

THE GOVERNOR STARTED TO HUNT COON BUT TREED A WILD MAN!



We all know what the Governor of North Carolina said to the Governor of South Carolina, but what the Governor of Missouri said when he started out to hunt coons and treed a wild man, is another story. The Governor of Missouri is a Piker (note the capital P). He was born and reared in Pike County, that famous subdivision of the "Show Me" State that yields an unparalleled crop of orators and statesmen. The Governor of Missouri on this occasion only said: "Gosh!"

And when we pause to consider his remark was both comprehensive and fitting. There was not much more to be said, was there?

"Gosh!" said the Governor, and "Gosh!" echoed the other guests and members of the Randolph County Coon Club whose annual coon hunt was the occasion of this famous occurrence.

And they all said "Gosh!" again when they took another look at their quarry, for they then realized that they had treed the only human being on record.

But it is well to begin at the beginning. Five squads of hunters with more than 100 of the most famous coon dogs of the county left the camp five miles northeast of Moberly, Mo., at 10 o'clock on the night of November 4, 1913, and plunged into the sycamore forest on the banks of the Elk Ford Creek. In one of these squads was the Governor of Missouri, Elliott W. Major, Edward F. Goltra of St. Louis, Democratic National Committeeman from Missouri and millionaire manufacturer; Mayor Rolla Rothwell of Moberly; former State Senator John E. Lynch, president of the club, Oak Hunter, who weighs 350 pounds and rejoices in the title of official tree climber;

How a Notable Expedition into the Woods of Randolph County, Missouri, "Pulled Off" the Greatest Coon Hunt in History in Which Missouri's Chief Executive and Ben, the Gold-Toothed Coon, Are Heroes.



MURILLO PORTRAIT



AT top, left to right: The Wild Man; Gov. Elliott W. Major; "Ben" the Gold Tooth Coon. Below, left to right: Mayor Rolla Rothwell of Moberly, Mo.; Hamp Rothwell, historian of the coon hunt; the coon treed; John E. Lynch, president Randolph County Coon Club; Fount Rothwell, original coon hunter of Randolph County.

Hamp Rothwell, official historian, and his brother, Ford Rothwell, the original coon hunter of Randolph County, and others.

"COON IN TREE PROVES TO BE MAN."

They had not been out long when the dogs picked up a hot trail and the chase was on. After a few miles of lively work the eager hunters came upon the dogs surrounding a lofty sycamore tree. A dark object was observable on a topmost branch.

"The daddy of all the coons," quoth National Committeeman Goltra as he took aim with his trusty shotgun. And then—

"Don't shoot, Davy Crockett, I'll come down."

The dark object uncoiled from the branch and slowly descended the tree. When it reached the ground and straightened up in the flare of the torches it was then the Governor of Missouri said "Gosh!" and his fellow sportsmen echoed the expression, for, as we have said, it was then that they realized they had captured the only and original human being.

The man—for it was afterward ascertained that the quarry was human—had a wooden leg and just above where his ankle would have

been on his original perambulator, he had carved a hole which a swarm of bees occupied as a hive. For a hat he wore a beehive, in which the little storer of sweets were industriously at work, while hundreds of their brethren were temporarily resting in his flowing beard.

After all the "Goshes" had been ejaculated, questions were in order and the strange captive was prevailed upon to tell his story. Neither the Governor of North Carolina nor the chief executive of South Carolina was present, but liquid refreshment was forthcoming and the coon hunt was temporarily abandoned while the hunters hearkened to the tale.

"Gentlemen, I was not always thus," he said, and it was noticed that his words were honeyed. But immediately his story became interesting.

"My name is Thomas Siebler," he said. "Back in 1855 I was a young, handsome and prosperous, also I was in love. And then I met with an accident. I will not recount the details. I shudder even when I mention it, for not only did it cost me a leg, but it blighted my life and made me the eccentric recluse you see today. When I left the hospital I sought my sweet-

heart, but she scorned me. I was too hurt to plead, but that night I boarded a train. At Moberly, prompted by some sudden influence, I embarked and slept that night in a hotel. It was the last roof that has sheltered me. I awoke early the next morning—in fact I did not sleep; purchased a few provisions and plunged into these woods from which I have never emerged, nor do I ever intend to."

TELLS HOW HE ADOPTED BEES

The recluse paused. Hamp Rothwell tactfully produced his flask. The recluse afterward continued:

"I always was a lover of nature and in my sorrow I turned to the dumb world for companionship. One day while strolling through the woods I paused to admire some beautiful panicles on the banks of the Elk Ford Creek. On one I observed a bee. Acting on impulse again I took the little creature in my hand. Its eyes sought mine appealingly."

At this point J. C. O'Keefe, a prominent Moberly merchant, who was in the party, kept softly on President Lynch's bosom. When

he was calmed, the raconteur continued:

"I could not bear to desert the little creature and with my pocket knife I carved a home for her in my wooden leg, for I afterwards learned, as you shall see that she was a queen bee. In the morning I discovered that I had adopted a swarm of bees. They enveloped me like a cloud. I enlarged the hole in my wooden leg as much as possible, but it was not sufficient and those that it could not accommodate sought refuge in my hair and beard. The hat I now wear is the result of their industry. I have grown as attached to them, gentlemen, as they are to me, and strange as it may appear to you, would not now be without them."

