

ONLY A STRIP OF CARDBOARD

By RUSSELL P. ASKUE

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BEAUTY is not always a quality inherent. The barren hill is ugly till glorified by the resplendent rays of the setting sun. The crude decoration on a meal ticket, viewed through the eyes of hunger, becomes artistic, beautiful (one might even say tasteful, and be guiltless of anticlimax). Dost thou worship the god of chance, then to thee the spots on a poker chip as fair as the freckles on the cheek of thy beloved. Dost thou enjoy church socials—then art thou unlike Jack Smith.

Mr. Smith was in the bathtub, splashing vigorously and whistling. The night before he had sat up until one with Professor Gucker's "Hypothetical Nebular Analysis" and a pony; tonight he was planning to enjoy Harvey J. O'Higgins and a pipe. Wherefore he whistled while he splashed. And pink teas and ladies' sewing circles and church socials were far from his thoughts.

There came a rap at the door and a voice called his name. It was the voice of Mrs. Thompson, mother of his roommate, and it bade him be quiet a minute. "We want you to come to the church tonight," it said; "we're giving a little entertainment, and—"

"O shucks!" he muttered, and began to splash more loudly than ever. But the voice, undaunted, waited patiently for comparative silence, and continued:

"I have tickets for you and George; here's yours, I'm going to put it under the door."

"But, Mrs. Thompson, I really—O, all right, I'll go, of course. I suppose you'd keep me in here all night if I didn't promise."

"That's a nice boy; I knew you'd want to come; of course I would if you didn't promise; now remember, dear." And the voice of Mrs. Thompson hurried away, while Jack, too dejected to splash, too angry to whistle, sat in the tub and glared at the floor.

He spied the ticket, and picking it up with a wet hand studied it with disfavor. He also made some very unkind remarks concerning it, finally throwing it into a corner.

Yet it was only a little strip of cardboard with nine very proper words neatly printed thereon:

MONTHLY SOCIAL
THE LADIES' AID SOCIETY
Admit One

To an ear accustomed to the English which thrives in Ohio the variety cultivated in New England is amusing, and that imported from the British Isles is funny. But the luxuriant native growth of the sunny Southland is charming.

Miss Dorothy Tyler was from the South, and the words of her mouth were quaint and delightful. She stood in the lecture room of a church in Cleveland, the vivacious center of an admiring circle of men. During a lull in the conversation she found herself looking up into the steady blue eyes of an athletic young man and heard someone mumble an introduction. But during the process the gentleman's name became hopelessly lost. So she asked him for it.

He bent toward her and informed her very solemnly—"Jack Smith."

The girl threw back her head and laughed, a wonderful laugh of irrepressible merriment; a laugh that rose exultantly from a sweet murmur to an ecstatic crescendo—the very spirit of animated music.

"Really, Mr. Smith, you must forgive me," she said, touching her handkerchief to her mirth-dimmed eyes; "but it was so funny, the way you said your name. You were so serious about it."

"I'm usually considered funny when I try to be serious. And of course I'm serious upon the question of names. But I'm glad you were laughing at me instead of at 'Smith.'"

"But perhaps I wasn't," she answered. "Anyway, 'what's in a name?'"

"That all depends. In mine there seems to be rich material for the wagging of tongues of a thousand jesters. And the thousandth man expects me to laugh at his aged joke—old as the honest name itself."

Again she laughed, deliciously, mischievously; which was exactly what young Mr. Smith desired. By several strategic maneuvers he had led her to a seat, so that he might enjoy that laugh all by himself. And the admiring circle, not being able to exist without a center, had broken up in confusion. Other groups were also dispersing, and the people were seating themselves about the room, in preparation for the formal entertainment of the evening.

A stately blonde standing beside the piano demonstrated her skill in the manipulation of a high-power soprano biplane, whose movements, however, were somewhat hampered by the lowness of the ceiling. And then Mrs. Thompson announced that the company would be further entertained with some readings given by Miss Dorothy Tyler of Louisville, Ky., who had kindly consented, etc.

Miss Dorothy Tyler, with an amused twinkle in her eye, observed the surprise on the face of Mr. Jack Smith; then arose in answer to the welcome that greeted her.

And he—he forgot to be bored, for—

got that there was anyone but himself listening to this bewitching, black-haired beauty. Breathless, all ears and eyes, he hung upon every word, delighted in every gesture.

