

The Honorable Jefferson Randolph Smith

A Tale of Skagway—By D. W. Higgins, Author of "The Mystic Spring," "The Passing of a Race," etc.



ONE day, early in the summer of 1894, a stranger applied to the civic authorities of the Colorado city of Denver for a permit to sell a certain brand of soap. He proposed to erect a small stand on a street corner where all day long surged a mighty tide of humanity afoot, and dispose of his wares after the manner of the street faker or peddler. When evening came the man mounted a packing case and on a small table opened out his stock. Each cake of soap was neatly wrapped in paper and a flaring placard, which was lighted by a flaming jet of gas, informed the people that every tenth wrapper contained a five dollar bill, which went as a prize to the lucky purchaser.

The man was of medium height and of spare figure. His hair and whiskers were of jet black and his complexion swarthy. He wore a shiny silk hat, after the manner of men of his profession. The power of his lungs was forty-horse. His voice could be heard a block away above the rattle and roar of the street traffic, and his witty remarks in directing attention to the article he had for sale provoked sallies of laughter from the crowd that had gathered to hear him. His repartee showed a ready and quick intellect, and he never failed to excite his hearers to laughter when he replied to questions as to the genuineness of his pledge that a five dollar bill was concealed in every tenth package, the cost of which was fifty cents. If every tenth package contained a prize, argued some, the man is giving more than he receives, when his license and expenses are considered. For many minutes the vendor continued to laud his soap, and described his methods of giving prizes, without results. At last a young stranger bought a package, and retired to the edge of the crowd to open it. Curious eyes eagerly watched as he unrolled the package, and when the wrapper had been removed, there, sure enough, was a five-dollar greenback. The young fellow was so elated by his success that he bought two more packages, changing the bill to pay for them; but luck had changed and he walked away with the rest of the money, chuckling that he was \$3.50 ahead of the game anyhow.

Another stranger, this time a woman, tested her luck, and to her own delight and the surprise of the assemblage found \$5 in the roll. From that on the sale was brisk, and in a short space of time the faker had disposed of his stock and the sale was closed. Except the two fives that were drawn at the start there were no prizes that day.

The following night the same scene was enacted. Two prizes were drawn and to the rest of the purchasers fell blanks; but the gullible buyers were not to be deterred by the ill luck of others, and the entire stock was disposed of and the public still demanded more. In the meantime the faker had made many acquaintances. He had registered at the hotel as Jefferson Randolph Smith; but in consequence of his business the Denverites dubbed him "Soapy" Smith, and that cognomen clung to him until he died, after a career of crime that has scarcely been surpassed on this coast.

From Denver Soapy Smith went to other towns of Colorado, at each of which he drove a large trade by the same methods he had pursued while at Denver, the drawers of the lucky packages being confederates who were used to attract the innocent into the net. At one of the towns, it is said, Smith tried his hand for the first time at gambling, and won a considerable sum. After one or two more experiences he abandoned his business and became a professional gambler. He was soon recognized as the most expert gambler in the State, and, possessing a forceful and overbearing manner when in drink, he was by common consent made leader of a gang of villains who lived by preying upon their fellow men.

One evening, while dealing faro, Smith was accused by a victim of cheating. He drew a revolver and killed the man. Self defence was pleaded and the murderer got off. A little later he was accused of killing another man for a real or fancied offence, and rather than stand trial he fled to California.

In 1896 and 1897 the Klondike fever raged and the subject of this narrative with some of his friends joined in the rush. On arriving at the primitive town of Skagway he pitched his tent there and opened a gambling house and bar. His confederates, who were scattered through the town, induced many unsuspecting miners to enter "Soapy's" den under many pretences. There they were often drugged and robbed and turned loose to wander helplessly through the streets or led to the wharf after dark and pushed into the harbor, where they were drowned. When the bodies were washed ashore a verdict of "found drowned" was invariably returned, and the authorities buried the remains. At least a score of unknown men were thus disposed of and their mystified friends to this day are in ignorance as to their fate. They only know that they disappeared at Skagway.

One day a double tragedy occurred which almost brought the criminal career of "Soapy" Smith and his gang to an end. A Klondike miner was robbed in a saloon by the aid of the bartender. The man complained to the United States marshal, and the two entered the saloon to demand restitution, whereupon the

barkeeper killed both men. Public feeling was aroused to a high pitch by this murder, and a vigilance committee was formed, from which a jury of twelve citizens was selected to try the criminal. He was acquitted on the plea that he shot in self-defence. Soapy Smith then organized as a counter irritant a "Law and Order League of 303," of which he was the elected head, and the vigilance committee, fearing a collision, dissolved.

