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Saturday Evening Post

**“If At First You Don’t Succeed – Quit” – Manuscript,
November 28, 1964**

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¹⁶ "If at First you don't Succeed..."¹⁷

Saturday Evening Post Article

Nov. 28, 1964

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²¹
~~19~~ pages of first draft mss

Final typescript with author's changes (6 pages)

Illustration: Black and white wash.

Copy of article.

~~Notes~~

The Case Against King Bruce

Once upon a time ^{the year} (about 1314) ...
 a Scot ^{named} ~~by the name of~~ King Bruce
 became ^{sort of} a psychotic. ~~Because he was~~
~~unable to~~ After a long series of
 failures ~~trying to~~ ⁱⁿ leading his troops
 against the English, his morale
 was undermined and he went into
 a deep depression.

~~Instead of~~ ^{unable to} consulting his
 neighborhood psychiatrist (who
 had not yet set up ~~his~~ ~~his~~
 a couch in the vicinity) poor King
 Bruce consulted a spider.

(2)

~~After three hundred~~ ^{and fifty} ~~thousand~~
After three hundred, thousand
attempts. he ~~did it~~ ^{finally}
~~did it~~ ^{finally} ~~built a perfect web~~
~~finally built a perfect web~~

Then he looked at King Bruce
and he winked and he said;

"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED,
TRY, TRY AGAIN!"

~~Whereupon Bruce was~~ ^{got}
~~so excited~~

Whereupon King Bruce of
Scotland ~~got~~ said to the
Spider, "you sure know
how to put a message over!"

And King Bruce, thus inspired,
~~dropped~~ ^{like an eagle} ~~like a~~
rose out of his ~~despondency~~
despondency! ~~He conquered his~~
~~psychosis~~ ~~valley~~

He conquered his ~~psychosis~~ ^{psychosis},
~~He led his army~~

~~And he conquered the~~
~~and destroyed the British army~~
~~and~~ ^{drove} ~~the~~ English out
of Scotland.

XXXX

1a.

Bruce's and the Spider's
And the result of their session together on ~~the~~
an ancient danish scottish hilside , subsequently wrecked the lives of
millions of americans.

~~What happened there~~
Any school boy can tell you what happened there that day.
Bruce threw himself prostrate in the ~~morning~~ heather, and began to
bemoan his fate. ~~He was~~ dripping

"What a flop I am, Mon!" he ~~was~~ kept repeating. Until ,
suddenly, he noticed ~~that the spider was having a rather~~
that This spider was having a rather
tough row to hoe himself.

The spider he was using
~~He~~ was trying to spin a web, ~~was~~ Evidently /using inferior
materials, because ~~manum~~ the stuff kept breaking. And King Bruce saw
the
~~When~~ spider take pratfall after pratfall.

got
Despite himself King Bruce ~~became~~ more and more fascinated.
That plucky spider just didn't give ~~a~~ up. Every time he fell,
little

~~he~~ he simply dusted himself ~~up~~ off, gritted his teeth,
girded his loins and went back and ~~took~~ took another crack at
building that web.

D

There was a fellow, King Bruce.
He'd been losing war after war.
He was frightfully discouraged.

~~And then~~
So ~~And~~ he threw himself down
in the ~~damp dewy~~
among the rocks and the wet
and the bracken heather of
Scotland, and he sobbed his
heart out, and he wailed, "I'm
~~I'm~~ failure."

And any school boy knows what
happened to King Bruce.

He saw that spider, ~~in front~~
~~of his nose~~, in the heather
in front of his nose.

Spider trying to build a web,
and having failures.

~~Spider~~
Spider falling on his
behind ^{countless} time after time.

Did that spider give up?

No, ^{he} did not.

He finally built that
web. And he is so inspired

The Case Against King Bruce

by Dr. Seuss

....

approximately,

Once upon a time...about the year 1314... a Scottish king named Bruce became sort of psychotic. After a long series of failures in leading his troops against the English, his morale was all shot and he went into deep depression.

