

Ole Bob

BY JOHN JOSEPH MATHEWS, '20

ONE Saturday I saw Ed standing in front of the Smoke House, looking out over the street where the afternoon traffic was moving slowly. The winter sun was warm where he stood with one high boot heel caught up behind him on the ledge of the plate-glass window. He was smoking his Saturday afternoon cigar with a sensual contentment, and the toothpick in the corner of his mouth indicated that he had just enjoyed a little town "chow," and had found it good.

When he saw me he raised his hand and shouted, "Howdy," then clanked up to meet me, his girl-leg spurs rattling as the high heels of his boots hit the pavement. "Well," he said, "whur yu bin grazin'—haint seen yu, rekon, since me and Jim and you was out after ole shep."

"I've been staying out at the place. Had any good huntin' this winter?"

"Purty fair, I guess—got my best dog all tore up—shore hated it."

"Which one. The little black bitch?"

"Yeah. Yu know how she fights. Jist can't learn her to take care of them legs of her'n. Me and Jim was out last Sunday and ole shep dang near et her up."

"Too bad. Think she'll get over it?"

"Yeah, guess so. Tain't very bad—kinda lames her up, so she cain't do nothin'."

"Wasn't Ole Bob by any chance was it? That old coyote eats hounds like Belle every morning for breakfast."

His face brightened and he smiled broadly: "Hell, me and Jim done ketched Ole Bob."

"When?"

"Musta bin about four month ago, rekon. Yeah, we shore ketched that ole shep."

"What's the matter, was he sick?"

"Yeah, sick like a quarter hoss. No sir, by golly that ole Snow dog of Jim's brother's jist reached out and gethered him in."

"Good race?"

"One hell of a race and some of the purtiest fightin' yu purt'near ever saw. It was a purty mornin' and we had only rode a mile from the ranch. The sun was just comin' up. We seen a coyote standin' on the point of the hill. We looked at him for a minute and Jim said, "Ole Bob." We set still there for five minutes and watched him and was wonderin' whether that short tail of his'n had been cut off or whether it was jist nacherly short; his ears too, we wondered if they had been cropped. You could see that long mane of his'n like a

lion's mane. You've seen it? Well, he looked like a purty good wolf standin' there broadsidin'; a-standin' there a-watchin' us as much as to say, like he always did, 'come git me if yu can git her done.'

"You know how bad ever body in the country tried to catch him, and how ever body come to know about him. I know me and Jim had bin a-chasin' him for five years—sometimes as high as three times a week from the first time we seen him a-standin' there on the Blackland hills. The first time we seen him was in 1926, in the fall. We had a young shep on our saddles, and we had the best bunch of dogs that year that we ever had, I guess. We was jist comin' to the big hills west of Blackland when suddenly on the side of the hill we seen ole shep. He had bin layin' down, and when he heard us he got up and trotted up the side of the hill, then turned broadside to us. We jist stopped and set on our horses and looked at him. He was the biggest coyote we had ever seen. His mane looked like a lion's mane. Yu could see the prairie breeze a-blowin' his mane.

"Purty soon the dogs seen him, and they was off, but the coyote would run a few yards then stop and look back. When he reached the top of the hill he stopped and looked back again, and the last time he stopped the dogs was not more'n twenty five feet from him. We poured in the steel to the top of the hill, and by golly if that coyote wasn't racin' across the flat prairie—the purtiest country for a race yu ever seen. We rode off the hill expectin' the dogs to catch him at any minute, and we jist kept on expectin' this for three and a half miles, but finely we seen him go up a short raise so fur ahead of the pack that we knowed that they wasn't any hope and jist set there on our blowin' horses and waited for the dogs to come in. It wasn't long as they realized that they couldn't catch him about the same time that we did, and here they come a-pantin' and fox-trottin' back to us. Jim said, 'Was that shep bob-tailed?' and I said I don't know: maybe he had his tail bobbed and his ears cropped too, but we both agreed that he was the biggest coyote that we had ever seen, and me and Jim's seen a-plenty. We thought he looked like a lion with that mane the way it was.

"In the next two weeks we had three more runs at him and all with the same

luck. Then seems like we begin hearin' about him more and more. Other fellas tried to catch him but with the same luck as me and Jim. They was stories about him a-comin' into the heart of Pearsonia and running the dogs off the street, and the people in that little village said that the dogs seemed willin' to let him have the dark streets. He disappeared as quick as he come they said. He also was saw in Foraker about eight miles from Pearsonia. Yu heard about him from all the ranches within ten and fifteen miles around. He would come up and take a chicken in broad daylight.

