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Untold Tales

XVII.—How Caius O'Lucius and His Crowd Beat the Disciples of Leviticus Szurbulofski and Were Afterward Released on Bail.

Among the whigs in the Third Ward of the City of Rome during the years 234 and 235 A. D. there were two factions, each of which seemed to embrace about half of the voters of the party. The first was headed by Caius O'Lucius, a well known publicist and publican of the time, who for many years kept a saloon at the corner of the Rue de Venus and the south branch of the Appian Way. The second faction was led by Leviticus Szurbulofski, the custodian of the Polish vote, and as Caius and Szurbulofski were bitter personal enemies—their rivalry, in fact, having brought about the split—it may be readily imagined that the feeling between the factions was high, and that each made every offer, fair, foul and otherwise, to overcome and annihilate the other.

This rivalry, in the primary campaign of A. D. 235, was much accentuated, and before the contest, in other parts of the City of Rome, was half under way, the factions in the Third Ward were at daggers points. Whenever one gained an advantage, the other sought to destroy it, and whenever one suffered a stroke of bad luck, the other endeavored to put it to the bad for fair.

Early in September the O'Lucius faction hired the Turnverein Hall, on Caesar Avenue, with the intention of holding a monster outpouring of the masses. Straightway the Szurbulofski-ites erected an open air stand before the main entrance to the building and employed 3000 longshoremen to block the way. In the fight that ensued there were 234 casualties.

A few weeks later the O'Lucius crowd made plans for a torchlight parade designed to eclipse anything of its kind in the history of Rome. The Szurbulofskit-ites put it on the bum by sounding a fire alarm and inciting the firemen to turn the hose upon the marchers.

Next the Szurbulofski contingent imported 2500 repeaters from down Marathon way and installed them, to await election day, in the leading hotels of Rome. The O'Luciusites, without turning a hair, brought 3500 Carthaginian repeaters from Carthage in a fleet of fast allies and quartered them in the Forum and Colosseum.

Then the Szurbulofskis engaged every night hack in Rome to bring out the voters on election morning. As soon as they learned of this the O'Luciusites telegraphed to Athens for 50 fast automobiles, and the hack contract was canceled.

Then the O'Luciusites offered the 10 leading breweries of Rome 67 denarii a barrel for their entire output. The Szurbulofski faction immediately made a bid of 68 denarii.

Then the Szurbulofski-ites hired a regiment of trained brigands from the mountains to intimidate the O'Lucius voters. The latter at once rented 500 experienced sandbaggers from the warden of the state penitentiary, and gave the brigands the laugh.

Finally, after all sorts of collisions and all sorts of unpleasantness, the campaign drew to a close and election day was nigh. The O'Luciusites, as a finishing stroke, decided to give a monster clam bake and chowder party—the largest in the history of the civilized

world. The shore of the Marigold Pleasure Club, on the east bank of the Tiber, was hired for the occasion, and tremendous efforts were made to have the affair go down into the future as an epoch-maker.

Twelve thousand bushels of clams were ordered and 50 of the most experienced chowder chefs in Rome were engaged. In addition the committee in charge secured 20 bands of music, 3 orchestras, 5 drum corps, 10 mandolin clubs and 6 hand organs, and purchased at wholesale 5000 barrels of beer, 200 half barrels, 100 quarters and 100 eights, 500 barrels of ale, 50 of porter, 100 of brown stout, 50,000 frankfurters, 750 hams, 10,000 loaves of bread, 8 tons of pickles, 10,000 genuine 5-cent cigars, 2 cases of whiskey and 5 baskets of champagne water—the last-named for the invited guests.

Three senators, five congressmen, an ambassador and the Chinese minister to Rome were secured to make addresses, and 10 journeymen spell-binders and 15 vaudeville artists were engaged to entertain the people on the outskirts of the crowd. For the trip down the river the committee—which, it may be stated, was headed by the genial J. Ippius Oi—hired 10 tugs, 5 steamboats and 34 barges.

