

BETZVILLE TALES

Col. Randolph Phipps and the Ostrich

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ILLUSTRATED BY PETER NEWELL

Last September, when the rainy season began in Betzville, the World-Renowned Hoggin's Three Ring Shows struck town, and they were already in pretty bad shape, the sheriffs along the line having reduced them to about one ring and a sixteenth, and when they came to pay the bill of the Betzville News for advertising, things looked black. So Orley Gibbs, the editor got out an attachment and leveled on the show, but it was worse than he had thought it would be, and he had to take the ostrich. It was either that or the hyena, and the ostrich seemed more in an editor's line than a hyena. An ostrich often lurches on old scrap iron, and an editor often comes mighty near having to do the same thing in Betzville.

But when Orley had the ostrich he was bothered. A bird that eats scrap iron looks at first glance like an economical bird, but scrap iron commands a regular market price in Betzville, and the only scrap iron Orley had was his printing press. And that press was such a disreputable lot of old junk that even the ostrich would not eat it. So Orley fed it lightly on printing type, beginning with the x's, for he used them less than the o's or f's, but he saw he would have to get rid of the bird soon or leave out his

down for a couple of kegs of nails and the ostrich gobbled them down, and looked around for more. So the Colonel sent down to the store for more nails, and he kept feeding nails to the ostrich until the hardware man said that he had reached his credit limit. By that time the ostrich was well filled with nails. He contained eight-pennies, and ten-pennies, and some screws, and five pounds of spikes, and a keg of shingle nails, and the colonel began to be afraid the ostrich was over-eating, but the ostrich did not think so. Between meals it walked up and down the sidewalk before the colonel's house and ate the nails out of the sidewalk. Whenever it saw the hardware wagon approaching it would gallop gayly down the street to meet it, uttering little squawks of joy.

But last Thursday when the hardware delivery wagon approached the colonel's residence the ostrich made a sad mistake. It had dashed out into the road as usual and poked its head into the wagon while the delivery boy was unloading the nails, and it saw a likely looking tid-bit and swallowed it. It happened to be a box of fifty 44 calibre cartridges intended for Sim Perkins, and the delivery boy missed them and reached for the railroad spike he always kept on the



Just at the Corner of Main and Cross Streets the Bird Began to Shoot.

local column entirely. So instead of saving the bird ruin the News Orley thought of a way to have it boost it.

There was a grand rush in Betzville when it became known that Orley was offering the ostrich as a prize to the person turning in the most new subscriptions to the News, and Uncle Cloutz secured one subscriber, and Orne McDooble nearly secured one, but that one got away. When the contest ended it was found that it stood:

Uncle	1
Cousin Orne	0
Other distinguished citizens	0
Wives of same	0
Others	0
Colonel Randolph Phipps	2

It was learned later that Col. Phipps hired his two subscribers to subscribe, but this was unknown at the time, and only goes to show how unscrupulous he was. He said later that if necessary he would have gone so far as to hire another subscriber, he wanted the ostrich so badly. Col. Phipps was a leading raiser of Shanghai chickens in our county, and he figured that if he took that long legged ostrich and tied it near his coop it would act as a stirring incentive to his Shanghai hens, and fill them with a desire to emulate the ostrich in long leggedness. He said that he thought that if he could produce a Shanghai fowl, with body of the ordinary size and legs as long as an ostrich's legs he would be rid, once and for all, of the trouble of rats eating the new-laid eggs, for he could build nests in the trees, and his hens could easily stand on the ground and lay eggs in the nests.

wagon sent to tap the ostrich on the head when it became too friendly, but the spike was gone! The delivery boy immediately called for the colonel and demanded the cartridges and the big spike, but the colonel was bothered about something else just then, for the ostrich had the hic coughs. Probably it had over eaten.

