

THE GOOD FELLOWS

(Below is the first of a series of sketches and impressions of a selected list of men and women to be published from time to time in these pages. Different writers, those who know the subjects the best will contribute to the collections and none will appear who does not belong among those in the community who have done something distinctive and who for some reason is entitled to commendable recognition.)

JOSEPH FARREN

By C. C. Goodwin.

THAT is, his parents christened him Joseph, but the last syllable was dropped years ago and since he has been plain Joe.

As men reckon time, Joe was born a good while ago in New York City and grew up there. He never stole apples in his youth, principally, I suspect, because New York City had ceased its farming era when Joe arrived there. But he learned to swim in the lower Hudson, to swim and to fish.

He was never large of size; nature cast him first in a not too generous, but healthy mould, and then devoted all her energies upon his head and heart. These latter two adornments are as big as the biggest.

He attended the city schools, took in all they had to offer, and in addition a vast amount on the outside. If the big city had any mysteries that he did not explore, it was an oversight which did not happen often.

He was tenderly reared at home, but was a gamin on the streets, and graduated with honors from that school which teaches boys to adopt means to ends. That branch of his education has been of vast service to him many a time since.

In that school he learned not to get excited without sufficient cause, and not to give himself away in following some impulse, and that has been of vast service to him on several occasions.

When a lad of twelve he was standing with a group of other lads on the river bank when a man came rushing to them, telling them that an hour before another man had fallen into the river some distance up stream; that as the tide was going out the body must be floating down with the tide and offered a reward to the boy that should discover it. All the boys responded and in search dove into the river.

The body had floated down, his feet had caught in some sea weed brought up with the tide, and so caught was swaying nearly upright in the current. When Joe opened his eyes in the water this swaying figure was close to him. He lost no time in reaching the surface; he had just strength enough to cry out "Here he is," and pulled out for the bank, white with terror. When later he was asked why he did not remain and help bring the body in, he replied that he was a scout, not a sexton; that the reward was offered to find it, and the contract called for nothing more. Now, when he reads about the exploits of the submarines in the war across the sea, he murmurs to himself, "I was the first one of them."

He was but a boy when he reached California and found his way to Plumas county. It was in the old placer mining days, but Plumas has what some other counties have not. In the long ago, how long no computation of modern man can determine within a million years, a river flowed through a part of what is now Plumas county. How many centuries it continued its flow only the Infinite knows, but finally, by a convulsion of nature, or more probably by the grinding of a glacier in flow, the river was buried under mountains of debris. When singing its way to the sea it was suddenly transfixed with all its treasures. Then nature resumed her course; the

streams in their courses on the new surface began to hew out ravines and finally some of these cut their way into the old channel of the submerged river. The miners found these and then other miners began to run tunnels and to sink shafts to find this old channel where it was not exposed.

How many fortunes were lost in that search will never be known, but it was fascinating work and many tried it.

The writer knew one man who all alone ran a tunnel 1,800 feet to strike that channel, only to find at the end that he was 60 feet too high. It broke his heart; he never would work afterward, though he lived and was physically strong and healthy for thirty years after the failure. He finally died of dry rot.

Well, Joe went there and was a placer miner for a long time, but he studied the hidden river and the quartz veins, until he caught most of the mysteries of the hills and set to words the alphabet that nature and the patient years had embossed upon the rocks. He put the knowledge in the cold storage chamber of his brain for future use.

But the placers began to fall after a while and the news of the riches of Fraser river in British Columbia came like an answer to prayer to many a discouraged miner. Had not the great Humboldt written a half belief that the gold of the west coast had its matrix in Alaska and was not British Columbia half way to Alaska?

Joe joined the rush. He is a little shy about describing that episode in his history.

He will make an affidavit that he fastidiously every day, but some of his eccentricities seem to give him away. For instance, he will not eat salmon, no matter how temptingly prepared, and green gooseberries are poison to him.

It has never been clear how he reached San Francisco on his return trip, only it is known that he hates Lord Tennyson for ever writing

"The dead steered by the dumb went upward with the tide."

He was next found in Placerville, Eldorado county. It has never been known why he went there, unless it was because Placerville was called "Hang Town" in those days and possibly the name suggested to him that he might find the man there that lured him to make the trip to Fraser river.

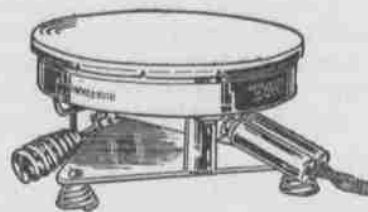
But reaching that place he found everybody crazy over the news from the Comstock. Again he joined the crowd and brought up in Carson City. Since then he has been at the christening of about all the new camps in these west coast states. He was one of the fathers of Austin; was the real godfather of Eureka; he put in that first winter at White Pine—but why expatiate? He knows every sagebrush in Nevada by sight.

At Austin he built the finest church the town ever had. It was this way: He had found and opened a most promising mine, but needed a quartz mill. There was a most eloquent one-armed clergyman in Austin, but he had no church, and so preached to the ungodly on street corners, in saloons—wherever he could get an audience. We will call his name Jones, principally because it was not his real name.

Joe had watched him and listened to him and had taken a liking to him, notwithstanding there were whispers that he had lost his arm one night because attached to a rope that he was carrying was a horse that was another man's property.

Joe had discovered that this clergyman had a wife and some little children in a cabin, and became convinced that they did not have something to eat every day. So, after thinking the matter over, Joe incorporated his mine. Then he made it his business to accidentally meet the preacher and draw him into conversation.

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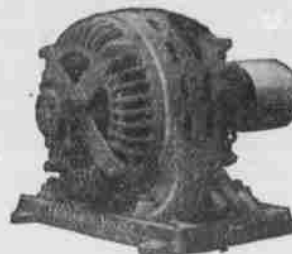
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