The Szurbulofski-ites, on hearing of these great preparations, were naturally rather surprised, but they were not scared—not by much. In six hours they had handbills printed and posted setting forth the fact that they, too, would give a clambake on the same day and at the same hour of that of the O'Luciusites, and at a shore—the J. Phosphate Calcium Association's—and—joining that of the Marigold Pleasure Club, where the O'Luciusites were to hold forth.

This caused a profound sensation in Rome, and the astonishment of the masses was trebled when the Szurbulofski-ite committee announced that at their clambake no intoxicating liquors would be on tap. The idea of such a thing was so absurd that for awhile the sturdy yeomen of the city could not assimilate it. In the end, when they succeeded in doing so, they laughed loudly, and at once sought cards of invitation to the O'Lucius function. What was a clambake without mixed ale? Foolish! What was beer without foam? Bughouse! What was a rose without perfume: a free lunch without wienerwurst: a building without a roof, a pickle without warts.

So it came to pass that when the great day of the twin excursions dawned the wharf whereat the O'Luciusites were to take their departure was crowded by a seething, squirming mass of humanity. Voters came in companies, battalions, regiments, brigades and divisions, from all parts of city of Rome and the remotest fastnesses of the suburbs, and for hours before the first boat left they stood on dock and slip, calmly and patiently contemplating the mammoth pyramid of kegs.

By noon all of the excursionists were on the ground and the exercises of the day were begun. First there was a grand sacred concert by the massed bands. Then there was an intermission for refreshments. Then there was a speech by Senator Nero Maximus Opus. Then there was another intermission and the chowder and other things began to disappear. Then there was a speech by the Chinese ambassador and a musical act by two of the vaudevillians. In the succeeding intermission a group of voters, inflamed by the liquor, became involved in a fight and three of them were stabbed. Then followed a huge minstrel second part by the vaudevillians and a speech by Congressman Claudius Paraamidophenolius. During the next intermission there were nine fights.

The malt was getting in its fine work—and the Szurbulofski-ites, half a mile up the river, were listening to a college glee club and sipping ginger ale.

It may be asked why? Why should politicians, in the hope of winning votes, offer their guests ginger ale and pallid singing? Certainly they must have had some good reason for so doing.

And it was even so.

They had.

At 9 o'clock it was dark along the Tiber. Long shadows floating from the west in the hazy gloom were cast athwart the river bank, and down in the rushes the whippoorwills and the frogs began their evening song. Over the waters there was a hush, as if all nature were charmed speechless, and not a ripple disturbed the calm face of the quiet stream. At the wharf of the Marigold shore lay the barges hired to carry the O'Lucius excursionists back to Rome. Slowly and painfully a detachment of stevedores loaded them aboard. Some of them, the more experienced, could navigate unassisted. Others—for the historian must be frank—were crippled. They could not walk. They were helpless because, if the truth must be told, they were regally, royally and most uncommonly tight.

Suddenly from the woods between the grounds and the grounds of the Calcium Association's shore, where the Szurbulofski-ites were encamped, there sounded a bugle call. Then, like phantoms, the Szurbulofski-ites arose from the undergrowth and fell upon the O'Luciusites—literally fell upon them and bore them to the earth.

The reason for excluding malt and spirituous liquors from the Szurbulofski function was explained.

The Szurbulofski-ites were strong and Vigorous.

The O'Luciusites were weak and helpless.

It was a cinch.

Until three days after election day the O'Lucius faction lay in chains in a cave on the banks of the Tiber. Their capture and imprisonment was accomplished so quietly and neatly that no one knew where they were. Torn by the sensation of their disappearance the people of Rome sent out searching and rescuing parties in all directions, and huge posses scoured the surrounding country. But until the Szurbulofski-ites had finished the job of voting themselves into power the matter was a dark secret.

Moral.—Take the pledge.