

John Mihok and His Lucky Stone



JOHN MIHOK is not a character in a short story in a fiction magazine. He is a real, flesh-and-blood man. He lives at 1943 South Twentieth street, Omaha, Neb. He is a furniture polisher and has worked at his trade for six years in Omaha. He has a wife and five children. He can walk into a national bank in Omaha and be identified. And what's more, people in his neighborhood point him out on the street and say: "There he is. That's John Mihok himself."

John Mihok was born in the village of Nagy Koros in eastern Hungary. In the Mihok home on the shelf over the fireplace one of the ornaments was a small rough stone. His father had picked it up one day beside a stream and had brought it home. It was a curious sort of stone. Here and there through the rough covering pretty red colors showed. Altogether it was an oddity and rather pretty. So the family kept it over the fireplace for years, while young John Mihok was growing up.

The boy wanted to come to America to seek his fortune and the whole family saved for years to hoard up the money to pay his passage. At last the time came for him to start. When he said goodby his father took the "pretty stone" from the shelf and put it in John's hand.

"Here's a keepsake for you, John; something to remember the old home by. Maybe it will bring you luck in the new country across the water."

John thanked his father and said, "Sure enough; maybe it will be my lucky stone." And he put it in his pocket.

The voyage by steamer from Trieste to New York was long and tiresome. John got tired carrying the stone in his pocket and chucked it into his big canvas bag, with the rest of his things.

One day he was rummaging through his bag and came across the stone. He showed it to some of his fellow-emigrants. While they were looking at the stone and he was telling them its story, a party of first cabin passengers came along on a slumming-trip through the steerage. One of the sightseers offered him \$5 for it. John was tempted, but finally decided to keep it, because his father had given it to him.

At Ellis Island the customs inspectors went through his scanty belongings. The lucky stone was right there in plain sight with the rest of his things. But the inspectors never gave the stone a second glance.

This was in 1900. John worked in various places. His first job was in Scranton, Pa., where he married. Then he worked in Cleveland, Ohio. Six years ago he came to Omaha. And now he is a citizen of the United States.

In the meantime the Mihok family in the United States was growing. It grew faster than John's earnings did.

It grew almost as fast as the H. C. L. It wasn't always easy for John and his wife to make both ends meet.

One night John was reading a newspaper and came upon a story of a man picking up a ruby beside a stream. Naturally the story interested him. And naturally it set this poor man with a wife and five children to thinking about his own lucky stone. Finally he had what a native son would call a hunch. The hunch said:

"Maybe your lucky stone is a ruby too. Take it to a jeweler and find out what it is, anyway!"

And John took the hunch. He hunted up his lucky stone and went to the jewelry shop of Joseph P. Frenzer in South Fifteenth street. He handed over the stone to Mr. Frenzer and said:

"Here's a 'lucky stone' I've had for years. Can you tell me what it is and if it's worth anything?"

Mr. Frenzer smiled and took the stone. But it wasn't one of those smiles that won't come off. It vanished in short order. For the jeweler, after a few simple tests, could give a shrewd guess at what John's lucky stone really was. He said to John:

"It's a ruby. And it's a big one. I guess it's a good one. But you'll have

Home of John Mihok

to have it cut to find out what it's worth. What you want to do is to take it to Chicago to a lapidary and have it cut."

John thanked the jeweler and walked out of the shop in a daze. And the more he thought about things the more dazed he got. "Take it to Chicago and have it cut!" The jeweler might as well have told him to take it to the man in the moon.

But John had not been here sixteen years without assimilating a fair amount of Yankee shrewdness, and after much hard thinking he went to Rev. Father William F. Rigge of Creighton university. Father Rigge is something of a scientist himself and quickly saw that the stone was in all probability a ruby of great value. He also realized that John was in a good deal of the plight of a hungry hobo with nothing but a thousand-dollar bill.

So Father Rigge called in Edmund McCarthy, a lawyer. They told him the whole case up to date. John offered McCarthy one-fourth of what the stone might bring if he would take charge of the whole affair and manage the cutting, polishing and marketing.

Mr. McCarthy accepted the offer.

Lawyer and client were soon on their way to Chicago.

"We did not sleep a wink that night on the train, I can tell you," said Mr. McCarthy. "We both kept guard. I won't tell you where we had the ruby, but it was in a mighty safe place."

"Arriving in Chicago we asked for

the name of a precious stone expert

and in due time came to the establishment of Gustof Gillman, lapidary, 1134 Webster avenue.

"Our hearts were in our mouths when we handed the stone to him. What if the Omaha jeweler and scientist had made a mistake? What if the 'lucky stone' was nothing but a 'pretty stone'?"

"The expression on Mr. Gillmann's face was not encouraging. He smiled a little as Mr. Mihok undid the package in which reposed the stone. Mr. Gillmann took the stone in his hand and immediately the cynical smile disappeared. His eyes seemed to bulge and his mouth opened.