~~Unable to contact his neighborhood psychiatrist, (No one had~~
~~not yet set up a couch in the vicinity), poor King Bruce consulted~~
~~a spider.~~ No psychiatrist had yet set up a couch in
~~the vicinity.~~ So to get any help at all, ~~the king~~
~~went to a spider.~~ consulted with a spider.
 And the result of Bruce's experience with that spider on an
 ancient, dampish Scottish hillside, ~~King~~ ~~has~~ wrecked the lives of millions of
 Americans today.

Any ~~schoolboy~~ schoolboy can tell you what happened ~~back~~ ^{that day} in Scotland.
 Bruce flung himself down prostrate in the dripping heather. He began
 to bemoan his fate.

"What an awful flop I am, mon!" he repeated over and over.

The spider paid him no attention.

~~The king finally had to pay attention~~
 Finally Bruce began paying attention to the spider. He noticed that
 the spider was having problems of his own. He was trying to spin a web.

Evidently he was using inferior materials, because the stuff
 kept breaking. And the spider kept taking prattfall after prattfall.

King Bruce, despite himself, got more and more fascinated.
 That plucky little spider refused to give up. Every time he flopped,
~~he merely dusted himself off.~~ ^{brushed off his pants} Then he gritted his teeth, girded
 his loins and went back to take another crack at building ~~the~~ ^{his} web.

② Old King Bruce to such
an extent that he left
~~just~~ ~~jumped~~ up in that
heaven and ~~the~~ yelled,
~~He~~ "If at first you
don't succeed, try, try again."
whereupon he chased all
his enemies out of
Scotland. ~~And the~~

And the legend has
ruined more lives than any
legend I've ever heard of.

Especially ~~being for~~

~~to the~~
~~fact that a~~
~~Spider~~

Especially ~~as~~ the

lives of thousands of kids ~~at the~~

in the country ~~who~~

want to be artists and writers

~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~fact that a~~ ~~Spider~~ (Rere's

at least ~~in every family~~) and

(Rere's at least in every family).

who keep pursuing me

TRY +ry again.
In my opinion, King Bruce to the contrary notwithstanding, spider watching doesn't always prove this happy moral.

I know, because once when I was terribly discouraged, I, too, watched a spider. But this particular spider wasn't trying to spin a web. ~~Heckman trying to spin~~ This fool ^{spider} was trying to make a lemon merengue pie.

After ~~thirty five attempts~~ thirty five heart rending attempts, he ^{got} ~~was~~ nowhere at all and his kitchen was a mess.

It was from him that I learned a ~~very un-american~~ ^{shocking} lesson: There are some things that some animals ~~just can't~~ ^{very un-Bruce} accomplish.

So, instead of ~~batting my brains~~ ^{trying - trying again in} out on a job that was impossible, ~~very wrong for me~~, I ~~quickly~~ quickly changed my occupation and advised the spider to do the same.

Today at least one member of every family I know has made a botch ~~of his~~ of his life because of that incident.

King Bruce's victory to the contrary notwithstanding, ~~our~~ our great American creed of Stick-to-it-iveness can be a mighty dangerous thing. ~~And~~ *P*

~~Spider watching is dangerous.~~ ~~In~~ ~~this~~ ~~very~~ ~~personal~~ ~~experience.~~ I know ~~it~~ ~~from~~ ~~personal~~ ~~experience.~~ ~~Once~~ ~~when~~ ~~I~~ ~~was~~ ~~terribly~~ ~~discouraged~~ ~~I,~~ ~~too,~~ ~~watched~~ ~~a~~ ~~spider~~ ~~for~~ ~~inspiration.~~

But this particular spider wasn't trying to spin a web. This fool spider was trying to make a lemon meringue pie.

After twenty two million heart-rending attempts, he got nowhere at ~~all~~ all and his kitchen was a mess.

~~From~~ ~~this~~ ~~spider~~ ~~that~~ ~~I~~ ~~learned~~ ~~a~~ ~~lesson~~ ~~quite~~ ~~different~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~one~~ ~~King~~ ~~Bruce~~ ~~learned.~~ ~~This~~ ~~spider~~ ~~looked~~ ~~at~~ ~~me,~~ ~~and~~ ~~shrugged~~ ~~his~~ ~~shoulders,~~ ~~and~~ ~~announced:~~

"THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT SOME ANIMALS JUST NEVER CAN ACCOMPLISH."