Again and again the girl responded to enthusiastic encores, until finally she begged for rest. "It's just dear of you people to be so kind and appreciative, but I'm most awfully tired now. Please let this be the last one; it's about Molly and Jimmy Baker, and mamma has tucked them into their two little beds and kissed them good night. So you mustn't make any noise when I get through, 'cause you might disturb them."

And then she took the part of little Molly, listening, in the dark bedroom; also of bold little Jimmy, frightening Molly with a story of a big, fierce lion.

During the reading she cried out, in the terror-stricken lip of little Molly, "Jimmy, Jimmy, what's that over in the corner?" Pausing an instant for Jimmy's answer, her eyes fell upon Mr. Smith. And so absorbed was he that he hunched up his shoulders and roared. His vocal effort was a good imitation of the terrifying challenge of the king of beasts. On a lonely desert, or in a dark bedroom, it would have inspired unspeakable dread; but there, in the brightly lighted church, its effect was otherwise.

Everybody heard the noise, and everybody roared—with laughter. Even the girl's quick answer for Jimmy could not save the situation. Poor Jack! A burning crimson mounted swiftly to his cheeks and enveloped his ears. And ere the first poignant pain of embarrassment had passed the reading was ended. People on all sides were rising to their feet, expressing their pleasure in a storm of applause.

Jack stood in misery by his chair, his legs begging him to run, his judgment commanding him to remain. And George Thompson, a grin with glee, patted him on the back. "Oh, I say, old man," he laughed, "don't look so sheepish; you're a lion, you know."

Then the girl, hurrying from the platform through the congratulating crowd, stood before him. "Oh, it was perfectly splendid of you to come to my rescue when I was so sorely in need of something scary," she said. "It made everything so much more realistic."

Mr. Smith was greatly relieved. "It's mighty good of you to put it that way," he answered, "after I made such a beast of myself. Let's go out on the steps; somehow I feel that all these people are wondering if I'll do it again."

And so, during the interval before the ice-cream-and-cake part of the program, they stood together under the stars.

"Tonight," said he, "has been the happiest of my life. I wonder," he added, thoughtfully, "if it is the custom in Louisville, Ky., for a girl to accept a fellow's company home from a church social?"

Beauty is not an inherent quality. But let the incandescent glow of sentiment shine upon a shoestring or a chromo, and then say, if thou darrest, that it is not beautiful.

George Thompson had never thought upon these things, and George was puzzled. Why had Jack sat quietly in his chair for a full half hour, gazing contentedly at something he held in his hand? And what was the something? He had fondled it; had held it close to his eyes, had contemplated it dreamily at arm's length. And now, before the wondering gaze of George, he pressed it tenderly to his lips.

George was in bed, supposedly asleep; but cautiously, silently, he pushed back the covers, and leaning carefully forward, looked over his roommate's shoulder. In Jack's hand was something white. But George was more puzzled than ever.

For it was only a little strip of cardboard, with nine words printed neatly thereon.

Scoter's Ideal Digestion

The digestive processes of the scoters are thorough and courageous. Since the powerful mandibles are incapable of crushing the mollusks on which the scoter feeds, it follows that every shellfish goes down not only on the halfshell but the whole. Think for a moment, says Nature Magazine, of being restricted to a diet of oysters or of butter clams, swallowed in their stony jackets—and then reflect upon the dreary interval that must ensue before one's astounded stomach has solved the problem. The scoter has no reluctance and not a single regret. The powerful gizzard, furnished with teeth of gravel, which attacks this hard fare, is so violently potent that holes are speedily eaten through the shell, until the hapless mollusk is riddled and its flesh attacked and absorbed.

Neither Beginning Nor End

Voting in person for Oxford university election has sometimes had its amusing side. In the famous election in which Gathorne Hardy ousted Gladstone from the university membership there was a high debate over one vote given by a graduate that was weak in aspirates. He voted in this form: "Glad—I mean 'Ardy.' Gladstone's supporters claimed the vote. "Oh, no," said the others, "he never finished Gladstone!" "That may be," was the retort, "but he never began Hardy."

Woman Does Man's Work

Mrs. Florence Merriman of Portland, Maine, is probably the only woman stevedore in the country. She says she can handle as much freight as any man. She is also mate and cook on a vessel, and in addition helps at any other task while at sea.