The colonel did not care whether it had over-eaten or not. What he cared about was that there was a box of 44s inside that bird, and a sharp pointed spike must be jerking the sharp point of the spike around among those cartridges, like the hammer of a pistol, and that the affectionate bird was aimed directly at him. Any minute one of those 44s might go off and kill the colonel, and the colonel knew it. He was far from happy in the affection of that ostrich, but the bird loved him and longed to show it. Colonel Phipps went down the road at full run, and the ostrich followed closely at a hic-coughy trot. Just at the corner of Main and Cross street the bird began to shoot. For an instant it exhibited a wild surprise, but the moment after it had no time to exhibit anything. It was exploding 44s with the rapidity of a gatling gun. Of course there were only fifty cartridges in the box, so the ostrich did not shoot long, but it shot well. For a careless, unarmed ostrich, firing wild, it was beyond reproach. It shot the colonel eight times out of a possible fifty, and with its last, expiring throb it sent a bullet right into the saw-dust filled imitation ham in the butcher-shop window, and to-morrow at one p. m. the ham and the colonel will be buried.

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But the first thing he had to do was to fatten the ostrich, for it was pretty thin. Probably there never was such a thin ostrich. It was so thin that the roots of the feathers on its left side rubbed against the roots of the feathers on its right side, and you had to look at it side-view to see it at all. So Col. Phipps sent

HE KNEW HIS FACTS

"John," she said, "I will be a sister to you, but—"

"So it's a throwdown, eh?" asked the young man with the rosebud in his buttonhole.

"Yes," she admitted, frowning. "If you want to talk about it that way, I suppose it is."

"All right," he said, "don't get warm. Wait a bit."

He arose to his feet and consulted a slip of paper which he took from his pocket. Immediately thereafter he threw his shoulders back, shot his cuffs and made a comprehensive gesture.

"Madam," said he, "are you aware that according to the last government census there was, in the state of New York, an excess of 65,000 females? Do you know that if every single male was married to-morrow there would be 65,000 females left over? Were you aware of this?"

She tapped her little foot upon the carpet, but answered him not.

"And you, madam!" he cried, wiggling his index finger at her, "What guarantee have you that you would not be one of the 65,000?"

She sniffed the air, but that was all.

"Madam!" he continued, "Are you aware that when a woman has reached the age of 25 her chances of matrimony grow less and less each year until they disappear altogether? Did you know this?"

He pointed his finger at her again.

"And you, madam!" he cried, "What ground have you for supposing that your chances are better than those of the girl next door or the girl across the street?"

"Twenty-five, eh?" she asked.

"Yes, '25!" he said, eyeing her sternly.

"Twenty-five, eh?" she sniffed.

With an impatient movement he returned to his oratorical manner.

"Do you know," said he, "that on account of the unprecedented rise in rents, food and clothing, the number of marriages is falling off daily? That every day a woman's chance of matrimony grows distinctly less, to say nothing of the decrease in her chances on account of the increase in her age? Have you been advised of this?"

He pointed his inexorable finger at her and cried—

"And you, madam! What right have you to suppose that you are an exception to the rule?"

She tried to pass it off with a laugh, but nevertheless she batted her eyes in a thoughtful manner.

"Do you regard an honorable proposal of marriage as an every-day occurrence?" he demanded. "Do you know that there are thousands of old maids in this broad land to-day, lonely and in despair, each of whom would give ten years of her life to recall her light refusal of the first and only proposal she ever received?"

He folded his hands behind him and leaned forward impressively.

"And you!" he solemnly exclaimed. "Could you make oath that you will ever receive another proposal of marriage?"

He straightened himself with an abrupt motion and shot his cuffs again.

"Do you know," he demanded, "that there are more than 1,000,000 old maids in these United States and that the number is increasing every day? Ah, think of them! Think of them with pity!"

He leaned forward again impressively, almost tenderly.

"What girl knows," he whispered, "but that she will be one of these millions? Do you?"

Was it a tear that glistened in her eye?

"Do you know," he continued with a gentle mournfulness, "that the number of old ladies' homes is increasing in geometrical progression? That every day, every hour, lonely splinters are obliged to seek the refuge offered by these fast-growing institutions?"

