue turkey gobblers and bottle-green snakes faded slowly from Johnny's mind, he took up the search for his old pal. He was sure Bill had been the victim of foul play. "Bill all'us wuz a sorter trouble-brewin' man," he said. "Besides, I want to go down ter Buffalo Humb and kaint go 'thout old Bill."

"In '93 I ran across Johnny in Sumpter.

"'Haint saw Bill, have ye?' he asked. 'I heard tell he wuz down this-away. Got a couple of claims over there,' he swept his arm vaguely toward the Greenhorns, 'and I want Bill to help me handle 'em.'

"A year latter I was sitting in a hotel lobby in Spokane, reading a newspaper, when an item caught my eye, which read: 'John Sloan, a miner, was picked up by the police yesterday and taken to a hospital for delirium tremens.' I went to see him, lying on a white cot in a cool ward. The blue turkeys and purple sunbonnets had faded away and Johnny's drawn face was peaceful.

"'Haint saw Bill, have ye? I'm going to kick the bucket and want to see old Bill 'fore I go. I'll bet I see him up there.'

"Johnny didn't know, and I didn't tell him, for various reasons,

that Bill was a 'lifer' in the Oregon pen for killing a man down in Lake county."

The Old-Time Mining Man wiped an imaginary cinder from his left eye, buttoned up his coat and spat copiously at, not in, a cuspidore.

"Tomorrow is Thanksgiving" he said, "and even had I nothing else to be grateful for, I would still give thanks that in the world there are lots of Jim Jam Johnny Sloanes and dam few Bill Ferd's."

Beautiful Columbia River folder.

The passenger department of the Oregon Railroad & Navigation company has just issued a beautiful and costly panoramic folder entitled "The Columbia River, Through the Cascade Mountains, to the Pacific Ocean." From Arlington to Portland, and from Portland to the Pacific ocean every curve of the river and every point of interest are shown, while Mount Hood, Mount Adams, and Mount St. Helens, perpetually covered with snow, stand in all their beauty. On the back of the map is an interesting story in detail of the trip from Huntington to Portland and, from Portland to the ocean, not overlooking the beaches and the San Francisco trip by ocean. A copy of this folder may be secured by sending four cents in stamps to pay postage to A. L. Craig, General Passenger agent for the Oregon Railroad & Navigation company, Portland, Oregon. By sending the address of some friend in the east, and four cents in postage, the folder will be promptly mailed.

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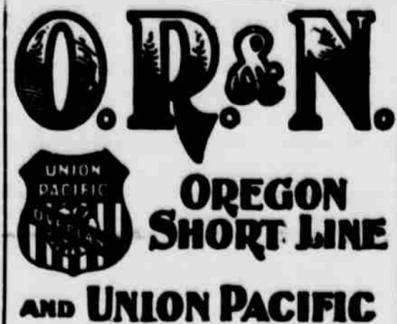
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