

RUBE, BEWARE OF CITY'S SLICKERS WHILE OUT WEST

(Continued from page one) minute. Some genteel appearing fellow rushes into the car with a \$20 bill in his hand and says, "Will some gentleman please be kind enough to change this twenty for me? I need four fives in a hurry." Up jumps the "come-on" with the four fives which the sharper takes in one hand while extending the other which holds the twenty. "Say, hold on," he exclaims, "this bill is no good; counterfeit." Just then the train starts. "Here, take your money back, I have no time to explain now," he chirps, and jumps from the train. The sucker looking at his money, finds he is a \$5 bill shy, but the train is in motion, so all he can do is to forget it.

These kind of swindles and dozens more were being pulled off every day in Denver while the "Soapy" Smith gang was around there and any stranger in town who didn't fall for at least one of them, was indeed lucky.

As I stated in a previous story, preachers were "Soapy's" personal meat. He would turn down good business to skin one of them for any insignificant amount. Why, I wouldn't say. Only know it was so. Privately, I have always suspected that "Soapy" knew they wouldn't make much of a holler about it. He knew a preacher, after being swindled, would hesitate to make a big fuss over it and then get up in the pulpit Sunday and admonish his hearers to "pray for them which despitefully use you," and "him that taketh away thy cloake, forbid not to take thy coat also," as the Good Book states.

However, the last time I was in Denver I had a trick pulled on me which is worth repeating, and

it wasn't by any gangster either. The snow in Middle Park, Colorado, piled up to seven feet on the level and made it miserable to work in. So I quit my job and came down to Denver over the Moffat road that used to climb over the lofty Berthoud pass, before they finally put the long tunnel in, that you have heard so much about. We reached Denver about dark and after supper, I went down to the big union depot to see about the price of a ticket to California and some other things. As I entered the depot where several hundred people were sitting around waiting for trains, I immediately noticed a tall, well-dressed guy walking up and down with his hands behind him. It was because he looked at me so sharply that I took especial note of him. While I was in conversation with the ticket agent, this guy passed close behind me several times and without appearing to pay any attention to it, I was watching him very closely.

Leaving the depot, I started back uptown but I hadn't gone more than a couple of blocks when I became aware I was being followed. I have lived in the big cities too long for anybody to trail me around without getting next to it. So when I reached Larimer street where there was a strong corner light, I turned the corner all right, then wheeled and came right back. I wanted to meet the fellow who was trailing me right under that bright light where I could get a good look at him. And sure enough it was the tall man I had seen in the depot and it was me he was trailing.

But I was due for a great surprise. Stepping squarely in front of me, he touched his hat and spoke in a most humble and respectful way. He said "Mister, I saw you in the depot and, begging your pardon, made so bold as to follow you. I am in an awful fix, a stranger in a strange town and flat broke. Could you possibly help me with the loan of a dollar?"

I did some of the fastest thinking right then of my whole life. Here was a guy, clean and better dressed than I was myself, who looked as if he could do anything any working man could do, asking me for a dollar.

Well, I had seen many fellows go broke in towns like Denver and, as I had close to \$700, I thought I could easily spare a dollar, so I said, "Why, yes, I guess I can let you have a dollar." I didn't want to spoil matters by asking him how he came to get that way, or anything along that line, so as to ease the situation off, I began to talk, telling him how I had just got in from Middle Park and about the deep snow there and how I was on my way to California, etc.

We talked for maybe five or 10 minutes, then he touched his hat again with a most respectful gesture and thanked me very humbly for my help and left me.

In the course of time I found myself in Canada, in a tie camp. My partner had been a cook on a Great Northern dining car, until his health had failed and he had to take to the outside for a while to build up. I took him for a partner, taught him all about the tie business and he taught me plenty about the cooking business in return. We were together for over a year with never a cross word between us. Day by day we took turns. One day I did everything, made fires, cooked, chopped firewood, cleaned up the camp, everything. He never lifted a finger to help. Next day he did it all and I took it easy. Not a chance for anybody to growl around that the other fellow wasn't doing his share, as is generally the way with partners. I had taken the Daily Denver Post for 17 straight years. The picture work of the Post is remarkable for its accuracy and clearness. Dozens of criminals all over the U. S. have been apprehended simply from their photos in the Post.