"He gave an exclamation, then

rushed with the stone to his workroom and put it through various tests, talking all the while in most excited fashion.

"And then he told us that we had a wonderful ruby. He could not tell how pure it was before cutting it, but he said it was probably one of the finest gems in the world of its kind."

Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Mihok took turns remaining with Mr. Gillman during the process of cutting and polishing and when the work was completed the lapidary turned it over to them saying:

"There's your 'great Mihok'—and it's all I told you it would be—and more!"

The two men took the "Great Mihok" back to Omaha with them. Then sat up all night again and hardly dared mention the precious thing even in whispers.

In Omaha they went directly to the safety deposit vaults of the United States National bank; rented a box and saw that the lucky stone that had been kicked around for sixteen years was securely locked up, with the key in their possession.

Then John Mihok went home and told the good news to his wife.

"She wouldn't believe me at first

when I told her we would not have to

John Mihok

work any more and that we could move in a nicer house where we would have electric lights," he said, "but now she believes me and we will have comfort in life."

"We will buy a new home. I know a nice one, just what we want, for \$4,000. And we are going to buy a little automobile. The rest of the money we will put in Liberty bonds, I think. There it is safe."

"We are no fools. We don't spend it all and we don't try to get rich quick. We put it away for our old age and for our children's education. The oldest boy, who left school last year, will go back again and maybe we make a doctor of him. All the children get now a good education. My dead father was the giver of all my good luck. We are thankful, indeed, and very happy."

And how much is the "Great Mihok" worth?

Well, here is what Mr. Gillmann says of John Mihok's "lucky stone": "The 'Great Mihok' is a genuine pigeon blood ruby; its color is a deep carmine red; it is flawless; its specific gravity is 4.05; its weight is 23.9 carats; it is the largest ruby I ever saw or ever heard of; I believe there is one in India that weighs about 17 carats; large rubles are scarce and valuable; one of ten carats is about ten times as valuable as a diamond of the same weight; Altogether, I should say the 'Great Mihok' is worth about \$200,000."

REMINDERS OF EARLY DAYS

New York Historical Society Has Unearthed Cave and Fireplace That Were Used by the Indians.

In and around the city of New York there is going on a modest kind of archaeological research that few Americans have heard of, but that adds now and then tangible evidence of what went on there when the Indians had their dwellings and paid no rent at all in this now expensive part of the world.

The work, one learns from an article in the New York Times Magazine, has been going on only a year, but the field committee of the New York Historical society has discovered a cave and fireplace used by the aborigines and dating back, in all probability, to a time before Columbus thought of sailing west from Europe. A committee of three gentlemen, in pursuit of recreation as well as relics, devote their spare time and holidays to the pursuit, being at once directors, explorers and laborers of what one might call the historical society expedition for recovering buried treasure in and around New York. The plan might be carried out in other large cities with pleasure to the explorers and profit to the sum total of historical collections.

His Gratitude.

"Sometimes I wake up in the night and sort of lay and give thanks for the mercies that have been mine during the day that has just closed," admitted Gap Johnson of Rumpus Ridge. "Prob'ly I recollect that me and wife had a few words about something or other, and I'm thankful that when she flung the hot water just barely missed me and scattersingly sprinkled a few of the dogs. And then mebby I think over the way I cussed and yelled at my fourteen children, and am full of gratitude that they didn't gang me and beat me to death. Eh-yah! In this life of ours we can 'most always find plenty of excuses for thankfulness if we'll just—yaw-w-w-n!—look for 'em."—Kansas City Star.

Peanuts in Mesopotamia.

Successful experiments in growing peanuts have been conducted in Mesopotamia by Englishmen.

NOTES OF SPORIDOM

The Illinois High School A. A. includes 418 schools.

Michigan will lose eight of this season's varsity football eleven.

John McGraw says he did not offer \$100,000 cash for Roger Hornsby.

The Indiana University A. A. cleared \$22,500 on football last season.

All the umpires to share equally in a world's series split is the latest suggestion.

Nebraska will meet M. A. C. in football next season in Lincoln, Neb., on November 20.

Branch Rickey has signed a new three-year contract as main works for the St. Louis Cardinals.

The decathlon and the fifty-six-pound weight throw have been dropped from Olympic games.

The Queen's university, Kingston, Ontario, will spend \$70,000 on a new stadium and hockey rink.

St. Louis writers have nicknamed Hornsby "Pep," probably not because of the way he plays baseball.

The Toronto Hockey league includes 100 teams and the players want dressing rooms provided in city rinks.

Bob Zuppke, football coach at the University of Illinois, has signed a five-year contract with that institution.

Jack Kearns, manager of Jack Dempsey, says he will be in no hurry to accept a bid for the Dempsey-Carpenter fight.

Connie Mack, boss of the Athletics, is the oldest manager in the major league. He was fifty-seven years old December 22.

The Chicago bowling tourney drew an entry of 480 five-man teams, 1,193 in doubles and 2,377 in singles. It is a record entry.

