

By His Own Petard

By M. J. PHILLIPS

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Even when one's affianced has the reputation of being, besides fairly rich and more than passably handsome, the most whimsically irresponsible practical joker in New York one has a right to expect that joking on one's birthday, of all days, will be shelved. At least Carrol Merrifield so expected, but she was disappointed, and that started the trouble.

Hunter Johnston was in love with Carrol, thoroughly so, but the practical joking instinct is like conscience and a taste for olives—hard to forget when once acquired. A brilliant idea in the jesting line came to Johnston the morning of his sweetheart's birthday, and he immediately set about giving it to that portion of the world in which he was most interested.

Carrol's birthday gifts from her particular circle were all that heart could desire, and she waited with happy anticipation for her fiance's offering.

At 1 o'clock a messenger boy appeared with a long, slender package for



"MAY I ASK WHAT THIS MEANS, CARROL?" HE ASKED QUIETLY.

Miss Merrifield. She opened it with eagerness and found a single magnificent American Beauty wrapped carefully in waxed paper and sparkling as if with the dew of June. Within five minutes another messenger with another long, slender package rang the bell, and this also yielded up a rose. When with the regularity of clockwork five uniformed lads had come and gone in twenty-five minutes, all with similar votive offerings, the girl comprehended—Johnston of the fertile mind had hit upon the plan of sending her twenty-three roses, one for each year of her life, but the gift was to be delivered on the installment plan.

The ingenious idea was pleasing—for a time. With the tenth rose the Merrifield family was holding joyous council over the ever increasing pile of boxes in the library, and Carrol was restless. When the fifteenth bona fide messenger had come and gone, not counting four small curiosity seekers, who smiled expansively, murmured something about "de wrong number" and retreated, Carrol was thoroughly angry. When on the heels of the twenty-third accredited flower bearer Johnston appeared, a particularly desirable brooch in his pocket and a sense of duty well done in his heart, she was composed, but the anger, though not visible, was present and controlled.

With true masculine density Johnston noticed nothing out of the ordinary with his sweetheart. She thanked him gayly and with the proper degree of warmth for brooch and roses.

"Mr. Practical Joker must have a lesson," Miss Merrifield declared to herself after his departure as she nibbled with lips as red as the petals themselves at the eighteenth rose. "I didn't mind so much his other tricks, but this time he has gone too far."

"He'd only laugh if he knew old Mrs. Froude sat in her window and counted those messengers. With the extra ones mixed in—little wretches!—there were thirty-one of them."

"She knows today's my birthday and saw through Hunter's scheme as quickly as I did. And she'll never believe but what I'm thirty-one. So, Mr. Hunter Johnston, beware of an old maid's vengeance," and she waved the rose theatrically in air.

On the morning of his own birthday, five days later, when his man brought up the mail Johnston's eye was immediately taken by one long white envelope. It was certainly peculiar in appearance, for his name and address were formed of letters clipped from newspapers and posted upon it. The envelope contained the following missive, similarly constructed:

Do you care to see your sweetheart cloping with another man? Be at the Twenty-third street ferry Thursday afternoon at 4.

Like many other practical jokers, Johnston had his "blind" side. He never suspected that any one would attempt to hoax him. He took the missive in deadly earnest and interrupted dressing a half dozen times to reread it.

His first sensation was one of anger that any one would dare label his sweetheart so. He resolved to telephone Carrol immediately—or, better, to call

upon her and enjoy a good laugh with her over the letter. Yet even while he smiled at its very absurdity, a sickening quiver of doubt, slow fitting and

ugly as a vulture's shadow, passed over his mind. Supposing it were true?

That was the most unpleasant day Johnston ever experienced. Breakfast was a farce; luncheon, "no performance." Long after the time for the latter meal he remembered that he had promised to spend the day with a married sister over in Jersey.

He tramped the snowy streets aimlessly, pausing occasionally to pore over the mysterious message, while policemen stared curiously and householders thought of Raffles. All his journeys brought him back somehow to the neighborhood of Carrol's home. But he could not enter. Something held him back. At 3 o'clock he was at the ferry and set himself down with such patience as he could muster to wait for 4 o'clock. "I'll see it through," he said.