"Well one day Che Sabe come to the ranch with his pack. He pulled off his saddle and forked that pinto bare-backed, and away went me and him and Jim for the Blackland hills. It wasn't hard to git a run at Ole Bob. We seen him in the usual place, and purty soon we was off; Ole Bob runnin' and stoppin' ever few yards to look back. Che Sabe fed that pinto the leather, but me and Jim jist loped along behind; we knowed that Injun dogs couldn't do nothin' with Ole Bob, though I'll admit that he had one of the best packs in the Osage, and that dog Shonkah of his'n was one of the best. We had a hard time persuadin' that Injun that he might as well stay with us and watch the race from the hill, but he was sure that Shonkah would catch Ole Bob. Well, it turned out jist as we thought. After the three-mile run across the flat prairie, we seen Ole Bob drop down into the breaks of Bird Creek. That Injun come a-lopin' back like a picur across that flat prairie, but he didn't say nothin'. Well, we had a nice race out of another shep afore we went back to the ranch.

"Yu know, a funny thing, most of them Blackland hills coyotes has got long manes jist like Ole Bob, only not so long of course, but seems like they all got 'em, unless me and Jim is seein' things.

"Most ever man that had a pack took a run at Ole Bob and me and Jim run him, I rekon a hundred times du-in' the next four or five years, till as I was a tellin' yu we finely ketched him about four month ago. Ole Bob's unlucky race come: he lost, though yu know he had won several hundred races agin' the best packs in the Osage, besides some track dogs from Telsy—one lose and he could never try agin. Wasn't no special dog that first laid holt of him neither—jist one of them things that yu read about in books—the Fate of the wild I guess yu'd say, maybe.

"The Old Man had me and Jim purty busy this fall, and we didn't git shipped out till along in October, then one beautiful mornin' Jim looked at me in a certain way, and went out and got to foolin' with the dogs. I seen ole Star, Jim's ropin' hoss a-standin' saddled, and I knowed what was up. Jim never used ole Star except for somethin' special, and I'll admit that he was one of the best hosses a man ever forked. I went down and got my ole

Jazzbo, which was not so bad himself fer a quarter. When I come up Jim was a-waitin' with the pack at his heels.

"When we got to the hills the sun was jist comin' up and what should we see a-standin' there on the hill but Ole Bob. We stopped and Jim said kinda like he was a-seein' him for the first time: 'Ole Bob.' We set there on our hosses and watched the old fella for some minutes while the dogs was a-payin' their respects to the carcass of a old dead steer. He stood there and looked at us in the same old way of his'n. We was both a-wonderin' the same old thing; whether their ears was cropped and whether that tail was bobbed and what made him so big. I guess he was thinkin' 'well there's them fool men agin that thinks they got some runnin' dogs—I was jist needin' a little exercise for my digestion anyway.'

"Jim looked over at me and said: 'No use a-gettin the dogs tar'd out on that _____.' I said, 'No I reckon not.' Then ole Spot scented him—the wind was favorin' us. It was the same story. He jist waited till the dogs got mighty nigh on him then he turned and run off, the dogs a-snappin' at his rear, it seemed like. Jist as we had done a hundred times we loped to the top of the hill and aimed to set and wait for the dogs to come a-pantin' back. But when we got there we didn't see him. We looked around. There was a old corn field at the foot of the hill, which had belonged to a farm that had been 'thrown out,' and there was the pack runnin' down the middle of it, and Ole Bob about forty yards ahead of 'em.

"The field was about a quarter of a mile across, and at the other side was a ditch about five feet deep and about ten wide. We stopped, cause we knowed he aimed to pull a fast one. He would make the ditch and then run along it and come out way down at the end, and the dogs goin' as fast as they was, and running by sight, would pile up in the ditch and when they got untangled would run straight ahead, while Ole Bob would climb out way down the ditch and trot off about his business. He aimed to pull a shanani-gan—didn't feel like playin' this mornin'.

"But right here's where that Fate you read about comes in. The little trick worked. Purty soon we seen Ole Bob climb out of the ditch way down the ravine and stand there, with his tongue out and lookin' back. With his tongue out that a way he looked like he was a-laffin'. We wondered where the dogs was—we guessed they was kinda gettin' untangled in the bottom of the ditch, when that Fate come in. She musta bin a-straddle of the oneriest dog in the outfit; a big Scotch deer hound, ole Snow, which was pure white, and had never ketched nothin' more than beef scraps at butcherin' time. He was fast as hell, and would run a jackrabbit clean out of the country, but he always laid back when the pack run ole

shep; but savage as hell at the kill, and growled like he was mean.