3)

XAK

~~As I indicated up above,~~

To go beyond the ^{inspiration}
I made before, ~~I~~ ^{I would} like to
go 2 great deal further
~~go 2 little bit further~~
~~2 2nd 1st 2nd 1st~~

The ~~the~~ Old King Bruce Story
has ~~become~~ ~~part~~ ~~of~~
"If at first you don't
succeed" try, try again -- has

become 2 ~~danger~~ very
dangerous ^{frightful} ~~be~~ part of the
Rover-Boys - Tom-Smith myth

Namely: ~~Everyone~~

~~Namely: Everyone can do
everything~~

~~Namely: If he works at it
enough, everybody can do everything~~

Namely: If you work
at anything long enough,

the spider is on your side
and you're going to win

I HAD an aunt who tried for ~~thirty~~ thirty two years to become a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She wore out a thousand gross of pencils filling out application blanks. And the D.A.R. rejected ~~every~~ ^{lead} ~~every~~ every one, because my aunt was born in Kleinschwartzenbach, Germany, and was only eligible as a member ~~of~~ of the Daughters of the ~~Kleinschwartzenbach~~ Kleinschwartzenbach Revolution.

Just think of what king Bruce did ~~him~~ to her life.

I had ~~another~~ a great uncle who tried for almost a quarter of a century, day in day out, to

3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ~~feet~~ feet tall
keeps trying out
for Basketball

My step-sisters step-son was another such case. He's been trying interminably

The American success myth, that anyone can do anything

Stick-to-it-iveness

There are some things that some people just can't do.

The
PRIDE
OF
KEEPING
IT

Some one should give a college course
called How to know when to quit and two
It might make Tom Swift and the Rover Boys
roll over in their graves.

There are ^{many} so many knockwurst salesmen, who will never ^{in this generation} succeed in selling ^{any} ~~one ounce of~~ knockwurst, no matter how many door bells they ~~may~~ ring. And no matter how many spiders they watch. every weekend.

~~And that is the reason they keep on trying.~~

Instead of watching spiders... cameleons. (change)

Many is the unsuccessful knockwurst salesman who could be ^{himself} ~~none of the things~~ turn/into a ~~first-rate~~ top flight manufacturer of ballet shoe polish or a phenominally outstanding keyhole inspector.

Garrets are full of artists ^{and writers} who are trying and trying again, when they ~~may~~ and many of these would be happier if they were out ~~selling that knockwurst~~ knocking on doors and selling that knockwurst.

The stick-to-it-iveness ^{and you can do it} is especially ~~true~~ ^{defenceless} sed in the field of the field of Writing and art.

In Every family, some poor child is told that he has "talent"

4)

by professors of English
who ~~have~~ tried ~~for~~ ~~40~~ ~~years~~ ~~to~~ ~~write~~ ~~the~~ ~~great~~
~~American Novel~~ years ago to
write the Great American Novel
and gave up because it sort of
~~And they are~~
turned out to be hard work.

And today they're telling
students as inept as
they are, to try, try again

(X)

heard of King Bruce
~~and~~ and his ~~miserable~~ spider?
~~reprehensible~~ spider who
build the bridge he was able to build?

There are just some things
that ~~no animals~~ certain
animals can do.

And I think it's time
we faced this fact.

I think it's time ~~our~~
~~university~~ great universities
Some of our colleges, ~~with~~
which which ~~credit~~
credits toward a ~~degree~~
Bachelor's Degree by urging ~~at~~
innocent adolescents on into
into believing that this work
is a lot of easy fudge,
~~should also give courses~~
~~in the like:~~ if you
Keep on trying to make it

There are colleges and universities
so called, ~~with~~ staffed

Colleges might do a great service
to their students if they'd supplement
their courses in How to succeed
with a seminar entitled How to
Know when to Quit.

~~The wisdom is when you learn that~~
~~the ladder you're climbing~~

~~Chimney up to~~

There are many ladders to
success. ~~But~~ Guts to
climb down sometimes,
and ~~find~~ start up another.

