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The Cur and the Coyote

Continued from Page 7

with a rush, the undershot jaw figuring as a conspicuous racial mark. The wolf-hound strain developed solely when he caught a lean, healthy jack-rabbit in a straightaway race, brought him into camp, and ate him before the eyes of an admiring crowd. His keen, pathetic sensitiveness was no doubt inherited from the collie stock, but of that there is more to follow.

At present Joe's cur-dog intelligence and sense of humor lay uppermost, leading him to the performance of tricks. These he could do without number, fetching, carrying, or standing on his hind legs to beg for bacon and applause. He could imitate a bucking bronco or a pawing bull. Also, he said his prayers in the manner of certain far-distant Christians—a feat, by the bye, which none of his associates had achieved in years. He named the values of poker-chips by barks, and, finally, could muzzle a deck of evil-smelling cards, selecting therefrom any named ace or deuce-spot, an accomplishment which was voiced abroad and thrilled the great Southwest with wonder and delight.

Is it, then, to be marveled at that a carelessly born cur-dog, alone and surfeited with adulation, should weaken and lose his grip on modesty? Joe lost it, but not irrecoverably, for about this time he met his Waterloo, and a mangy Napoleon rested for a space on the isle of mortification.

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Joe took the suggestion without parley. A noiseless brown streak made out toward the serenader, but Mr. Coyote saw it coming. He ended his song with a crisp crescendo and departed in an easy, shambling lope. The dog was too much occupied to hear the coarse ripple of amusement following his exit, or to see the master stir a sleeper with his foot and remark, with a widening grin:

"Come, git up, Tony, 'n' see the spote. My dawg's a linkin' it after a ki-yote."

A more perfect stage could not have been desired; the moon for footlights, Tonque and nineteen cow-men as the audience, a coyote for comedian, and Joe, of course, the star. The chase went south for half a mile, doubled itself, and passed the camp again, the maneuver being repeated six separate times, apparently for the benefit of those who watched. It was a close race, too, or seemed to be, for seldom was the cur's black muzzle more than a yard or so behind his victim's flaunting tail.

Never before had the wolf-hound breed cropped out so strongly. Joe ran low; his muscles ached and burned, his eyes protruded, and he whimpered in desire; yet, strive as he would, he failed to reduce the lead, while the beast in front reeled onward with a shambling lope. Think of it! A lope!

But now Joe gained. He moaned aloud with joy. His blood was up, and he went for his enemy in crazy, heart-breaking leaps. Three times he snapped, and bit nothing but his own dry tongue; then something happened. The coyote, tiring of the game, took his foot in his hand, so to speak, and faded away as a woodcock leaves a weasel.

Joe sat down and thought about it. Nothing short of a pistol-ball could travel like that little black dot on the far horizon. There was something wrong about the whole affair, but just what the cur-dog could not figure out. Possibly the cow-men might enlighten him and offer sympathy; so, with this false hope at heart, he went back slowly, his hot breath coming in labored gasps, his stump tail sagging sadly. His reception, however, was very different from the one so fondly hoped. Instead of pats and a courteous explanation, they greeted him with a roar of vulgar laughter—a taunt which stung him to the very quick.

That dogs are sensitive to ridicule is a fact too patent to admit of argument; but collies, perhaps, are the most humanly sensitive of all. And this is where Joe's collie breed cropped out to stay. He was stunned at first. He couldn't take it in; but when the taunts continued, the dog's already heated blood began to boil. He was fighting for his last torn shred of pride—and pride dies hard.

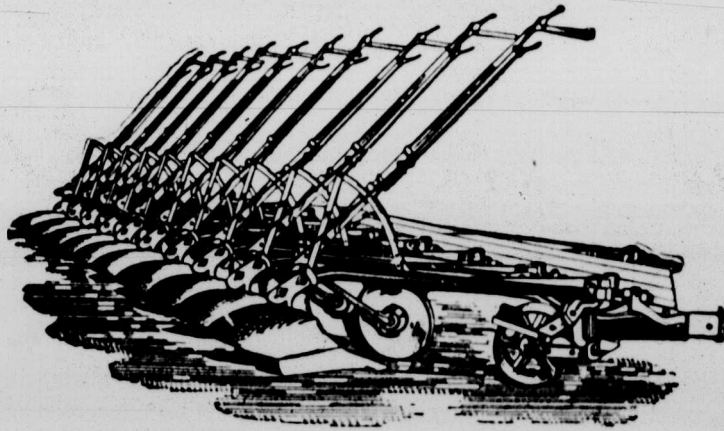
He crouched beside the camp-fire, his rough hair bristling down his spine, his ugly nose distorted by an uglier wrinkle still. And when at last Sprig Flannigan—the humorist, by the way, who had sicked Joe on—laughed louder than the rest, and pointed a derisive finger at the

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