By this time "Soapy" had become an important individual. He was virtually the Mayor, the Board of Aldermen and all the other officials of the town of Skagway, for nothing could be done in the way of civic business without his consent being first obtained. Good men hated Smith and his works. They saw that his presence in the community was a menace to trade, because travellers and miners avoided the town lest they might share the fate of the unfortunates who had gone down to death or lost their valuables there. But while the business people hated, they also feared the desperado and his confederates, and endeavored to impress the uncrowned king by their words and actions that they were not inimical to him, while all the time their hearts ached and their fingers itched to dethrone him and put a noose about his neck. To curry favor with the king of Skagway, upon the arrival of a steamer, distinguished visitors were lined up at Soapy Smith's bar and treated to the best the house had on tap. A United States Circuit Judge and all territorial officials were welcomed by Smith with a glad hand. The mayor and other civic officials daily "moistened their clay" with his whisky side by side with known thieves, murderers and gamblers.

About this time the war with Spain broke out and Smith tendered the government a company of volunteers which he proposed to raise at Skagway. He signed his name to the offer "Jefferson Randolph Smith," and the answer from the War Department was addressed through some error to the "Honorable Jefferson Randolph Smith." From that on Soapy adopted the title of Honorable and discourag-

ed so far as possible the term "Soapy" as applied to him.

A peculiarly atrocious assassination that occurred between Skagway and the summit of the mountain again aroused public sentiment to a striking point. A middle-aged man bought a bill of goods at a Skagway store and placed them in two conveniently sized packs, his intention being to leave one sack behind until he had reached the summit, and then to return and carry the second sack to where he had left the first. He was a quiet, sober, respectable man, and in paying for the goods had unconsciously displayed a considerable-sized roll of bank bills. It was always thought that one of the evil wretches who infested the town saw the roll and set out to possess it at any cost. The man left the town with pack number one, and was met toiling his way slowly up the steep toward the spot where he proposed to deposit it and come back for the number two load. An hour or two later a party of miners were coming out on their way to Skagway, and came across the unfortunate man lying dead on the trail by the side of his pack. He had been shot through the head and the body was still warm. The roll of bills had not been disturbed, showing that the murderers, hearing the party approach, had fled, and so lost their intended plunder. No one knew the man. In a pocket next his heart was found a small memorandum book on a leaf of which were written these lines from one of Browning's poems:

"The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave unto the sea;
But time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me."

There were memoranda of goods purchased at Skagway, but nothing to indicate whom or what he was or where he came from. His hands were as soft as a woman's, showing that he was a stranger to hard work. The body was interred where it lay.

The 4th of July, 1898, was ushered in with the usual patriotic ceremonies. A procession was formed with Soapy Smith as Grand Marshal. Mounted on a white charger of goodly

size and showy movement he headed the line and presented a striking and picturesque appearance. He rode on a Spanish saddle with a lariat and all other fixings and as his horse pranced through the street he and his rider were the objects of general admiration. He seemed bursing with pride, and the horse appeared to have caught the infection and to be as proud as his rider of his exalted position. There was nothing to indicate in this man's manner or in his large, expressive eyes and not at all unhandsome face, or in his speech, for he was slow and measured in his talk when not overloaded with drink, and in the presence of women he was ever polite and gracious—there was nothing, I say, in all these to indicate that he was a ruffian of the deepest dye, who had murdered men in cold blood and robbed them of their property. Neither was there anything to indicate on that festive day when "Soapy" Smith's heart was swollen with importance at his selection as the biggest man and the first citizen of Skagway, that he was within four days of the hour when his clock would run down and time for him would be no more.

Three days after the shouting and the tumult incidental to independence day had died away, a miner named J. D. Stewart came out of the Klondike with a bag of gold dust valued at \$2700. He was inveigled into Smith's saloon under the pretence of seeing a captive eagle. While he gazed at the bird the bag of gold was snatched from his hand by one of the desperadoes who made off with it. Heart-broken at his loss, which represented two years of work at Dawson, Stewart was assured that the taking of the gold was a practical joke and that it would soon be returned to him. Several hours elapsed before the miner realized that he had been robbed. He complained to the United States marshal, but that official did nothing. He then appealed to the leading citizens and they convened a meeting on the wharf to consider the matter and revive the vigilance committee. The vigilantes were armed with rifles and revolvers, and a committee was appointed to guard the ap-

proach to the wharf. The head of that committee was named Frank H. Reid. He was city engineer and was known as a fighting man who had already slain one victim and was not averse to killing a few more when opportunity offered.