As a result of this conference, ~~immediately~~ I ~~immediately~~ quit my job (which by coincidence

As a result of this advice I quit my job (which by odd coincidence was also making lemon ~~meringue~~ meringue pies, a profession for which I had no talents whatever.).

This ~~was~~ ^{was} the first time I had ever become a ~~quitter~~ quitter. And I ^{quickly} learned that this nation despises ^{any} a quitter. People ~~never~~ looked the other way when I passed them on the street. I could ~~hear~~ ^{hear} them whispering, "There goes that quitter." He failed to see things through. ~~He~~ ^{He} Didn't keep his nose to the grindstone. He let ~~his~~ his associates at the ~~factory~~ Charlie Henderson's Lemon Meringue Factory down."

~~Quitting is un-American.~~

Quitting is un-American. It is not in ~~our~~ the ~~strong~~ Tom Swift-Rover Boys Tradition ~~which~~ which is kept burning brightly in ^{in American} our schools and ~~family~~ family circles.

Thus, all over this nation we have garretts full of ~~artists~~ ^{struggling} artists who ~~would be happier selling~~ ^{very much} would be happier selling knockwurst. But their teachers inspired them never to say die.

Conversely, we have many many knockwurst salesmen who will never succeed in selling one ounce of ~~knockwurst~~ knockwurst, no matter how many door bells they may ring.

Our slogan is "Keep at it lad. Never say die! "

~~Consequently, many men in this country~~

That's why this country is full of unhappy knockwurst salesmen.

Many is the ~~unsuccessful~~ unhappy knockwurst salesman who will never ~~again~~ succeed in selling one ounce of knockwurst no matter how many door bells he may ring.

But he dare not quit his job because of King Bruce's spider.

He's got to show the folks that he has what it takes, ~~and in this time~~ good old ~~American~~ stick-to-itiveness.

Most of these miserable knockwurst salesmen could easily turn themselves into top flight manufacturers of ballet shoe polish or ~~become~~ phenomenally successful keyhole inspectors. But that spider wont let them.

The same sad thing was true about my poor ~~Aunt~~ Aunt Gretchen. Once she started on a project she never gave up. She spent twenty two years trying and trying again to become a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. ~~It~~ She wore out a thousand gross of expensive ~~and~~ pencils filling out one application blank after another.

them,
The D.A.R. rejected every one, because my aunt was born in Kleinschwartzzenbach, Bavaria, and the only group of daughters ~~who~~ for which she was eligible was the Daughters of the Kleinschwartzzenbach ~~Revolution~~ Revolution. Just think of ~~what~~ what that spider did to her life!

~~His~~ Her son, incidentally, was another tragic case, But ~~unfortunately~~ I won't do into that one. There are plenty of tragic cases you can find in your own family.

5

2/22/61

2/22/61

And, ~~above~~ above all, ~~above~~ stay away from spiders.

And I think you all ought to call all your families together and tell that that Stick-to-itiveness ~~from here on in is out~~ from here on in is out and that anyone who wants to be a quitter ~~in the future~~ in the future has your blessing.

After that, take ^{your} ~~the~~ family down cellar and shoot spiders.

2.

After three hundred and fifty thousand attempts, his stick-to-
~~the-iviness~~ it-iveness paid off. He produced a perfect web!
Then he looked at King Bruce and he winked and he said:

"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY, TRY AGAIN."

Whereupon King Bruce said to the spider, "Mon, you sure know how
to put a message over."

Completely cured of his psychosis, the king lept to his feet,
~~marshmarchmarchmarch~~ waved his battle ax and chased the English army all the
way back to London.

* * *

Today at least one member of every family I know has made
a botch of his life because of that incident. *We've taken the gag line of
a Caledonian spider and turned it into an American Gospel.*

King Bruce's victory to the contrary notwithstanding, our
American Creed of Stick-to-it-iveness is a mighty dangerous thing. I know
~~while the spider was watching~~ this from personal experience. Once when I was
terribly discouraged I, too, watched a spider for inspiration.