At ten minutes of the hour Johnston's heart gave a painful throb, for Carrol, rosy from the searching wind, entered the ferry building. A tall, athletic young man, with the air of the outlander about him—he was well dressed and evidently well bred, but not a New Yorker—followed her in. He was carrying two heavy suit cases.

Johnston confronted them. "May I ask what this means, Carrol?" he asked quietly.

The girl halted and seemed to shrink from him. The athletic stranger stepped forward. "And may I inquire how it concerns you?" He did not raise his voice, and the attention of none of the jostling scores was attracted to the group.

Johnston ignored him. "Did I deserve this, Carrol?" he went on. "If you'd ask, I'd release you. When I got this letter—"

The girl had determined to punish him thoroughly, but at the sight of his weary, troubled face she relented.

"Do you know," she interrupted blithely, "I'm proud of that letter? I avoided telling a lie in it, even a white one, although I came pretty close to fibbing, didn't I? But I blustered my hand cutting out those letters. Wasn't it a real sweet little birthday gift?"

Doubt and dawning comprehension struggled in Johnston's eyes. "But, why—why?" he began.

"Why—why?" mocked his sweetheart, her head tilted saucily, a roguish smile on her face. "Just to show that two can play at practical joking as well as one. Thirty-one messenger boys, sir; You should have a whole month of anonymous letters."

"But this gentleman!" He waved his hand toward the athletic stranger who appeared to be enjoying the conversation overmuch.

"My cousin, Phil Hudson of Omaha, Mr. Johnston. He came last night, but could only stay with us a few hours."

"You were the victim of a base conspiracy, Mr. Johnston," laughed Hudson as they shook hands. "I beg pardon."

"Oh, nothing of consequence!" responded Johnston. "I just said 'Stung!'"

American Geographical Names.

America can show many geographical names taken from novels. California comes from the name of a fairy kingdom in a Spanish romance of the early sixteenth century. The Antilles take their name from Antilla, an imaginary island figuring in Italian legends connected with the wanderings of St. Brendan, and marked in the latitude of the Sargasso sea on Catalan and Genoese Portulans of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Montreal is by some said to take its name from a legendary castle mentioned in French romances of a very early date. The island of Barataria, lineally descended from Sancho Panza's imaginary governorship, also figures on the maps of Louisiana, while it is a moot question whether the strait of Juan de Fuca does not take its name from a historical geographical romance, a la Rider Haggard, devised by a Greek scion of Queen Elizabeth's day for the benefit of her majesty's resident at Venice and his own pocket. "I Brazil" is found in early Irish legend as an island in the Atlantic, and it is a moot question whether the empire of Brazil derives its name from this creation of the Celtic fancy or from wood from which a dye resembling in color burning cinders was made.

Field's Meerschaum.

When Eugene Field worked in Newark he used to smoke a cob pipe, greatly to the disgust of his employer, who was a man of taste and refinement and liked his employees to observe the niceties of personal appearance. Knowing this, Field still smoked his cob pipe until it fell to pieces, whereupon he bought a common two cent pipe of clay and made a great display of it around the office.

"Can't you find something better to smoke?" asked his employer one day in early December. "To see you with that thing in your mouth one might take you for a workman."

"It's the best I can afford," said Field, and every day thereafter he made it a point to meet his patron in the hall puffing away at the obnoxious dudon.

He found a handsome meerschaum pipe on his desk Christmas morning, Newark News.

The American tradition is the experience of the world everywhere. There is Washington and there is Hamilton, gently born and gently bred, but somehow the heart turns rather to Franklin and to Lincoln, as of more hope for the common men "God made so many of."—Mr. Howells in Harper's Weekly.

WHEN IS A MAN 21?

Think a Moment Before You Attempt to Answer the Question.