Soapy Smith heard of the meeting and its object. He was in his saloon half drunk when the news reached him. Hastily thrusting two revolvers in his waistband and seizing a Winchester rifle he headed for the wharf on a half run, swearing and gesticulating as he ran. At the entrance to the wharf he saw Reid and his fellow committeemen standing. Approach Reid he shouted "You—, what are you doing here?" at the same time striking at him with the rifle. Reid grasped the weapon in his left hand as it descended, pushing it down towards the ground, for he was a stronger man than Smith. The outlaw pulled the trigger, and the ball entered Reid's groin and passed through the body. At the same instant Reid fired twice. The first ball traversed Smith's breast and entered his heart and he fell stone dead in his tracks. Reid, who was mortally wounded, fell by the side of the desperado. The dead and dying were taken to the hospital, where, despite the tenderest care and sympathy, he died four days later. His funeral was attended by all the good people of Skagway, and the remains now lie in the cemetery beneath a handsome granite monument on which is a record of his great services in the interest of good government and a statement of how he met his death. Near his grave there is a lovely fall, the waters of which, as it murmurs over the rocks, and the sighing of the winds through the tall pines sing a requiem to the departed hero, whose sturdy bravery rescued the community of Skagway from the hands of an organized band of ruffians.

All that is mortal of "Soapy" Smith lies in the same cemetery beneath a simple headstone. He was a strange man. None knew his origin. He was ever silent as to his antecedents, but he was believed to be an American by birth. He was a well educated man, could speak two or three languages, and at times gave evidence of a sound early training. Once or twice he spoke affectionately of Old Yale, which gave rise to the belief in some minds that he was a graduate of that institution of learning; but none ever tried to penetrate his incognito without meeting an ingracious rebuff, which taught them to allow his dead past to remain buried.

Stewart's bag of gold, \$600 short, was recovered by the committee. It was found in a box in the back room of Soapy Smith's bar.

BACK TO THE LAND

There is no country in the world where the land is so sub-divided as in France. Yet here, as elsewhere, the large towns are constantly absorbing the rural population, and the now familiar phrase "back to the land" represents a problem which a few thoughtful politicians are making an earnest endeavor to solve. The latest experiment is less ambitious than the famous "three acres and a cow" idea, of which so much was heard in England a couple of decades ago. It is a scheme which may be summed up as "half an acre and a homestead." Parliament sanctioned it in April last, but as the Bill passed through without discussion nothing was heard of it at the time. The plan is now beginning to come into operation.

What M. Ribot and the other promoters of the measure aimed at was to give working men in the towns and laborers in the country an opportunity to acquire, on easy terms, a plot of land and a modest homestead, arguing that this would be a more practical kind of provision for the evening of life than any old age pension fund. It was, indeed, while the Old Age Pensions Bill was under discussion that, as M. Ribot has been telling an interviewer, the idea occurred to him. Some of his constituents in the Pas de Calais had suggested that they would rather invest their savings in this way, and he at once sought to secure them the option of setting aside their prospective pensions as part payment of the purchase money required to buy a plot of land and a homestead.

The field or garden must not cost more than £48, and its extent is limited for the present to a little over half an acre. The intending purchaser must possess £9 12s. If not, he is helped by the State, and the moment he deposits the money he becomes proprietor of the holding. He must undertake that he, or his children, will cultivate it, and he must also insure his life. The State does not deal direct with the purchaser, but with an intermediary and guarantee company formed in each district. A capital of £4,000,000 has been set aside for loans at 2 per cent, and each local company must have a capital of £8,000, of which half is to be held in reserve. The original idea was to provide town or country workers with a home when they had reached the age of 50 or 60, but it will be seen that any one who has saved one-fifth of the purchase money, less than £20, can at once become the possessor of "half an acre and a homestead." At the ages mentioned, the family is generally dispersed, but it is hoped that the liberal facilities accorded will induce younger people—soldiers on completing their period of service, for instance—to settle on the land, marry, and bring up a family. Should the experiment succeed, its promoters will come back to Parliament and ask for larger credits.

Mexican View of Australia's Need

PEAKING of "Australia's Great Need," the Mexican Herald says:

The visit of the American fleet to Australian waters, which is just coming to a close, has been successful from the point of view of hospitality and the assertion of common race ideals. No untoward incident worth mentioning has marred the celebrations, and though the idea of the dominance of the White Man in the Pacific, in general, and of a White Australia, in particular, has been repeatedly emphasized, no utterance or occurrence during the course of the entertainments was of a nature to give umbrage to Japan. This was a real danger which evidently was very skillfully guarded against.

The press dispatches show that not only were the officers and sailors of the American fleet officially entertained but that many of them were guests at the family board, particularly on Sundays, at Sydney and Melbourne. This is the hospitality that counts and is the real touchstone of congeniality. Elaborate official entertainments penetrate little below the surface and they do not necessarily imply esteem or regard between those who tender and those who receive the compliment; but when there is enough of sympathy and mutual comprehension to cause a guest to be made at home and to feel at home in a family, the hospitality ceases to be formal and becomes the genuine expression of a spontaneous and na-

tural attraction which in five minutes places strangers of similar ways of thinking at ease with one another.