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Crime or Jest?

Not long ago a small box with an insufficient address was held up at an English post office. As the address could not be found it was opened and disclosed a parcel of bones, established to be human. The mystery was never cleared up. What crime it shrouded, or whether it was a joke on the part of some hospital student, must be left to conjecture.

Honor to Dead Soldier.

The War department says when a soldier is buried the following is the procedure: The body is lowered into the grave as the priest or minister reads a short service. Usually music is played or a hymn is sung. A bugle then sounds taps, after which a firing squad fires three round over the grave. The guns are pointed upward, in no particular direction. After the funeral party leaves the cemetery the cemeterial help closes the grave.

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Ancient Pennies.

A silver penny struck during the reign of Ethelred H., the Unready, 979-1016, at Sudbury, England, where at that time there was a royal mint, has been presented to the borough by the town clerk. It passed into his possession several years ago, and he has ascertained on high authority that it is genuine. The coin has been deposited in the borough technical institute.

Money in Unsealed Packets.

The implicit faith of the public in the honesty of the post office is shown by the huge sums of money sent through this channel. One ordinary business letter, not stuck down, was found recently to contain a negotiable check for half a million. Frequently banks, and even private people, send unsealed letters with checks running into four and even five figures.

Rubens' Paintings.

Bryan in his "Dictionary of Painters and Engravers" says that the amount of Rubens' pictorial work was prodigious. A list records no fewer than 2,253, exclusive of 484 drawings. It was Rubens' practice to employ many student assistants. It is not possible to say exactly how many of the paintings are still in existence.

Exit Cant.

Honor to the strong man, in these ages, who has shaken himself loose of shams, and is something. For in the way of being worthy, the first condition surely is that one be. Let cant cease, at all risks and at all costs; till cant ceases, nothing else can begin.

Earnings of Laziness.

Laziness begins with cobwebs and ends with iron chains.—Proverb.

Annapolis Gay City.

From a little settlement on the Severn in 1664, Annapolis grew in size and importance until it became the capital of Maryland. By 1750 it was famed for its gayety and luxury and was often referred to as "The Paris of the Colonies."

Unable to Rescue Franklin.

Between 1847 and 1857, 39 expeditions were sent into the Arctic regions to find Sir John Franklin who set out for the North pole, May 19, 1845. The last one found relics of Franklin's expedition.

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How Easy the Public!

It is not notorious how small a fraction of society takes any interest in the conduct of public affairs? how important trades union issues, such as a strike, are left to be determined by a handful of the men who are vitally concerned? how great a part is played by catch-phrases and relatively unimportant local issues in our political elections?—The Right Hon. Herbert Fisher in the Common Weal.

Wild Guess.

The music teacher was trying to impress upon her pupils the meaning of F and FF in a song they were about to learn. After explaining the first sign, she said: "Now children, if F means forte, what does FF mean?" "Eighty!" shouted an enthusiastic pupil.

Friars Left Names.

The Black friars, the White friars, and the Gray friars, whose names appear frequently in the topography and tales of London, were respectively the Dominican, the Carmelite and the Franciscan orders of friars.

Says Brother Williams.

Of course, Time an' Tide ain't goin' to wait for you. Both of 'em has got business to attend to, and they've got to get there.—Atlanta Constitution.

It will aid greatly in cleaning the painted walls if they are gone over with thin uncooked starched water. Painted walls and woodwork can be cleaned easily and well by using equal parts of vinegar and kerosene. Wash with a cloth and dry with a dry cloth.

The first institution for the education of deafmutes in Germany was opened in 1778 at Leipsic by Samuel Heinicke, whose experience as a teacher led him to devote all his time to the deaf and dumb.

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Simple Marriage Rite.

Marriage is celebrated in a strange fashion in some parts of India. The woman puts a pot of water in her prospective husband's house, and on his lifting it up the marriage is ratified.

Not Hampered by Cold.

One of the largest forests in the world, situated between the Ural mountains and the Okhotsk sea in Russia is said to grow out of what is practically icy earth.

What About "PD"?

What are the two most potent letters in the alphabet? The quick answer is "U. S." There is something to be said, however, in favor of "O. K."—El Paso Herald.

Easy on the Culpit.

When one judges one's self the verdict is pretty sure to be acquittal.

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