~~The spider went on further to say,~~

It depends on who you
are ~~at~~ in it depends on
what you're sticking to
=

Don't stick to your knitting
unless you have ~~the necessary~~
~~the~~ the necessary quorum
of fingers and thumbs.

College quitting

Ladder of success

give it
your 1st ounce

L2st minute touch down

~~In our family circles~~

Quitting is Un-American. It's not in the tom-Swift-Rover Boys tradition which we built up out of that silly spider yarn. Our tradition is ^{Always} "Keep at it, lad. Never say die.!!".

~~In our family circles~~

"When your team is trailing by thirteen touchdowns ~~and~~ and there are only ^{two} ~~thirteen~~ seconds left to play, ^{never} ~~never~~ for one instant, lad, ~~is only one~~ believe that you are beaten. You ~~may~~ You may fracture your thorax doing it, but you can win that game!"

~~In~~ We keep this tradition burning brightly in family circles throughout our land. ~~Which is why so many thoraxes get needlessly fractured.~~

A2 + vents why so many young thoraxes get fractures

No water vent the orders

perseverance.

2nd re landed thorax

Hopelessly ~~incompetent~~ struggling. even
... ~~Hopelessly~~ bad printers who shouldn't ^{even} be trying
~~printing. Unhappy & unsuccessful~~
impossibly bad ~~writers~~ ^{poets} who ~~shouldn't~~
~~be trying~~ should quit and take
up phrenology... hopelessly bad
phrenologists who should quit and
take up poetry.

make a quick survey, and after
you've made it, I have the following
suggestions.

The Case Against King Bruce
by Dr. Seuss

Final
Typescript

....

Once upon a time...(approximately in the year of 1314)...
a Scottish ~~king~~ king named Bruce became sort of psychotic. After a
long series of failures in leading his troops against the English, his
morale was all shot and he went into deep depression.

The king was unable to consult ~~with~~ ^(with) a psychiatrist because no
psychiatrist, as yet, had set up a ~~man~~ couch in that vicinity.
So King Bruce of Scotland consulted with a spider.

And what happened that day on an ancient dampish Scottish
hillside eventually wrecked the lives of millions of modern Americans.

~~As any schoolboy can tell you,~~ here is what transpired:
The dejected king threw himself down prostrate in the dripping heather
before the ~~man~~ spider. He began to bemoan his fate.

"What an awful flop I am, mon!" he said over and over again.

The ~~p~~ spider paid him no attention.

Finally the king took a long look at the spider and he noticed
that the spider was having problems of his own. He ~~was~~ trying to build
a web.

Evidently he was using inferior materials because the
stuff kept breaking. And the spider kept taking prattfall after prattfall.

King Bruce, despite himself, got more and more fascinated.
That plucky little spider refused to give up. Every time he fell,
he merely brushed off his pants, gratted his teeth, girded his
loins and went back to take another crack at building his web.

After three hundred and fifty thousand attempts, his stick-to-it-iveness paid off. He produced a perfect web! Then he looked at King Bruce and he said:

"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY, TRY AGAIN."

Whereupon King Bruce said to the spider, "Mon, you sure know how to put a message over."

Completely cured of his psychosis, the king lept to his feet, waved his battle ax and chased the English army all the way back to London.

Scottish

Somehow or other, that/spider's gag line has come down through the centuries and crossed the Atlantic ocean. ^{In our country,} We've taken this ~~from the~~ Caledonian Spider Talk and ^{built} ~~added~~ it into ^{the} Great American Gospel: "All you have to do to succeed is keep ^{on} trying." And today, at least one member of every ~~man's~~ family I know has made a botch of his life because ~~of talking spider~~ ~~as shoddy wise crack~~ of a spider's shoddy wise crack.

King Bruce's victory to the contrary notwithstanding, the ~~Almighty~~ Creed of Stick-to-it-iveness is a mighty ~~misleading~~ ^{misleading} dangerous and misleading philosophy. I know this from personal experience. Once when I was terribly discouraged I, too, watched a spider for inspiration.

But this particular spider wasn't trying to spin a web. This fool spider was trying to make a lemon meringue pie.

R He tried 2nd he tried, ~~and~~ He tried 2nd he tried.