He sat down beside her.

"Mary," he whispered, "are you aware that the average adult male's income is less than nine dollars a week—that I am getting \$40. Don't cry, little girl! It's all right. I—I'll have you."

And when mother, wondering at the silence, looked in a few minutes later he was measuring her for the ring in a lordly sort of way.

No Entrance There.

There is one door in the big State, War and Navy building which is sacred to the presence of one cabinet officer. He alone gets in and out of it; every other person connected with the United States navy or with the government of the United States has to go around.

The door leads into the office of Secretary of the Navy Meyer. He enters through it and leaves by it, but all other times it remains locked.

One day Mrs. Meyer visited the department. She was in a hurry, and as soon as she reached the corridor in front of her husband's office she headed for the sacred door.

Mrs. Meyer tried the door; she twisted the knob, and then knocked. She knocked again. The answer came from Private Secretary Taylor's door in the form of a big colored messenger. He spoke to Mrs. Meyer, and she followed him through the circuitous path which leads to her husband's desk.

Fifteen minutes later she came out; this time she used the private door of Secretary of the Navy Meyer.

TO BUY OR BUTCHER

CAN NEBRASKA SAVE MONEY BY LATTER METHOD.

A QUESTION FOR SOLUTION

Report of the State Agricultural Experiment Stations.—Other Matters at the State Capital.

Is it cheaper for the state to do its own butchering than to buy of the packing houses is a question Land Commissioner Cowles is trying to solve. Figures bearing upon the answer to this question were brought to Mr. Cowles by H. F. Bishop, steward of the asylum at Lincoln. During the fourth quarter of 1909 the state purchased for the institution fifty beef cows, which furnished 24,625 pounds of beef, 197 pounds of hearts, 531 pounds of liver, 131 pounds of tongues, 107 pounds of tails, 555 pounds of tallow and scraps. The cows cost \$1,800. The hides from these cows brought \$400 and the five items aside from beef were worth \$70, so the actual cost of the 24,625 pounds of beef was \$1,380 or \$5.64 per hundred. Bids for beef carcasses were not invited for this institution, but at Norfolk the contract price was \$5.94 and at the Soldiers' Home at Burkett, where they also bought carcasses, the price was \$5.80. So far as these figures go, said Mr. Cowles, the state saves a small amount of money when it buys the cattle, and the officers at the asylum say that there is a vast difference in the quality of the meat, the home made product being so much better than the packing house meat.

Another report will be made at the close of the present quarter, March 31. Whether the higher price of cattle will show a greater or a smaller gain for home made beef will be determined at that time. During the present quarter Norfolk pays 44 cents and Burkett 68 cents per hundred more for beef than they paid last quarter.

Report of Experiments.

J. S. Dales, financial secretary to the State Board of Regents, has filed with the governor his annual report of the state agricultural experimental stations for the last year.

The report shows there was received from the Hatch fund, \$15,000 in installments of which \$10,113.68 was expended for salaries; received from the Adams fund, \$11,000 of which \$6,446.23 was spent in salaries; university cash fund received, \$6,858.58; for the sale of live stock and farm products, \$23,831.54. Out of this there was a balance on hand last July of \$2,345.75. Appropriation for the support of the North Platte station, \$25,000; balance on hand November 30, \$13,844.97; appropriation for support of farmers' institutes, \$20,000; balance from 1907 appropriation, \$6,754.62; balance on hand at close of the fiscal year, \$17,386.87.

The report covers in detail the experiments conducted by the college during the last year, which have been published in bulletin form and mailed out to the public generally.

Way to Lessen Crime.

Furnish every convict with a job upon his release from the penitentiary, punish assiduously all men who put the lynch law into use, and reform the jury system of the country by making conviction possible on a vote of ten of the twelve jurors. These are the means by which Dr. Edwin Mavey, professor of criminal law in the University of Nebraska law school, would change the system of dealing with criminals and lessen the crime of this country. Before his class in criminal law at the university he enunciated this doctrine and predicted its adoption by the various states would rapidly decrease the number of criminals that are annually sent to the state prisons.

