

TEMPER COSTS PARTNERS SAW MILL, SAVINGS

By J. C. REYNOLDS

It is said there are only 12 men in the entire world who can understand Professor Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. I have done my damndest to be the thirteenth, but after two years study, must give it up and call myself licked.

For awhile I was getting along fine. I can realize the shortest distance between two points is a curve. I can understand that if I started out and traveled for several million years through space, I would land right back here in Jackson county, Oregon. And it is easily seen that a train speeding 60 miles an hour is shorter than one that is standing still. But when Einstein says that a fall from any height is not the result of gravitation, but is caused by the earth coming up and hitting the falling object, I find it too complicated for my feeble brain to assimilate. In fact, I don't believe a word of it.

If the earth were flat, it might possibly work out, but listen here: Suppose an airship several miles up was falling over Oregon, and a balloon miles high in the air was falling on the other side of the world, and a million other objects were falling from different heights all over the world, as happens every second of time.

Do I believe that our earth jumps up in different places a million times or more each second, to meet these objects? I do NOT. Right there is where I quit. Professor Einstein can take his relativity and go to blazes with it and I'll study something else for a change. You see when the Lord made me something went wrong. He either didn't get my head on straight, or maybe put in a little mud where my brains ought to be, or something. Anyway, I have never had the faculty of gulping down theories and statements like most people have.

There are, for instance, little theories like Joshua stopping the sun from going around and Adam being the first man that I never could swallow, not even with a chaser. Other people by the million can eat that stuff, smack their lips and call for more. But as I have stated, something went wrong when I was being made. Probably Satan threw a monkey wrench into the machinery. Anyway, this gift of gobbling down stuff without looking to see what I am being fed is something I have never been able to do. But if you want to know all about relativity, I'll tell you.

When a pretty girl sits on your lap for an hour, it seems like a minute, but when you sit on a hot stove for a minute, it seems like an hour. So now you know all about it and can go back to your cabbage patch. The keenest minded scientists living, men to whom we owe all of our wonderful inventions, chemical knowledge and, in fact, everything of value in our lives, have never ceased their endeavors to unravel the basic law

of the universe. Professor Einstein, who is called the greatest intellectual luminary in the world, will perhaps be the man who will discover it. He has nearly identified it at different times and though it has so far eluded him by a hair's breadth, his perseverance is bound to succeed in the end.

Changing the subject a little, some coal miners in Colorado, close to where I was working about 45 years ago, found the bones of a giant lizard in a good state of preservation. Scientists were notified and at once came and took charge of the excavation. Gentlemen, that was some lizard. When his bones had been dug up and arranged as they were in life, they showed him to have been 85 feet in length and a man six feet tall could walk right through nearly all the way. It was in this same section where the giant lizard was found I went through a rather bitter experience. I have a hard head, but when experience pounds a lesson into it, I find I do not soon forget it.

This was in the early eighties when times were booming in the west. I went in with a fellow named Burns and we bought a portable sawmill. For its size it was a first-class outfit. We could cut 15,000 feet of lumber a day and sell every bit of it for a good price in cash, though we piled up the clear stuff in the yard to season, after which it was worth a still higher figure. We had a dandy location where the ground was just right for logging and everything else was just right except that we were short of water. To overcome this we built an enormous tank inside the mill and by letting this fill up at night we had plenty of water to run the mill while the surplus was stored outside for the use of the camp and to water the 20 yoke of work oxen that we had purchased with the plant, and did our logging with. We paid our men good wages and everything ran as smooth as clockwork for three months or so. We worked hard, made money hand over fist, paid up what we owed on the outfit and began to feel like we were on easy street.

Then our engineer got to bucking. Every week he would want a couple of days off to go and get drunk, which put us to a lot of trouble to get a man to take his place, some of these substitutes proving to be unsatisfactory which of course delayed the work when they could not furnish enough steam to keep us running steady. My partner ordinarily was one of the finest men I ever knew, but had a quick, unmanageable temper that flared up in a second's time, especially if he felt he was being imposed on. I never had any trouble with him, as I usually let him have his own way whenever possible, but he had heated quarrels with some of the men on occasions that it took considerable tact to smooth over. Burns formed a tremendous dislike for the engineer and after a couple of months or so of vainly endeavoring to induce him to straighten up and attend to business, he began to ride him so hard on his return from his weekly sprees that the engineer quit. Now the laws governing labor those days were far different from what they were in later years.

