

The Tragedy of Student Potts

A Soulful Summer Story

By R. D. J.

Part I.

Nicholas Potts sat on the tin roof of his rooming flat and reflected. Being of a philosophical turn of mind, he often reflected. But a mental cataclysm of an extremely violent character had tonight invaded the seat of his intellect and wrought unspeakable havoc. The eddying thoughts whirled and twisted in and out of the convolutions of his cerebellum, leaving uncertainty and doubt in their wake. Now and then they met, clashed, and swayed to and fro in their efforts to gain the ascendancy. Finally, the force of their impact neutralized, they would sink helplessly down and lie dormant, until some new explosion would send them forth again to rage wildly in fierce combat. Then succeeded a moment of tranquillity, and the tenor of his thoughts flowed along with the serenity and persistency of treacle flowing from the hog's head, when the grocer's boy has forgotten to replace the plug. Slowly but surely a germ grew and waxed strong in his cranial cavity, until it became an idea—a thing with which Nicholas was seldom afflicted. All the contending force were at rest now, having withdrawn from the open into the interior. But the fact must not be lost sight of, that Nicholas Potts had an idea—tangible, analytic and realistic.

Yes, he had an idea, and after it had undergone a vast number of evolutionary gyrations it shaped itself into a conclusion. There it lay compact and settled in the bottom of his mental tub. What was the nature of this conclusion? Is it right to intrude on the consecrated privilege that mortal man has to the secrecy of his own cogitations? This question must be left for settlement at some other time. But it is pertinent to know the exact nature of this conclusion. Here good Dame Fama, with her usual officiousness, has penetrated the secret and flies whooping away to divulge it. An appalling calamity had befallen Nicholas Potts—such a one as has blasted the hopes of many well-meaning youths and caused them to go wrong. To cut it short, he was in love! With what? With whom? Wherefore? Not so fast; all will be told in due season.

Nicholas Potts was originally a tiller of the soil. But later he left his plow to rust in the furrow and turned his attention to the higher things of life. His intellect developed slowly and painfully in the great moral and aesthetic gymnasium known as District 41. After a number of revolving years had completed their cycle and he had arrived at man's estate, he himself became the commander-in-chief—the Grand Monarque—of the great institution that had developed his youthful capabilities. There he reigned supreme as a concrete, composite faculty, with none to question his right

or dispute his sway. The first year of his reign having come to a close, he had, accumulated in his possession, a considerable quantity of the wherewithal, having acquired it by falsely persuading the honey-hearted elders who constituted the board of trustees that he was giving value received. Nor was his conscience troubled by the baseness of his deceit; there is even a lurking suspicion that he thought he was entitled to it.

Laboring under the singular mental aberration that his intellect was one that was capable of great possibilities, he concluded to migrate to Lincoln and pursue a course in the summer school of the state university. He had an intimate knowledge of the classics, being able to conjugate the present tense of 'amo' and having penetrated the mysteries of algebra to the depths of simultaneous equations. He was a literary man also, being acquainted with the great lights of literature from William Shakespeare to Marie Corelli. And he could spell, too. Creator Omnipotent, but how he could spell! At the meetings of the literary society he had floored all comers, showing 'em how it was done. Equipped with such a powerful mental armament as has been described, this orthographical prodigy sought the genial clime of Lincoln, and having satisfied the aversion of the registrar, he found himself an active member of the great University of Nebraska. The dignity was a great one and his bust swelled visibly as he meditated on this fact.

In the class room he was strictly in it, and made the force of his logic felt. In cosmology he took a ghoulish delight, and loved to exhibit his superior powers of intellect and dazzle the chancellor and his inferiors—the hot pallor, his classmates—with his brilliancy. While Sophor, the offspring of hot weather, held the rest of the class fast in his soul-refreshing embrace, this fiend poured out his logic and caused frightful dreams to pervade the slumbers of those about him.

Throughout the weeks of summer school this grievous grind rasped and ranted. And now the last days were coming to pass. And it happened in those days that the pink-cheeked girl with the white shirt waist first came into his vision. She was a maiden who fulfilled the most exacting requirements for looks. Wavy dark hair, laughing blue eyes and comeliness of features—they were all there. She was beautiful and she was graceful, and fusing both elements—she was simply a stunner. She had moved up from the back row and occupied a seat directly across the aisle from him. Once she dropped her fountain pen and he clumsily picked it up. And she thanked him so sweetly that he blushed. And all that morning his foolish heart pounded about against his ribs and disturbed the whole order of things that composed his inner being. Afterwards she even seemed desirous of carrying on a conversation with him. Once she told him that he must be awfully bright to know such deep things. He made a note of this in his memorandum book.