The New York Giants and Boston Red Sox will meet in several games on their way home from the spring training camps.

The official navy gold star that goes to men who take part in the annual army-navy football game will be given to 14 players this year.

Clyde Engle, former well known American league ball player, is mentioned as the University of Vermont's most successful athletic coach.

Those baseball moguls should have pulled off that row when there were not so many counter-attractions if they expected to get much attention.

The Purdue football team had a most disastrous season this year, playing three games in the Big Ten conference and losing all of them.

Unless Manager Tris Speaker of the Cleveland Indians is sadly mistaken, Pitcher Roy Caldwell will be the wonder of the American league next season.

Herman Obertubessing has announced his candidacy for president of the Amateur Athletic union at the next annual election of that organization.

Now a war is threatened among the boxers. It is declared that France and England will not accept the American ring champions as international title holders.

The Eastern Intercollegiate Basketball league, composed of Pennsylvania, Cornell, Columbia, Princeton, Yale, and Dartmouth, will play a series of thirty games.

Australia has a freak welterweight in Will Leahy, who stands 6 feet 2 inches and weighs only 150 pounds. He is said to have the remarkable reach of 82 inches.

In booking a football game with Center college next fall, it looks as if Harvard had beaten the big teams to it. Center's gridiron warriors are bound to be a big attraction.

The notion of Jack Kearns, manager for Jack Dempsey, that the Dempsey-Carpenter bout would draw a million dollars is not shared by any of the American fight promoters.

Ping Bodie of the Yankees seems destined for another trip to the minors. Miller Huggins, no reports state, is endeavoring to close for the fence buster to return to a coast league team.

Jimmy Wilde, English flyweight champion, believes he got the worst of the decision in his recent bout with Jack Sharkey at Milwaukee and will most likely seek another contest with the New York bantam.

Two leading professional golf players may visit this country next year, namely, Abe Mitchell, the latest European sensation, and George Duncan, while Harry Vardon, James Braid and J. H. Taylor are possible visitors.

MAN O' WAR IS ONE OF GREATEST HORSES EVER DEVELOPED IN THE UNITED STATES



Man o' War, Winner of Rich Futurity at Belmont Park, With Jockey Lofthus Up.

The development of a number of brilliant racers, among them Man o' War, which promises to rank with the great horses of all time, a season of racing that goes down in history as one of the most successful in American turf annals, and the establishment of a new peak in the "value" of the sport, were high spots for 1919 in the racing game.

Racing in the sections of the country in which it is permitted, rose to a plane of popular favor. This was evidenced by the fact that new attendance records were created at nearly all the eastern tracks.

High Mark for Purse.

The new high mark for a purse was set at Latonia on Oct. 11, when the Latonia championship was run, the value being \$50,000. This race was designed to decide the 3-year-old championship, but unfortunately many of the stars of that age did not start. The race was won by Sam Hildreth's Mad Hatter. The winner took down slightly more than \$44,000.

The stellar feature of the year was the wonderful racing of Man o' War, owned by the Glen Riddle farm. The

feet son of Fair Play and Mahabah was the undisputed champion of the year, although this 2-year-old colt was not the greatest money earner. That honor went to Commander J. K. L. Ross' Sir Barton, which was the winner of the classic Kentucky Derby at Louisville.

Sir Barton High Earner.

Sir Barton earned \$88,250, while Man o' War was second with \$83,325. But it was Man o' War's racing, not his winnings, that made him the greatest racer of 1919. Man o' War went to the post ten times during the season and finished in front nine times. He was apparently racing better at the end of the season than at any time. His most notable win was the rich Futurity at Belmont Park. His only defeat was encountered at Saratoga in the Sanford Memorial stakes, when he was left at the post, only to make up much lost ground and finish second to Upset.

Just which horse is entitled to the honor of being termed the best 3-year-old of the year is a question that is certain to start a dispute. Sir Barton and Purchase have their followers, and both performed brilliantly.

FAR EAST ATHLETES TO ENTER OLYMPICS

Big Sporting Boom Now On in Various Oriental Countries.

Interest in American Games in China Has Caused Demand for Native Amateur Athletic Association

—Skating Popular.

Athletes from China, Japan, the Philippines and other far Eastern countries may be contenders for honors at the seventh Olympiad, to be held at Antwerp next August, and for a certainty will be formidable contenders at succeeding Olympiads, so keen has become the interest fostered by the Y. M. C. A. in these countries.

In China, particularly, the interest in American athletics has caused a demand to come from all parts of this great new republic for a native national amateur athletic association.

R. A. Leake, physical director for the "Y" at Foochow, China, reports that "the need for this has grown during the last few years, owing to interest in international athletics and China's participation in the far Eastern Olympics, held at Manila. On the occasion of the assembling of the Chinese team of more than one hundred picked men at Manila, it was decided to make a start toward organizing a federation.

A committee was appointed to draft and present such a constitution and by-laws. This has been done, and it has been distributed for correction and criticism. The completion of the organization certainly will be effected during the coming year.