For instance, if a worker quit and couldn't get his money, he could sue for it and get judgment. But even at that, he couldn't collect for 90 days if the debtor wanted to be obdurate. Consequently, when the engineer demanded his wages, Burns pulled out a roll of money big enough to choke a crocodile and flashed it in his face. "I've got the money right here to pay you," he told him, "but as you have acted like a damn _____, you can go to hell. The best you can do is to sue and I'll see that you won't get a cent for the full 90 days." I reasoned with Burns, when I heard this. I said, "We owe the man and will have to pay him sometime. Why not pay him now and be rid of him for good?" But Burns was adamant. Before the engineer left camp he told some of the boys he would get square if it was the last thing he ever did. But a few days after the incident it was almost forgotten.

Burns had a dog, a real dog, almost as intelligent as a human; a big, beautiful dog that was loved by everybody in camp and he thought more of that dog than many people do of their kids. One morning the dog was found to be violently sick. Hunting around for the cause, which at first we thought to be poison, we discovered some chunks of fresh meat full of ground glass. Then we knew that without doubt that it was the engineer's work. And we knew there was no hope for the dog. He was doomed to a most agonizing death. When that was made plain Burns wept like a child. Many of the men went around with tears in their eyes unashamed. It was decided he must be killed to put him out of his misery, but not a man wanted to be the executioner. I am sure I didn't. I have seen men I had far rather kill than that dog. But someone must do it. After a day and night, during which everything that could be thought of was done to ease his suffering, though to no avail, it fell to me to fire the mercy shot. I went up to him, petted him for a bit, then showed him my gun. He smelled of it and his intelligent eyes showed he understood. I said, "Old Friend, I am going to do you a kindness and put you out of your pain." He reached out his tongue and licked my hand and I shot him square between the eyes. Then I went off in the woods and bawled like a baby for an hour.

A week later a dozen of us were sleeping soundly in the bunkhouse. Burns of course was with his wife in the little shack they had to themselves. Three of the loggers who had families were at their separate camps nearby. A vivid, bright light shone through one of the windows in my face. Slowly it penetrated to my inner consciousness and presently I awoke. In a second's time I was out of bed reaching for my clothes and letting loose a yell that brought the whole camp to their feet in a hurry.

Our mill was a mass of flame. Frenzidly we rushed into a losing battle and desperately we fought, but nearly our entire supply of water was in the tank inside the mill and entirely surrounded by fire. When morning came we were beaten, ruined, wiped out. Nothing left but a few pitiful thousands of our best lumber we had been able to save. When I went to bed that night I could easily have figured myself \$3000 to the good. After all was over, accounts settled, men paid mostly from the sale of our work cattle and what little clear lumber that was left, we were in debt \$85. Burn's hysterical wife had made him promise to take her back to her folks in Iowa. They had barely enough money for that if they could induce me to assume the \$85 debt. One of the loggers, who was in fair circumstances, said he would wait for the money if I would agree to pay it. I agreed. I found a job of rough carpentering at a new mining camp nearby at \$4 per day. By working

Sundays and overtime, I paid off this obligation in full in less than a month. The engineer never showed up to collect the \$60 due him, so it must have been he who set the mill on fire. Just took his wages out in revenge on Burns and called it square. I never heard from Burns and was glad I didn't. Since that time I have always tried to avoid people who possessed ungovernable tempers. My own temper was bad enough and it took me years to overcome it, but it is my private opinion that any person who has a temper they can't control at all is as nutty as the majority of the nitwits in the crazy house and ought to be sent there before they injure somebody. To science and to science alone I give all the credit for gaining the

upper hand over a temper that I was really afraid of. Science, with painstaking care, showed me where I was headed for and taught me the truth of how in giving way to fits of temper I was hurting myself more than anyone else. And for that science has my everlasting gratitude.

I won't deny that there are occasions when I partially lose my temper even now. But these occasions are few and far between. Only extreme provocation can rile me enough for that and when it does happen I find in every case that I am the boss, which is much more satisfactory than to allow temper to do the bossing.

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