It is quite right and proper that the people of Australia should desire to keep that country for colonization and development by the white race and as the future seat of another great and powerful English-speaking community.

English-speaking people everywhere will sympathize with that aspiration. But it is high time that the Australians should wake to some other facts and realize that if they are to strengthen their position as a white race in a domain of continental dimensions they must fill up the vacant spaces and present a more serried front to the active and enigmatic yellow man, whose industry is patient and unwearied, and who can bide his time and who multiplies fast.

There must be no race suicide in Australia, among the white people, if the brown and yellow man is to be kept out. And in addition, Australia will have to endeavor to attract a large volume of white immigration.

Let it be considered that the area of Australia is greater than that of the United States proper—2,974,581 square miles against 2,970,230. Of course we are aware that the territory of Australia does not abound in resources as uniformly and has not been so favored in physical and climatic conditions as the territory of the United States, but making due allowance for that fact, it is none the less

noteworthy that whereas the United States has a population of some 84,000,000, or 28 per square mile, Australia has a population of only 4,119,481, or less than 2 per square mile.

The following is the population per square mile of various countries:

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| Austria-Hungary | 188 |
| Belgium | 643 |
| Denmark | 167 |
| France | 190 |
| Germany | 290 |
| Italy | 304 |
| Netherlands | 448 |
| Spain | 96 |
| United Kingdom | 363 |
| China | 262 |
| Japan | 322 |

Nothing can prevent an overcrowded population from overflowing into a neighboring, or not distant, sparsely populated region. It is almost as inflexible as a natural law.

The Australians should look to this. Post-prandial oratory about "the white arm stretched across the Pacific" is well and good, but facts are stubborn things and if the Australians are to enforce their ideal of keeping their island-continent a "white man's country"—and all people of English speech will sincerely applaud the aspiration—they must make up their minds to address themselves to a hard practical task, that of building up their huge domain in the larger sense.

And Population is their first need.

Speculation and Wages in Cotton Industry

A VERY serious situation has arisen in the cotton trade owing to the disagreement between the Employers' Association and the Operatives' Societies upon the question of wages," says the Morning Post.

"Some months ago the exceptional prosperity which the cotton industry had enjoyed for the past three years came to an end; the employers demand that there shall be a reduction in wages of 5 per cent. on the existing rates; the cardroom operatives have refused by a large majority to accept their proposal, and there seems to be no doubt that the spinners will take the same line. There is therefore for the present a disagreement upon a perfectly plain issue, and though there is plenty of time for the good offices of outside mediation to bring the parties together before a lockout is declared, the menace to Lancashire is undoubtedly very grave.

"Behind this disagreement as to wages there is a real and fundamental difference of view as to social expediency and the proper way of adjusting the circumstances of the industry to meet a time of temporary depression. The employers point out that during the past two years the operatives shared in the prosperity of the trade by receiving two rises of 5

per cent. each upon current rates; they see that there is likely to be a good crop of raw cotton coming in, and that if they can get rid of the yarn which is on the market good times may again revive. They hold that the best hope of attempting orders is to lower prices by reducing wages, and they are possibly influenced by the thought that if the worst comes to the worst, and no agreement is attained, they will not suffer very much by a cessation of work which will ease the market and let existing stocks be worked off.

"There is obviously a connection between the condition of trade at any given moment and the wages which can be paid to those in it. But it has always seemed to the manual workers one of the hardships of their position, a hardship which they cannot avert, but which presses nevertheless heavily upon them, that they should have to submit to a reduction when the industry is suffering from a depression which is not caused by any shortage of raw material or unexpected fluctuation in the demand, but to the reckless speculation of capitalists who have put up new mills and overstocked the market with unsaleable products. There does not seem to be any doubt that the present crisis is mainly due to the over-production of yarn.

"No one who has travelled through Lancashire in the course of the last year can have failed to be struck by the immense number of new mills which are in process of construction. Tempted by the enormous profits of the last few years capital has poured itself into the trade, only to find that the market for yarn has disappeared before the mill is complete and the machinery installed. Both masters and workmen feel the pinch, and both of them have said strong things about the mania for speculative mill-building.

"As industry is at present organized, supply is adjusted to demand by the estimates of individuals who form their calculations in ignorance of each other's movements, and as long as that continues perfect adjustment, or anything approaching it, must be the exception and not the rule. It is difficult to believe that such a state of things, though it undoubtedly eliminates the weakest competitors, and so far makes for economic progress, can be the last word of civilized society."

"Didn't you say that your dog's bark was worse than his bite?"

"Yes."

"Then, for goodness' sake, keep him from barking; he has just bitten me.—Chums.

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