

TOM WHITE WHOPPED

HE THOUGHT THE BEAR WAS ZEB THE POSSUM HUNTER.

And the Mistake Proved to Be a Fatal One. How the Possum Hunter of the Tennessee Won a Reputation as a Marvellous Clawer and Biter.

"That was sum purty bad men around you jest arse the wah," said Zeb White, the possum hunter of Tennessee, as he got his pipe alight one evening on the door-step. "Melibe the wurst critter of the lot was named Tom Smith. He didn't hev no fam'ly, but jest sorter hung around at the Co'ners. He was powerful on the bez, but he could fight fur all that, and wisely everybody got skeered of him. He went about with a chip on his shoulder and blood in his eye till sum men moved away to git 'lar o' him. Fur sum reason he didn't bother me fur a long time, but one day when I went down to the Co'ners to sell sum possum pelts Tom was outer acts and opened on me. He looks at me a long time with a glare in his eye. Then he throws down his hat and jumps on it and yells:

"Whoopee! Zeb White, behold the jumper from Junipersville! I'll bet my rifle ag'in them possum pelt I kin out jump you by six inches! If yo' ar' a man with legs under yo', cum out and try me on."

"I seed he was tryin to pick a quarrel," said Zeb, "and so I talked soft to him and tried to git away. When I wouldn't jump, he wanted to box or pull sticks, and when I'll hang off he jumped on his hat sum more and hooted:

"I'm the tallest tree on the Cumberland mountains. I've stood up ag'in a hurricane, and when lightning struck at me I hit back. I'm dyin fur some varmint

not to know a b'ar from a man, but he thought it was me, fur shore, and he soon had a surprise party on hand. The b'ar didn't seem hankerin after meat, but he did want sum fun. It was a purty squar' standin up like a man. From the way he yelled out I could tell that he thought I was usin my nails and teeth, but he didn't complain. The b'ar knocked him down and rolled him about a dozen times, and he got many a good lick in on the b'ar, but at length the fout was over and Tom Smith was a whopped man. He hollered out that he'd got plenty, and I reckon it was the same with the b'ar, as he suddenly made off into the woods. When Tom got over being dazed, he got up and said to me: "Zeb White, I'm a-beggin of yo' pard'ning. I thought yo' was a coward and didn't stand up to me, but yo've whopped me in a fair fout and I'll be yo' friend forever with my nails and teeth, but yo' kin out-bite and outclaw any human critter in the state of Tennessee."

"Was he ludy used up?" I asked as the story seemed to be finished.

"He hadn't skassy a bit of clothing left on him," replied Zeb, "and he was bruised and bites and claw marks from head to heel. I reckon he might hev got well from them, but his heart was broke. He knowed I was in pore health, and when he realized that he'd bin whopped by a sleek man he took to his bed and died in two weeks. He sent fur me the day he died, and an hour befo' he breathed his last he reached fur my hand and whispered:

"Zeb White, I can't make out how yo' did it, but yo' dun made me holler fur the first time in my life, and I'm prayin fur death to cum. I've kinder thought yo' might hev had buzzsaws fastened to yo' hands and feet, but that wouldn't be ag'in yo' and I bear no grudges. Goodby, Zeb. I hope to meet yo' in the t'other land and hev another fout to see who ar' the best man!"

M. QUAD.



"FETCHED HIM A CUFF THAT KNOCKED HIM TEN FEET."

to look cross eyed at me. Zeb White, take my rifle, my bates, my hat; take all I've got on this yere arth, but stand up to me like a man!"

"I was in mighty pore health," exclaimed Zeb, "and no match fur sich a man, and so I had to crawl. Everybody said I ceter about him down, but I couldn't stand blood that way. It hurts me to this day to remember that I went home like a wilted ear, leaving that critter to crow over me, but my mind was made up to tackle him as soon as I felt like a man ag'in. When I got home, I was cryin, and the old woman sez to me, sez she:

"Zeb, has the wah broke out ag'in?"

"No."

"Then, what's the matter?"

"I've bin bluffed!"

"D'ye mean that Tom Smith has cetered over yo'?"

"That's jest what he has, and I'm so poky weak in the knees that I had to git away from him."

"Jest backed yo' down, did he?"

"He did. It's the first time in my life I ever crawled fur any human critter!"

"Reckon it is, Zeb. I know how yo' feel, but yo' couldn't help it. If yo'd tackled him, he'd hev broke yo' in two. I'll go right at it and nurse yo' up, and in fo' weeks yo'll be fitter to whop Tom Smith all he can't hoot. If yo' hain't, I'll put on yo' clothes and whop him myself!"

"I felt letter arter that," said Zeb, "though I couldn't get over the hurt to my bellies. One evenin about two weeks arter the fass and when I was gainin on it, but me feelin much better. I was sittin right when I cotched sight of a b'ar across the road, by them rocks. Plenty of b'ars round yere them days, as nobody had been home to kill 'em off. About the time I cotched sight of the b'ar Tom Smith showed up. He had cum down to whop me. He wasn't satisfied with bluffin me down, but he'd made threats to break all my bones. The old woman cotched sight of him as soon as I did and got down the side. She meant to kill him if he cum in to attack me. Tom saw me a-sittin yere and he stopped right by that tree and stared down his hat and yelled:

"Whoopee! I'm hungry fur the meat of an alligator! I thirst fur the blood of tigers! I'm lonely to meet up with a den of rattlesnakes, and I can't go home to-night till I've chased the ear of a panther! Zeb White, ar' that yo' a-sottin that?"

"Ar' yo' call yo' self a man?"

"Not a well man. If yo'll gin me fo' weeks mo', I'll run yo' outer the kentry!"

"I can't wait! I'm a-perishin fur the want of a mortal combat with anybody! If yo'll cum out yere, Zeb White, yo' kin see my hands and feet and I'll fight yo' with my teeth alone! Take pity on a pore man and cum out. Whoopee! If yo' expected yo' pore old father or loved yo' mother, yo'd cum out and stand up to me!"

"Well," sighed the old man, "he talked that way till I got mad and riz up to go, but jest as I did so that b'ar waltzed across the road on his hind feet and fetched him a cuff which knocked him ten feet. Tom thought I'd got out thar without his scin, and he was tickled to death as he riz up and went fur the b'ar. We heard him say:

"Zeb White, I said yo' wasn't a man, but I take it all back. I didn't believe yo'd stand up to me and my heart was high then, but yo've got sand, and this ar' the happiest minit of my life. Take that, and that!"

"I reckon Tom must hev bin half drunk

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