Worry Upset His Reason.

Thomas J. Bigley of Beatrice was brought to the insane hospital here by Sheriff Scheik. Though it is said Bigley worried over his debts to a considerable extent, worry over a reprimand from the court for his action as a juror is said to have been the final straw that overthrew the man's reason.

Requisition Papers Asked For.

Sheriff Schick and County Attorney F. O. McGill of Gage county dropped into the governor's office to arrange for requisition on the state of Oklahoma for the return to Gage county of James W. White, now under arrest at Newkirk, Okla. He is charged with wife desertion.

Forger in the Toils.

Requisition has been issued for the return to Douglas county of Austin Elliott, arrested at St. Louis on a charge of forging a \$35 check on the Merchants National bank at Omaha.

Record Day for Treasurer.

Tuesday of last week was a record day for the state treasurer in the matter of receipts issued. The collections amounted to 109,000 in round numbers, which Deputy Treasurer Frank Brian said was more money than the office had ever collected in one day, at least in the present term. With no state debt, the treasurer believes he will be able to come before the next legislature without any outstanding warrants, and therefore turn the office over to his successor with the state on a cash basis.



Valentines
More
Popular
Than Ever



IN THE latter part of the eighteenth century the "valentine"—those ornate creations of lace paper, silver and gilt, artificial flowers, scrap pictures and sentimental verse—which we know, grew from the simplest processes by natural degrees of elaboration. Before valentines became a recognized article of merchandise lovers were constrained to construct their own. A quill pen, a sheet of writing paper and ability to write "doggerel" was the required equipment. Soon there appeared obliging little chapbooks called the "Gentleman's New Valentine Writer," "Cupid's Annual Charter," "The School of Love," and the "Ladies' Polite Valentine Writer." There also was a "valentine writer" for tradespeople and one for the joker called the "Quizzing Valentine Writer." These valentine writers were little six-penny pamphlets containing choice specimens of doggerel for almost all degrees of love and sentiment. Here are a few samples:

Round is the ring that has no end;
So is my love to you, my friend.
You are witty, you are pretty;
You are single! What a pity!
I am single for your sake;
What a handsome couple we shall make.

In the tradespeople's "Valentine Writer" valentines for almost every trade and profession were provided. Here is one for the pawnbroker:

I pledge my word for thee I live,
And am sincere when honor calls.
Oh, then, my dear, an answer give,
You know where to—to the three balls.

The grocer's was as follows:
Your breath is all-spice, I declare,
And you're so neat and handy
That you're as sweet, I think, my fair
As plums or sugar candy.
Be favorable, I implore,
These verses kindly weigh;
And if you will my heart restore,
I'll treat you to some tea.

This was the maid's scornful answer:
Your letter I've weighed,
Am truly afraid,
Many pounds you're deficient in weight;
And so, Mr. Grocer,
I'd have you to know, Sir,
I care not a fig for your treat.

Often times these home-made valentines were of the "cut" and "torn" paper variety, beautiful designs being worked out by cutting or tearing the paper.

About the year 1800 the manufactured article began to steal away the early charm of St. Valentine's day. Transformation scenes were a conceit of the German manufacturers. A lone bachelor sits and bemoans his fate of solitariness until a shifting scene reveals to him what bliss life would be with her of his dreams. The more elaborate of these manufactured valentines were wonderful examples of human ingenuity and handicraft and some were very expensive.

The manufacturer of valentines 50 years ago gave remunerative employment to an army of women, to whom the work of construction was intrusted. Germany furnished most of the material in bulk for valentines, but the beautifully made artificial cambric roses, each no longer than a pea, were made in French convents by women to whom valentines were never sent and who were vowed to celibacy and single life.

