

It was decided that all should go on to my claim, taking Big Mac to referee the fight, and I was to see Daw and arrange it with him amicably if possible.

Along with Big Mac came his partner, both anxious to see the scrap.

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"Is your name Daw," I inquired of a pretty husky individual whom I found grubbing away on the claim.

"Name is Daw," he replied looking up. "What of it."

"I reckon you know that this claim belonged to a man named McCork," I began. "He left his recording rather late and on his way into the recording office he got lost. You know the rest."

"Yes," he replied calmly. "I know that this claim was originally staked by one McCork, but as he had not recorded it within thirty days after staking, as required by law, he forfeited all his right and title to it, and it makes no difference to me whether he was lost or hung."

"As it happens," I said, "McCork is an Irishman with a temper belonging to that race and unless you are ready to fight him for the claim I imagine you are in for a thorough licking."

"Wishes to fight me for the claim, does he? He's a fool, and I would be, too, if I agreed to such a crazy thing. I have the claim and am not exactly spoiling for a fight. Still if it's a fight McCork wants I might be able to oblige."

"Do you know," I said angrily, "that with your nerve I would own the whole camp. You chatter away so glibly about the law, that one would be apt to think that it was your best friend; but it has you on the hip this time. You've jumped claims before and got away with it; but you overstepped the mark this time. You swore you staked this claim a week ago to-day, when at the time you were not here at all. You made out your certificate, swore to it, recorded it and then came out here and restaked this claim. Now we will see just what the law will do to a man who will commit perjury to jump an honest man's claim."

"That's not true," he said, but I could see that he was badly scared.

"Very well," I replied, "you've had a real sporting offer made you. If you won't take it you will have a chance to prove your right to this claim in a court of law."

"Wait," he said, "what kind of a man is McCork?"

"As you said a moment ago he is a fool," I replied. "He has the notion that the only reasonable way to settle this matter is to fight it out, and the best man take the claim. He knows that he was at fault; but he also knows that you are absolutely crooked. He is not nearly as large as you are."

"And if I win the claim is mine," he asked, "and there will be nothing more about it?"

"That is his fool proposition," I replied. "The fight will end the dispute."

"And am I sure of fair play?" he asked anxiously.

"There will be fair play all around," I assured him.

"Then bring your man around to-morrow morning," he said finally.

Daw looked mightily surprised next morning at the appearance of seven men, when he had only expected two. He cast many an anxious glance towards Big Mac, but his face cleared when I named McCork.

"These men are all witnesses," I began, "that the winner of this fight is to be the absolute owner of the claim on which we stand, and that neither is to take any action against the other in any way in regard to it."

Everyone agreed that such would have to be the case, and both men expressed the willingness to fight under these conditions.

Big Mac assured them both that it was to be a straight, stand-up fight with their fists. And no one in the crowd was to make a remark till it was over.

The two men then faced each other. For a time they sparred as though to try and learn each other's skill, and it was evident to all that neither of them were novices at the game. Suddenly Teddy's fist shot out and he landed on his opponent's mouth. The blow was not hard, but it hurt. It angered Daw, who struck fiercely in return. Then the fight began in earnest.

It was soon apparent that Teddy was playing with his opponent. Daw was much stronger and his greater reach should have counted much in his favor. But Teddy's defence was perfect, and so quick was he in getting away that Daw rarely reached him. He would circle round and round awaiting his chance. Then he would plant a light blow and retreat. When Daw followed too close he always got punished. So the combat went for half an hour.

Daw at last realized that if he won he must make use of his superior strength. So he decided to force matters. He drew gradually back and as Teddy followed he made a rush. To his surprise his opponent did not retreat, but met him solidly. His mighty right punch was caught on Teddy's left arm, while Teddy's right landed on his chin. The blow dazed him and he dropped his arms.

"Had enough?" asked Big Mac, but he got no reply.

"Go to him Teddy," someone advised.

"Shut up," roared the referee. "The next man to open his head feels my fist."

Daw slowly recovered, but seemed in doubt what to do. Teddy stood ready, and just as the referee was about to call it off, Daw made a rush. Teddy dodged and slapped him smartly on the ear with his open hand as he passed. It was fear of Big Mac only which kept us from laughing.

They faced each other for a few seconds. Then Daw, if he could not fight, knew how to retire gracefully. He held out his hand.

"McCork," he said, "take the confounded claim. You could have knocked me out at the start and I know it."

"Sure," replied Teddy, who had not lost his smile since the fight began, as he took the proffered hand, all animosity forgotten, "I knew that I could whip you from the start; but you gave me a good half hour. Sure I promised my sweetheart I'd never fight again—only in a just cause, and I've kept my promise."

I invited everyone over to my camp for lunch, and had you seen the happy family demolishing my pork and beans, you would not have believed them fresh from a fight.

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Next day Teddy restaked his claim and lost no time in recording it. He sold it later and though he did not realize the thousand pounds he decided that it was enough to change the mind of the parent of his sweet Kathleen.