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CAN YOU AFFORD TO PASS IT UP?

The Mascot of Sweet Briar Gulch

By HENRY WALLACE
PHILLIPS

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"Blime-by," he would say to himself.
"I'll have er muscle on me like Jim,
an' den I'll yank dis cussed ol' car
right out in der middle of der creek."
And he examined the small bunch on
his arm critically a dozen times every
day.

Meanwhile his hero and idol was
outdoing the human in his exertions.
The effort he put forth would have
killed an ordinary man. He fought
the stubborn earth as though it were
an enemy. Stripped to the waist, bent



"Blime-by, I'll have er muscle on me
like Jim."

over in the low tunnel, hour after hour
Jim pined the pick and shovel with the
regularity and power of a machine.
There was at once something fascinat-
ing and heroic in the rippling glide of
the muscles over his broad back and
in the supple swing that sent the pick
to join the packed dirt.

It all looked so easy. It was as if
the dirt were very soft and not the
striker very strong. Nevertheless four
teen hours a day of this, varied occa-
sionally by cutting timbers and carry-
ing them by hand to the tunnel, some
of them a weight enough for a horse
others not adequate, "just as they
came" being careless Jim's motto, told
even on his engines.

They had a certain mark on the can-
yon side—a wildcat's hole it was—and
when the sun threw the shadow of
the western wall upon the mark the
day's work was finished.

Ches used to watch this with atten-
tion. "Yer move along all right till
yer gits halfway up, den yer jos
crawls, yer ol' beggar," was his stand-
ing remark on the progress of the
shadow. Still, he always gave good
measure.

Toward the last of the month Jim
grew an interest in their clock.

"Where's the blame thing now,
Ches?" would come hollowly out of
the tunnel.

"Three more cars away, Jim, jus'
tupda' the white rock."

"Then the cheery shout of 'All over!' and the worker stepping out into the
fresh air, soft and cool in the twilight,
hooking the sweat from his forehead
and wishing that supper would cook
itself. Sometimes the wildcat looked
down upon them from his eyrie.

"Ches," said weary Jim, "if that lad
thinks at all he must think we're aw-
ful fools."

"He wouldn't be so twable off his
guess neider," replied the equally wea-
ry Ches.

After supper, however, the world
seemed different. There was Jones'
hill—a man of large ideas was Jones
to call that mass of rock a hill—shin-
ing redhot in the last light against a
ropax or turquoise sky and the gulch
that ran up to it in a mystery of dark
green gloom offering up an evening
prayer of indescribable odors, those
appeals to a life in former spheres
which no other sense remembers—the
senseless roar of the wind in the pines,
so steady that it formed a background
for other sounds almost as good as si-
lence itself; the evening pipe and the
talk of what had been done and what
was to be done—all these made amends.

And then the sleeping—such sleep-
ing! And waking up in the morning
in the exact attitude one went to sleep
the night before! Sleep that washed
out all the former day's fatigue and
started them as eager as bounds for
that of the new day—that is, within
limits, for when a man overworks as
continually as Jim had done no para-
dise sleep nor balsam air can turn
again right perpetually.

And for that reason the claim de-
clared a holiday, consisting of a hunt-
ing trip. It was a curious hunting
trip. Not one "Bang!" went the clean
and polished rifle. They stalked four
deer, crawling on their bellies, quiver-
ing with the chase, rounding behind
rocks. Then when the game was with-
in range up went the rifle. Jim squint-
ed along the sights, then dropped it.

"What's der matter?" whispered
Ches. He had been waiting for a long
time to hear the gun go off.

"They seem to be having a pretty
good time by themselves there, Ches."

"Yes, dat's so, but I've heard deer
meat was good." Ches was disap-
pointed at this manner of hunting.

"So it is," replied Jim. "Probably
nobody has that notion stronger than
the deer." He followed the four pret-
ty animals below them with tense
eyes. He loved to hunt, but he hated
to kill.

"See here, boy," he said, sitting
down and pulling off his boots. "I
think I can show you some fun. Do
you notice they're feeding up to that
nose of rock? Well, I used to be rather
quick on my feet once, and I think
if I can slip down behind there with-
out their winding me if one gets close
enough I can catch him with my
hands, which is a trick I'd like much
to accomplish. Now, you sit here
and watch and for your life don't
make a move or sound. By Jiminy, if
I could do that!" He trotted light
footed down the slope out of sight.

The boy soon saw him reappear be-
hind the sharp rock wall that jutted
out into the valley, rubbing crushed
pine needles upon himself with the
idea of overpowering the human odor,
although, whether effective in its pur-
pose or not, it was not necessary, a
strong up wind from deer to man
making it impossible that they could
scent him.

They waited and they waited, a big
man crouched like a tiger below and a
highly excited small boy above, while
the deer did every exasperating thing
that animals could do.

One hour went by—two—when sud-
denly the buck rose and walked
straight up the canyon in a course
that would take him within twenty
feet of the rock. Jim heard him snort
and prepared for action, laying hold
of a corner of stone to get a spring
from his fangs.

The deer shadow floated black on
the grass before him, and Jim leaped
—to the biggest surprise of his life, for
instead of making the least effort to
escape the buck charged and that
with such sudden fury it was all the
man could do to lay hold of him any-
where as they came to dirt together.

The next ten seconds was delirium,
each combatant doing something as
quick as he could without any definite
aim. Jim received a painful rake



across the chest from the antlers and
a jab in the leg from the sharp hoofs,
while the deer was the worse for sev-
eral bangs over the head and an ear
nearly pulled off as they rolled over
together.

Meanwhile Ches had legged it down
the hillside at his best speed, enthusi-
astically cheering what he supposed
was a prearranged performance. Jim
had promised him fun, and that whirl-
ing heap below supplied plenty of it.

"Hooryay!" yelled Ches. "Hooryay!
Hold him dere, Jim, tll' he get down!"

Jim heard the shrill voice as he suc-
ceeded after a desperate effort in get-
ting an arm around the deer's neck so
that he could do something in the
choking line, and he smiled grimly in
the heat of battle. "All right, Ches,"
he gasped. "Don't—hurry!"

"Keep out of this!" he yelled a mo-
ment later as Ches burst out from the
bushes. "You'll get killed!"

But Ches was not to be denied. He
danced around the pushing, tugging,
straining storm center and the moment
opportunity offered slipped in and
seized the buck by a hind leg.

If he had touched an electric bat-
tery the effect could not have been
more instant. The deer fanned that
muscular hind leg with its boy attach-
ment at the rate of 700 strokes to the
minute. Poor Ches' head was nearly
snapped off his shoulders, and the
breath was literally jerked out of his
body, but he hung on with all the
strength that pulling the car had given
him.

It was not much help, but it was a
diversion. Jim gulped a lungful of
air, gathered his powers and came
down with all his might. Slowly the
rubbery neck bent, so slowly that
Jim feared he would give out before
raining the mastery. As it yielded his
leverage increased, and at last, exert-
ing every ounce of strength that was
in him, he downed the foe and held
him there, his leg over the front legs,
whose armament he had felt before
and was not desirous of feeling again.

(To be Continued)