

Sammy.

By F. Hopkinson Smith.



IT was on the Limited: 10.30 Night Express out of Louisville, Nashville and beyond south to yond.

I had lower Four. When I entered the sleeper the porter was making up the berths, the passengers sitting about in each other's way until their beds were ready.

I laid my bag on an empty seat, threw my overcoat over its back and sat down to face a newspaper within a foot of my nose. There was a man behind it, but he was too intent on its columns to be aware of my presence. I made an inspection of his arms and hands and right leg, the only portions of his surface exposed to view.

I noticed that the hands were strong and well-shaped, their backs speckled

push through. If he delivers mail, or collects bills, or drives a pack mule, or walks a tow-path, the muscles of the thigh are hauled taut like cables, the knee muscles keep their place, the calves are full of knots—one big one in a bunch, just below the strap of his knickerbockers, should he wear them.

If he carries big weights on his back—sacks of salt as do the poor stevedores in Venice; or coal in gunnies, as do the coolies in Cuba; or wine in casks, or coffee in bags, then the calves swell abnormally, the thighs solidify; the lines of beauty are lost, but the lines of strength remain.

If, however, he has spent his life in the saddle, rounding up cattle, chasing Indians, hunting bandits in Mexico, ankle and foot loose, his knees clutched tightly, hugging that other part of him, the horse, then the muscles of the thigh round out their intended lines—the



"I never left that plow till sundown."

with brown spots—too well kept to have guided a plow, and too weather tanned to have wielded a pen. The leg which was crossed, the foot resting on the left knee, was full and sinewy, the muscles of the thigh well developed, and the round of the calf firmly modelled. The ankle was small and curved like an axe handle and looked as tough.

There are times when the mind lapses into vacancy. Nothing interests it. I find it so while waiting to have my berth made up; sleep is too near to waste grey matter.

A man's thighs, however, interest me in any mood and at any time. While you may get a man's character from his face, you can, if you will, get his past life from his thigh. It is the walking beam of his locomotion; controls his paddles and is developed in proportion to its uses. It indicates, therefore, the man's habits and his mode of life.

If he has sat all day with one leg lapped over the other, arm on chair, head on hand, listening or studying—preachers, professors and all the other sedentaries sit like this—then the thigh shrinks, the muscles droop, the bones of the ankle bulge, and the knee joints

most subtle in the modulating curving of the body.

The aboriginal bareback rider must have been a beauty.

I at once became interested then in the man before me, or rather in his thighs—the "extra" hid the rest.

I began to picture him to myself—young, blonde hair, blue eyes, drooping moustache, slouch hat canted rakishly over one eye; not over twenty-five years of age. I had thought forty, until a movement of the paper uncovered for a moment his waist line, which curved in instead of out. That settled it—not a day over twenty-five, of course.

The man's fingers tightened on the edges of the paper. He was still reading, entirely unconscious that my knees were within two inches of his own.

Then I heard the exclamation—"It's a damned outrage!"

My curiosity got the better of me—I coughed.

The paper dropped instantly.

"My dear sir," he said, bending forward courteously and laying his hand on my wrist, "I owe you an apology. I had no idea anyone was opposite me."

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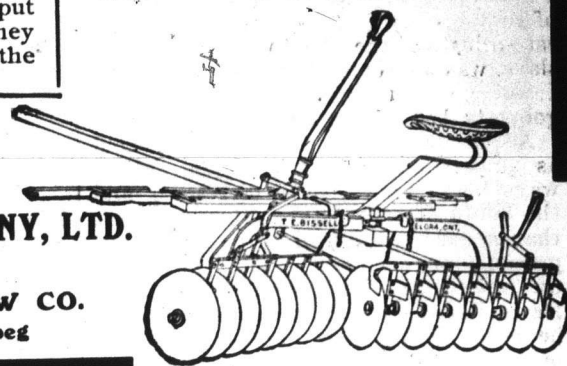
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