On this day I speak of, it was my day off and as three of the Post papers had come in all at once, I was reading them. Suddenly I gave a wild yell and my partner wanted to know what had bitten me. I said, "Just look at this. You remember I have told you about that guy in Denver begging me for a dollar. Well, here he is." Some bank president back east had absconded with a couple of hundred thousand, had gotten as far as Denver and had been caught there. The front page photo showed him being taken to the police station between two detectives and one of the detectives was the guy who had bummed the dollar off of me. I said to my partner, "I thought I was on to most of the cute tricks, but this is a brand new one. That dick thought when he saw me that I resembled someone he was after. He couldn't pinch me without some kind of a charge. So he put on that act to have a personal interview and satisfy himself and not only did that but made it pay him a dollar." I thought that was pretty good. Killing two birds with one stone, one might call it. Finding out what he wanted to know and grafting a dollar for himself at the same time.

Coming up from the Tonopah excitement, my train was late and I had to stay over in Sacramento till next day. I had \$1600 and had it right with me. The following morning about 11 o'clock I went down to the depot to see about the north-bound train to Redding. Just as I turned away from the ticket window a well-dressed individual of about 30, with a swell overcoat over his arm and a high-priced grip in his hand, had just come in and had heard my question, but had not heard the agent's reply. "What did you say?" he inquired. "The train is two hours late," I answered. "Darn the luck," he growled. "I was going off on that train, myself." We got into conversation and he asked me where I was from. That was no secret, so I told him I had lately arrived from Manhattan, the new gold

camp in Nevada. "Did you ever meet Frank Robertson there?" he asked. Frank Robertson was a famous mining man, a well-known promoter and very wealthy. Everybody knew him. So I replied in the affirmative. "He is my uncle," he stated. I swallowed that all right and after more conversation I said, "Well, as we have to wait a couple of hours, let's go across the way and get us a cool drink. I do not remember what he took, but I had a cocktail. Then we talked awhile. Finally he said, "Have a cigar on me now, but hold on. Let's go up the street to a place I know where they make the best cigars in town."

So we started up the street for the cigar store and after going half a block, caught up with an old fellow with long whiskers and bow-legs, dressed in countryfied fashion, who half turned as we came up and spoke to the fellow who was with me in a long southern drawl that was humorous in the extreme. I am unable to spell the words as he pronounced them, but it would make a dog laugh to hear him. "Say, Paardner," he droned, "can yeou tell me when the train goes outa here fer Salt Lake City?" "No, Uncle," my friend replied. "Are you going to Salt Lake? Do you live there?"

"Neow I don't live there, but I have to geow through there to get away from this gol-darned Yankee country." "Why is it you don't like the Yankees, Uncle?" inquired my friend. "Waal," he said, "I came up hyar from old Kaintucky with a carload of muels and I sold them tha muels fer a darned good figger, but these gol-darned Yankees got it mostly all away from me." I have not the space here to repeat half that was said, but that old fellow was as comical as a clown at a circus and I remember I was immensely tickled at his talk. Finally my friend inquired, "How did the Yankees get your money away from you, Uncle?" "Well," was his reply, "they got me into a leetle kyard game." Suddenly I saw a vivid, brilliant

light. "Boys, boys," I said, "for the sake of Mike cut it out. I forgot this game over 20 years ago." And whirling on my heel, walked away from them. As I turned the first corner, I flashed a backward look. They were standing talking together and watching me, wondering if I was going to call a cop. But I didn't. After getting out of sight I laughed till I was nearly sick and every time I thought of it for a month afterward. I said to myself, "Old timer, you must surely look like a rube for them to try that moss-grown trick on you."

It had all come to me like a flash, how easily I had gotten acquainted with the young stranger at the depot, how we had straggled for the cigar store where the finest cigars in town were, how we had caught up with the little old chap with whiskers and the mention of the "kyard game."

The next move would have been for us all to have proceeded to the cigar dive, where doubtless there were other sharpers, and the old "muel man" would have demonstrated how he lost his money in such a manner as to induce me to bet my money on it, or at least take a drink or two with them, after which, good-bye bank roll. That trick is so old that 5000 years

ago Noah and Methuselah used to play it on the Egyptians. Still, I presume, there must be suckers left even in these days who would fall for it. Three new ones (suckers) born every minute, you know.

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