But what was the cause of this sudden interest? Ah, he had it. She admired his learning and manly bearing. That was it. Why hadn't he thought of that before? And as the end of the session drew nigh their intimacy waxed stronger. And then he began to think. He even forgot to talk, and the class enjoyed a blissful peace that it had never known before. Finally, in direct contradiction to all his tastes and instincts, he overcame his natural scruples as to parting with his money, and made an investment. He bought a green necktie with white spots in it, and a box of blacking. He also bought a second hand book on "Manners and Etiquette," and studied it diligently. These were his initial preparations for the campaign. It was a new experience to him and he determined to take a try at it. O how fortunate it would have been for him had some kind power gied him the gift. He was a fright—a genuine, unmitigated fright! This fact, it was hoped, could be kept concealed, but Truth, though at first the under dog, will rise again; and necessity

compels that a description of him be given, if limited human powers can cope with such an undertaking.

His linear dimensions were remarkably noticeable and he could hardly be accused of rotundity. If long, spindling shanks, a narrow chest, and a limited girth of waist constitute a perfect figure, then he approached perfection. If long-pointed ears, sparse, sandy hair, green goggle eyes, thin, freckled features, a convergent nose and a cut-away chin constitute manly beauty, then he was the paragon. Such a form, such a visage! How well fitted was he to win the affections of guileless maidens! Well, this was the object that crawled up through the trap door and out onto the roof of his rooming flat that memorable night in July, to reflect.

Part II.

This part of Nicholas Potts' history is sad and it is best to make it brief. It was the day of the final exams, and Nicholas started out for his class room in order to be there in good time. As chance would have it he met her—the girl with the pink cheeks and the white shirt waist. They were both headed for the same corner, and she arrived there first. Glancing around she beheld him and stopped and waited for him. For a moment he stood palsied, uncertain whether to advance or execute a movement to the rear and fly for his life. But she smiled so sweetly that he was reassured, and advanced clumsily, an ox on the way to the slaughter. She made a few senseless remarks which he eagerly affirmed and in response to which he obediently schreeched his appreciation. In return he ventured a few remarks relative to the condition of the weather and to the coming exam. As it was still early when they reached the campus, they seated themselves in a shady place and exchanged comments.

By this time Potts had found his tongue, and was boring the atmosphere atrociously. But his companion had become strangely quiet. He tried to draw her out, but failed. She sat with her cheek resting on her shoulder and her eyes fixed on the ground. No glow of animation now suffused her cheeks, but instead her features were drawn and her manner strangely depressed. Just what had come over the spirit of her being Potts was unable to see. But anyhow he thought that she looked deuced pretty. He tried in vain to rally her, but his awkward efforts were borne in silence and absolutely unheeded. Finally she burst into tears and covered her face with her hands. Potts was touched to the depths of his innermost being, and grasping her wrist he tried to wrench her hand away from her face, at the same time exclaiming in a quavering, tender tone:

"What's the matter now? Have I offended you?"

At first she was obdurate, but yielding to his entreaties she told him her tale of woe.

"You see," she said, between pathetic sobs, "I don't understand that horrid cosmology a bit; and I'm so afraid that I will be flunked. And I thought," she said wistfully, "that—perhaps—you would help me."

She said this so shyly and appealingly that Potts' noblest instincts were aroused, and swelling with a consciousness of his own knightliness, he tendered to her the promise of his humble assistance in her hour of need.

Greatly cheered, she walked with him to the class-room and they took their accustomed seats. The examination was of course a stiff one, and many an unfortunate found occasion to regret past negligence. But Potts, in his freakish fashion, had his subject at his finger-tips. Of each answer he made a duplicate copy and passed it to her via the sub-transit. And the smile of gratitude she gave him made it an even trade, and Potts felt foolish and happy. After the exam was over he walked home rejoiced in spirit and proud of his knightly achievement.

In the evening he went to the chancellor's reception to the students of the summer school. He had other reasons for going than the mere fact that he had been invited. He might meet her again. All that afternoon he employed in coining soft expressions and pointing sayings, which he intended to spring on her if he should meet her in the evening. No doubt

(Continued on page 6.)

Buy of

Farmers' Grocery Company

Largest Retail Distributors of Groceries in the West.

226-240 N. 10th St.

JOS. KOLBACH

Back at the old place
BLUE FRONT SHOE SHOP
First-class repairing while you wait
1326 O St. Lincoln, Neb.

C. EHLERS

TAILOR
N. W. corner O and 11th Sts.
Suits made to order at popular prices. Repairing, cleaning and pressing also. Good work guaranteed.

DENSMORE

The Densmore gives better service than any other typewriter. Write us.

OMAHA PRINTING CO.
OMAHA, NEB.

We handle all kinds of office supplies

Pianos, Organs,
Sheet Music, Studies
and Musical Instruments
Cecilian Piano Player

STATE AGENTS FOR THE
Weber, Bauer, Shaw, Ludwig,
Schiller, and Matthews Pianos
Farrand and Lakeside Organs

Matthews Piano Co.
1120 O St., Lincoln, Neb.

Waterville
Hand-Forged
Pocket Knives
50c

Fully Guaranteed

HALL'S
1308 O Street

RIGGS' "SIZZ FIZZ"

No matter what the weather man's decision may be our Swastik fountain is ever sizzling hot or cold. We can serve you a Polar Dream or an Irish Iceberg. "Tommy will deliver the goods."

A suggestion: We have prepared some special drinks, have named them for your different Frats and we serve them colors to match.

RIGGS
1321 O St