As he talked the recluse finished the flask and his story simultaneously. The hunters silently clasped his hand and as they resumed the hunt for coons those of the initiated explained how the human being had been run down.

Coons love honey with a passion as absorbing as that of a bear, they related. The coon the dogs had been trailing was following the trail of the honey that dripped from

the hive in the wild man's wooden leg. Simple, is it not?

But the treed of the wild man and his strange story was not the only remarkable feature of this hunt which has made Randolph County, Mo., famous. You should hear the story of the haunted house, how Committeeman Goltra's knowledge of astronomy rescued his associates from the problem of spending a night in the trackless forest far from the camp and its comforts, the tale of "Ben," the famous gold-toothed coon, etc. And you shall.

The scene of the hunt, which lasted three days, was on the lands of W. H. Daly and Frank Smith. These lands formerly were the estate of Wallace McCampbell, a pioneer settler of Randolph County. McCampbell came to Missouri from Kentucky and built a handsome home. He brought with him many fine horses and many slaves. He was a great horseman and maintained a private race track on his grounds on which he held meets for his friends. He also maintained dog pits and his kennels of fighting and hunting dogs were famous.

TELLS STORY OF HAUNTED HOUSE

But the story, which is that of the haunted house as the McCamp-

bell homestead now is called, properly begins with the death of Mrs. McCampbell, and to be appreciated must be told by Hamp Rothwell, the official historian of the Coon Club.

"The old McCampbell house," says Hamp, "is a two-story log house standing on the banks of Elk Ford Creek, near a big spring. In the old days there were thirty to forty huts nearby in which the McCampbell slaves were housed, and a smokehouse in which the winter's meats were stored.

"Shortly before her death Mrs. McCampbell became subject to delusions. One was that the negroes were trying to rob the smokehouse and just before her death she requested that she be buried standing up near the smokehouse that she might watch it. Her request was complied with insofar as that she was buried standing up, but in the McCampbell private burying ground, about 100 yards northwest of the house, instead of near the smokehouse.

"It was not long after her death, however, before the negroes were terrorized by the apparition of her ghost patrolling the smokehouse. White people at first laughed at the

by a mighty glare and his companions gave an equally mighty shout, which was echoed by an even more mighty outburst as it reached the ears of their companions who had just replenished the campfire and thus gave evidence in corroboration of Goltra's qualifications as a navigator.

But, about Ben, the gold-tooth coon. Ben is one of the largest and scrappiest coons ever captured in Randolph County and has the reputation of having taken on and whipped three dogs at one time. He was captured in 1913 and domesticated until now his manners are perfect. He was presented to Goltra in St. Louis at a 'possum and coon dinner at which Goltra was host to the members of the club and now is a resident of St. Louis.

And the gold tooth? It's a fact. You see, it happened this way. Mayor Rolla Rothwell of Moberly, in addition to "mayoring," also edits a newspaper and his "print shop" became the favorite place of Ben after he had been domesticated and given the freedom of Moberly. But one sad day while prowling about the type cases during the noonday cessation of activity, Ben yielded to the temptation offered by a "nut quad" and attempted to crack one for luncheon. Needless to say it was his tooth that was cracked. His moans of anguish brought his friends on the run and when the nature of his injury was learned one of the leading dentists of Moberly was engaged to repair it. The dentist did a good job and the golden molar now flashes magnificently when he smiles greeting to old friends or new acquaintances.

RANDOLPH COUNTY IS WIDELY ADVERTISED.

And this is the account of the famous 1913 hunt of the Randolph Coon Club, as recounted by its historian, the Honorable Hamp Rothwell, and far be it from us to doubt it. Suffice it to say that, seriously speaking, its benefits in advertising Randolph County and Missouri have been incalculable. The newspapers at the time published lengthy accounts of the hunt and still comment on it; the moving picture men photographed its events beginning with the parade at Moberly on the first day, where Governor Major and Goltra democratically rode on Missouri mules to the capture of the wild man, and it is a surety that the next hunt will see even more distinguished guests participating than did the recent one.

Much of the success of the hunt was due to the following officials of the club, who planned and conducted it: John E. Lynch, grand

sachem; George Sparks, vice grand sachem; M. J. Lilly, master of the hounds; Brack Stephens, assistant master of the hounds; Oak Hunter, first tree climber; Aubrey Marshall, second tree climber; John Faessler, first aid to the thirsty; J. Le Sours, second aid to the thirsty; John F. Curry, first head big medicine man; Chester Johnson, second head big medicine man; Obe Wright, keeper of the same preserve; Louis Radcliff, blower of the royal horn, and the following commissary generals: John C. O'Keefe, Rolla Rothwell, Henry Owens, Samuel Magruder, Dr. A. R. McComas, A. B. Little, Louis Klein, Forest Martin, James Holman, Barney Holcomb, Harry Gillilan, Tony Florida, Fred Well and Charles Branham.

Briggs—Thank goodness the opera season will soon be open!

Griggs—Didn't know you ever attended.

Briggs—I don't; but my wife and daughter do, and that gives me a chance to slip out to the club for a quiet game.