"It is often said that law is applied common sense," said a professor of the Yale Law school the other day. "While it is true that law principles originated in common sense, the law itself is the combined experience of many men, for no two men unacquainted in law will agree as to what is applied common sense."

"Then there are many rules of law which undoubtedly have a common sense origin, but, conditions having changed, history fails to disclose this origin. Yet these very rules must be retained in order not to shake personal and property rights." Therefore no man can depend on his own unacquainted common sense to know the law.

"To drive this statement home I have frequently put to an incoming law class the question, 'When does an infant become of age?' The answer is always unanimous, 'When he is twenty-one years old.'"

"The next question appears ridiculous to some and makes them laugh, while others set their alleged common sense at work and never with correct result. 'When is a man twenty-one years old?'"

"One student says, 'On his twenty-first birthday,' but of course he does not mean it, for he is about a year out of the way. Another ventures, 'On the twenty-first anniversary of his birthday.' This sounds better, but even if correct is not specific enough. 'When he has completed his twenty-first anniversary,' 'At the beginning of that day' and 'On his twenty-first anniversary, at the precise hour of his birth,' are other answers.

"And then I surprise the guessers by saying that they are all wrong."

"In computing time it is a general rule that the law disregards part of a day. In applying this rule, suppose a man was born just one minute before midnight on Jan. 2, 1880.

"At midnight he had lived but one minute, yet the day on which he was born was ended and the law considered him one day old. So in computing the twenty-one years which a man must live in order to reach his majority we do not begin with the moment of birth, but with the commencement of the day of his birth."

"Now, since we must start with the first moment of Jan. 2, 1880, it is perhaps natural to say that this man did not become twenty-one years old until the close of Jan. 1, 1901. Mathematically speaking, this is true.

"Twenty-one years in that sense requires that the last moment of Jan. 1, 1901, should have arrived in order to make the man of age, and obviously he was of age at that point of time. But here again the rule is applied."

"As the man was of age on the last moment of Jan. 1, the law disregards the entire part of the day intervening between the first moment and the last, and consequently he became in law twenty-one years old on the first moment of Jan. 1, 1901, the day preceding the twenty-first anniversary of his birthday."

"This rule is a part of what is known as the common law and is applied in this country in all states where the common law of England has been adopted and remains unchanged by statute. A man may vote or make a valid will on the day preceding the twenty-first anniversary of his birthday, although the right in the one case and the capacity in the other are given only to persons who have reached the age of twenty-one years."—New York Sun.

Undertaker For Pet Birds.

An old branch of business conducted by a New York establishment devoted to supplying and boarding feathered pets is that of bird funerals. Children who have lost their canaries or other songsters through disease or accident bring the little cadavers there to be laid out in becoming style.

Tiny coffins just large enough for a bird are kept in stock; also quantities of pale pink and blue cotton. The latter is used for filling the bird coffin, and on it the bird is laid. The effect when birdie's remains are "decently" composed upon the pink and blue is excellent, sufficiently so to console the little mourning master or mistress. The children then convey their coffin away for interment. Funeral expenses are light.—New York Press.

Perfumes.

Perfumes have been used from the earliest times. The burning of perfumed incense was one of the rites of the Hebrew and pagan religions, and perfumes of various sorts were used by nearly all the nations of antiquity. Both the Romans and the Greeks were skilled in making perfumery. It was from the Arabs, who possessed the art of preparing perfumed waters, that the use of perfumes was introduced into mediæval Europe.

An Artist's Feat.

One of the most remarkable and most artistic of twenty-four hours' records stands to the credit of Sir Edwin Landseer, who had promised a picture for the spring exhibition of the Royal British Institution in 1845. On the day before the opening he was found standing in front of an untouched canvas. "I shall send that to the institution tonight, a finished picture," he declared to the astonished messenger who had been sent by the hanging committee to see if the promised picture was ready, "and have consequently given orders not to be disturbed." True to his word, Landseer put the finishing touch to his canvas and dispatched it to Pall Mall that very evening; and as "The Cavalier's Pets" it was one of the greatest successes of the exhibition.

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