"Imagine our surprise when somethin' white come out of that ditch right on top of Ole Bob. We figured afterwards that Ole Snow was on him before he knowed it and Snow bein' scairt to death jist set in to fightin' like a 'possum that is cornered. Well, him and Ole Bob mixed it. Ole Snow was big and strong, and he could fairly fight when he had to, er when he was scairt like he was now.

"We poured in the steel and got to the fight about the same time as the rest of the pack. Now, I've seen some fights in my time, but I never seen one like that Ole Bob put up. Yu know when a pack hits a coyote, he goes down and up again two or three time before he is finely kilt. But not Ole Bob; he wasn't down once, but ever dog in the pack was down more than once. Well we had to help the dogs kill him. I believe he would have whupped that whole pack, and Jim thinks so too. Finely he was stretched out there in the long grass, and the dogs was a-layin' around lickin' their wounds, and me and Jim was blowin' too. My pants was ripped down the leg, and Jim's hand was cut.

"We throwed him on the saddle and started hime—no more runs that day, and as it turned out no more runs for several months cause ever dog in the pack was cut up purty severe, and we had to go back after ole Dan and Socks in the wagon—they jist couldn't make it.

"As we rode along slow so the limpin' dogs could keep up we wondered why ole Snow had run down the ditch, and we come to the conclusion that they musta bin a rabbit got up jist as the dogs pulled in, and ole Snow preferred rabbit to coyote so he got unscrambled, him a hangin' back a little too, and took down the ditch after the rabbit right onto Ole Bob, and both of them was surprised. But if Ole Bob had played as he usually did he would be singin' to the moon yet, I guess. I don't know what was the matter with him that morning, unless as Jim said, he musta had a double breakfast.

We stood there in the sun for a short time in silence. Ed was studying the end of his Saturday afternoon cigar, which had gone out during the recital, then he pushed his hat back on the back of his head, took out his knife, squatted on his high heels and picked up a piece of a pine box which had fallen into the gutter. He said as if reminiscently, "I was ridin' that country the other day lookin' about some strays. Yu know it's kinda funny not seein' that big wolf standin' on the point of the hill, a-looking as if he owned the Osage. He weighed over fifty pound—haint never seen his match—don't guess they make a common coyote any bigger. Seemed like I could hear them teeth of his'n comin' together when he missed a foreleg du-in' the fight, and them yellow eyes of his'n that made you feel kinda funny after he was stretched out there in

the grass—seemed like them eyes was a-sayin' that he hadn't quit yet, even if they wasn't much left of him but some yellow hair matted with blood."

During the short silence that followed he had shaped the piece of pine box into a smooth peg. He arose, put his knife back in his pocket, pushed his big hat forward and looked up the street, squinting as he would squint riding across the prairie when the sun was bright. Then with a touch of embarrassment: "Yu know I wish he was still kinda a-Kingin' it over them hills—shore wish we hadn't ketched him." Then after a brief pause: "Shore'n hell do."

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TOWARD BANKING REFORM

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 200)

is something that exists within the secret chambers of the individual; it is amenable to no law; it accepts no regulation. Like the gourd of Jonah, it covers us with its shadow, and by night it is withered by a worm.

Would we not, therefore, strengthen our whole economic structure by abandoning credit money and returning pretty much to a hard money basis, much as in Europe where payments by check are practically unknown?

With an economic machine geared to a deposit money mechanism of fifty or sixty billion dollar capacity, it is apparent that a return to a hard money basis, if not actually impossible, would prove even more disastrous than the collapse of the deposit money mechanism.

The solution to the problem would therefore seem to be a *rapprochement* of the two concepts; i.e. restriction of our credit mechanism to limits supportable by sound money, and expansion of our currency base by conservative means.

The senior Senator from Oklahoma, with a statesman's foresight, has long held the thesis that there is an inadequate supply of actual currency in the country. Over ten years ago, to the writer's knowledge, when the present collapse of banking was something far under the horizon, Senator Thomas was deeply concerned with the problem of an inadequate currency.

With modifications in our banking laws increasing the reserve requirements to be held against deposits, in order to prevent any increase in currency from being used by the banking system to inflate credit, measures to increase the government backed currency should command approval.

The emergency enactments, providing for the expansion of the currency by the issuance of Federal Reserve notes backed by a wide list of bank assets, is an acknowledgment that our present credit money system has grown too large to be