The anonymity of the remembrance is its charm, as in the case of the young artist of Charles Lamb's acquaintance, who expended hours and his best work on a valentine for his neighbor, a young girl with whom he had never spoken, but whose radiant girlhood had given him joy to behold. To her surprised eyes came his exquisite testimonial. And like pleasure shared our grandmothers when in the good old days folded sheets with lace edging and most delicately handwritten verses beneath crudely sentimental sketches found their insidious way under their front door.



Old-Time
Love Missives
for the
Day

PEPPYS, that delightful old gossip of the reign of Charles II., enters in his diary on Valentine's day, 1667: "This morning came little Will Meiser to be my wife's valentine, and brought her name written upon blue paper in gold letters, done by himself. Very pretty, we were both well pleased with it. But I am also this year my wife's valentine, and it will cost me five pounds; but that I must have laid out if we had not been valentines."

Two days later Pepys says: "I find that Mrs. Pierce's little girl is my valentine, she having drawn me, which I am sorry for, it causing me of something more than I must have given to others. But I do first observe the fashion of drawing moities as well as names, so that Pierce, who drew my wife, did also draw a motto, and his girl drew another for me. What mine was, I forget, but my wife's was 'Most courteous and most fair,' which, as it may be used as an engagement upon each name, might be very pretty."

Pepys has a great deal to tell about valentines, and what he says shows that the day was observed in the highest fashionable circles and that expensive presents were given. He describes how the duke of York, being the valentine of Miss Stuart, a famous beauty, gave her a jewel valued at £800 and how Lord Mandeville, another valentine of this lucky woman, presented her with a ring worth £300. A man had to have money to keep up with St. Valentine's procession in the age of King Charles II.

But fully as interesting and much more strange were the St. Valentine's customs among the common people. Many of the observances were singularly like those of Hallowe'en. They were not so growome, but the resemblance is unmistakable. For instance, a pert miss, who lived in the 1750's, writes: "Last Friday was Valentine's day and the night before I got five bay leaves and pinned four of them to the four corners of my pillow and the fifth to the middle, and then if I dream of my sweetheart, Betty said, we should be married before the year was out. But to make it more sure I boiled an egg hard and took out the yolk and filled it with salt and ate it shell and all without speaking or drinking after it. We also wrote our lovers' names upon bits of paper and rolled them up in clay and put them into water and the first that came to the surface was to be our valentine."

There have been endless devices for valentines, but perhaps the queerest on record is that described in the following little story. One St. Valentine's morning an English gentleman remarked to his pretty daughter that on that day 200,000 more letters than the average passed through the London twopenny post.

"Why, papa," replied the girl, "that's just the number of young folks that must be in love with each other—that's the way to reckon."

At that moment a bachelor friend of the family came in and learning the subject of their talk, drew a small package from his pocket.

"Here's my valentine," he exclaimed, and presented it to the young woman.

It contained a small rib, carved of ivory and covered with white satin and ornamented with true lover's knots. There were also some verses, of which this is one:

THU Adam had a partner given,
Much as fair Eden bloomed like Heaven,
His bliss was incomplete,
No social friend those joys to share
Gave the gay scene a vacant air.
She came—'twas all complete.

"Well, now, I call that capital," cried the lively lass. "After such a valentine you must take the hint, my dear sir. It's settled, you must get married."

"Will you marry me?" he asked.

"I marry you? No. You are too old. But there are many women of your age. Why don't you ask one of them?"

He had to be contented with this sorry consolation, though he deserved a better fate for the ingenuity of his valentine.

St. Valentine's day has always been a favorite with the poets. It is mentioned by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Goethe, Donne, Gay, Lydgate and others, and many first-class versifiers have written valentines. Of these none is more remarkable than Macaulay. That renowned scholar and historian never missed giving a St. Valentine's tribute to his favorite niece and his valentine to the Countess Beauchamp, daughter of the earl of Stanhope, ranks with the most admirable of his compositions.

It is a pity that the fine old festival of St. Valentine's day is not made more of by this generation. Something should be done to bring back to it the charm, the romance, the poetry of other times.

Happily, in the last few years the comic valentines have been more humorous and less vulgar.—The Sunday Magazine