R After thirty three million heart-rending attempts, he got nowhere at all and ~~in~~ his kitchen was a mess. ~~this~~

From this spider I learned a lesson ^{that proves that old King Bruce's} ~~entirely different from~~ ~~spider was talking through his hat.~~ ~~King Bruce's~~ ~~my~~ spider looked at me through haggard eyes. Then he shrugged his weary shoulders and ~~he~~ said:

~~There are some things~~

"THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT SOME ANIMALS JUST NEVER CAN ACCOMPLISH."

MINNEAPOLIS

Insert 3x

Quitting is un-American. It's not in the Tom Swift-Rover Boy tradition which we have built up out of the mouthings of the mouthings of a spider.

In our family circles we have impressed upon them through the years that "Perseverance will conquer anything, no matter what the odds!"

"Always keep at it, lad. Never say die! When your team is trailing by thirteen touchdowns and there is only one half a second left to play, for goodness sake don't ever get the silly notion ~~idea~~ that you've been beaten. You may fracture your thorax doing it, but you can win that game!"

We keep this belief burning brightly in the ~~souls~~ souls of our children. And that's why so many American thoraxes get fractured.

As a result of this advice, I quit my job (which, by odd coincidence was also making lemon meringue pies, a profession for which I had no talents whatever).

This is the first time I had ever become a Quitter. And I quickly learned that this nation despises any Quitter. People looked the other way when I passed them on the street. I could hear them whispering, "He failed to see things through. Didn't keep his nose to the grindstone. He let his associates at ~~Charles Henderson's~~ ^{Pie} the Lemon Meringue ~~Factory~~ Factory down."

~~Quitting is un-American. It is not in the Tom Swift-Rover Boys tradition which grew up out of that spider yarn and is kept burning brightly in American family circles.~~

~~Our tradition is, "Keep at it, lad. Never say die."~~

That's ^{also} why this country is full of so many unhappy knockwurst salesmen. Many is the ~~unhappy~~ ^{inept} knockwurst salesman who will never succeed in selling one ounce of knockwurst no matter how many door bells he may ring.

But he dares not quit his job because of King Bruce's spider. He's got to show the folks that he has what it takes...good old gutsy stick-to-it-iveness.

Most of these miserable knockwurst salesmen could easily turn themselves into top flight manufacturers of ballet shoe polish or even become phenomonally outstanding keyhole inspectors. But that long deceased spider with a Scottish burr makes it impossible for them to say, ~~William~~ "I've had it."

The same sad thing was true about my poor Aunt Gretchen. Once she started on any project, she never gave up. She spent twenty two years trying and trying again to become a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She wore out a thousand gross of expensive pencils filling out one application blank after another.

The D.A.R. rejected them, every one, because my aunt was born in Kleinschwartzzenbach, Bavaria, and the only group of daughters for which she was eligible was the Daughters of the Kleinschwartzzenbach Bavaria Revolution. Just think of what that spider did to her life!

Her son, incidentally, was another tragic case. But I won't go into that one. There are plenty of tragic cases you can find in ~~mm~~ your own family.

Once you start looking, you'll be apalled by the number of horrible instances you discover. After you've made your survey, I have the following suggestion:

Let's ^{all} get all ~~our~~ our families all together and tell them ~~that from now on we are all stick-to-it-iveness~~ that Stick-to-it-iveness from here on in is out and that anyone who wants to be a Quitter in the future has our Blessing.

After that, let's all go down cellar and shoot spiders.

Once you start looking, you'll be appalled by the number of horrible instances you discover....hopelessly struggling painters who shouldn't ~~be~~ even ^{be} trying.....impossibly untalented poets who should quit and take up phrenology.....hopelessly bad phrenologists who should quit ~~and take up poetry.~~ and become poets.

Make a quick survey, and after you've made it, I have the following suggestion to offer:

Let's all get all of our families all together and tell them that Stick-to-it-iveness from here on in is out. Let's imbue them with the ~~new~~ new American Credo that a Quitter, sometimes, is a ~~mighty bright guy.~~ very brilliant guy.

After that, let's all ~~in~~ go down cellar and shoot spiders.