

The Simple Faith of Ole

By G. G. Bostwick
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who had seen many such a rush during his adventurous life. There were weathered sourdoughs—men long in the country, invariably of extreme gentleness and mild demeanor. There were the toughs and routabouts from the Coast and a sprinkling of just average men made up of clerks and the like.

A bunch of the latter class met Ole upon his arrival.

"Well, see who's here," offered one as he took in the weary form and sun-burnt face of the yellow-haired boy.

"You've come just at the right time, too," he went on. "There's a grand new opening for you, kid! We've all staked up to our limits and then we go and find this ground with gold laying like rocks all over it. That's just our Tom-fool luck!"

"Aw, leave the kid alone," said a watching sourdough that in some vague way reminded the boy of his lost friend.

Ole straightened with eagerness, ignoring his words.

"Where is it?" he asked, his weariness dropping from him like a garment.

His tormenter turned his face innocently to the mountain that towered to the skies ahead of them, waving his hand behind his back for his fellows to keep quiet.

"It's up there—see?" he directed. "Right on the very top of that old lofty. Gold—nuggets—all kinds of the stuff. The guy that stakes that claim will be as rich as Croesus. He won't need to look for a job as long as he lives—except how to blow his kale!"

Ole bit like a famished fish that sees a fat worm under its nose.

He asked no questions except as to the trail, and that discovered, he set out at once, forgetting everything but the treasure ahead.

He heard laughter at his back that grew fainter as he munched away, but that troubled him not at all. He was used to that. He had been the butt for laughter since his first recollection.

Ole drew himself wearily step by painful step. He was worn to the bone. Hungry with that hunger which no food can satisfy—hunger which is elemental, savage. He was on his way back from the terrible trip. The camp was but a scant half mile away. He could see the smoke of many fires rising on the evening air.

He had been a week on the trail. Four days of interminable climbing until it had seemed as though each step would be his last. But with that dogged persistence with which he had met every difficulty of his life, he stuck to his job. He had at last arrived at the summit of the mountain they had pointed out to him. The mountain-top where he was to find the gold!

He laughed crazily as he paused. He would show them!

He staggered with weakness where he stood. It had been a hard trip. The hardest he had ever made. Never once had he faltered, though his bacon had given out and for three days now he had tasted no food other than roots he had pulled from the ground and a ptarmigan egg he had found in the scant growth.

He went on more and more slowly, so nearly exhausted that he fell again and again. His feet felt curiously heavy and his head was light as air.

Now the tents were but a hand's throw away. He made a last desperate spurt and came out into the open about which the rag houses clustered invitingly.

Ole approached the largest tent and a sudden whoop went forth.

"Well, see who's here!" It was the same voice, the same words that had assailed his ears seven days before, on his arrival.

Men gathered miraculously as though they sprang out of the ground. Ole was almost instantly the centre of a loud and hilarious bunch.

"Did you stake your claim, Ole?" asked one and a silence fell on the group.

POWER OF SIMPLE WORDS

(This remarkable poem, it will be observed, consists wholly of words of one syllable.)

Think not that strength lies in the big round word,

Or that the brief and plain must needs be weak;

To whom can this be true who once has heard

The cry for help, the tongue that all men speak

When want or awe, or fear is in the throat?

So that each word gasped out is like a shriek

Pressed from the sore throat, or a strange, wild note

Sung by some fay or fiend! There is a strength

Which dies if stretched too far or spun too fine,

Which has more height than breadth, more depth than length.

Let but this force of thought and speech be mine,

And he that will may take the sleek fat phrase

Which glows and burns not, though it gleam and shine,

Light but not heat—a flash with out a blaze.

Nor is it mere strength that the short word boasts;

It serves for more than flight or storm can tell—

The roar of waves that clash on rock bound coasts;

The crash of tall trees when the wild winds swell;

The roar of guns, the groans of men that die

On blood stained fields. It has a voice as well

For them that far off on their sick beds lie,

For them that weep, for them that mourn the dead;

To joy's quick step, as well as grief's low tread.

The sweet, plain words we learnt at first keep time.

And though the theme be sad, or gay, or grand,

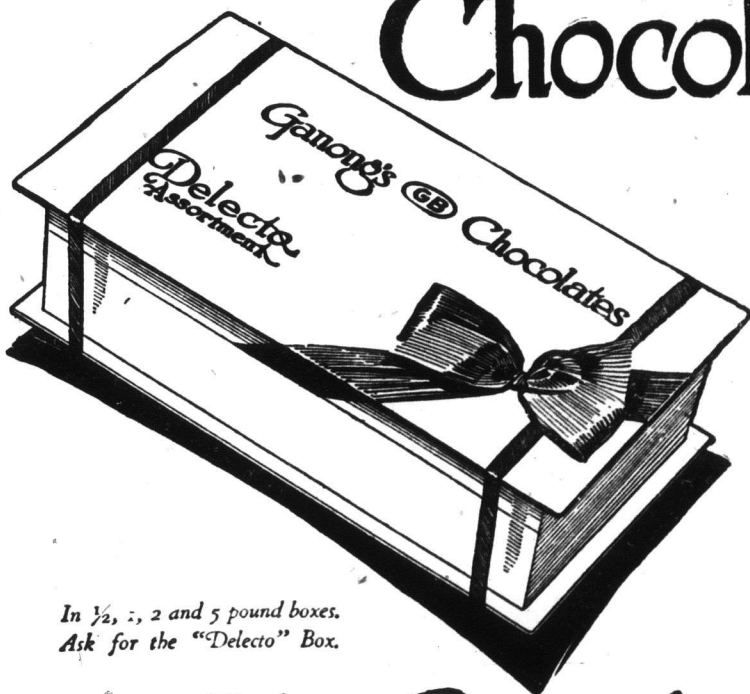
With each, with all, these may be made to chime,

In thought, or speech, or song, or prose, or rhyme.

—Dr. Addison Alexander.



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