SHORT STORY

Humble Beggar

By

Matthew Christopher

The knock sounded like the soft click of a night latch. Naomi opened the door, and he stood there—a tall, humble looking figure whose sunken grey eyes peered unobtrusively from a sun-leathered face

If Philip had been here she would have closed the door. She would say, "I'm sorry, but we have nothing left." Or, just, "I'm sorry." But Philip wasn't here. And she was ready to place the food on the table.

"Good morning, Ma'am?" he said. He smiled, a tender smile that broke through his grey whiskers, "Would you be kind enough to give an old man a—a bite to eat?"

Then it was as if Philip was behind her, staring over her shoulders glaring with those level brown eyes of his, saying, "Tell him to go on his way."

The sun flashed a welcoming signal on her bright smile, and touched the high tones of her smoothly planed face. "Come in," she said. "You're just in time."

He had a cautious quality about his step as he crossed the threshold into the kitchen. She could almost hear Philip say, "See how careful he is? You got to watch that kind. That characteristic quirk isn't exactly human nature!"

Connie ran in from the dining room, her brown curls bobbing on her head like soft coils of spring.

"Go back and get in your chair, Connie," Naomi said. "We're going to have company." She gave the beggar a radiant smile, and pointed to a chair in the dining room. "You may sit there. The hat can go on the bureau behind you."

Suddenly she saw her purse there. She had placed it there after having brought home the things from the grocer's. But it would look silly now to remove it, she thought. Even if he were one of Philip's characters, there was only 60 cents, to the penny, in the purse.

It would have made no difference in the world to Philip that he was old. The older, the more experienced; the more experienced, the craftier, was Philip's philosophical slant on it.

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Naomi heard the man chuckle as she stood at the stove, mixing the gravy with the potatoes. She brought the food to the table, put some in Connie's plate, and urged the man to help himself. He did, unembarrassingly, but he didn't take much Just a little of each.

He pushed the plate away from him when he was finished, patted his skinny stomach with satisfaction.

"You're not through?" Naomi said. "There's lots more."

He shook his head. "No, Ma'am, thanks. I'm through. It was delicious, believe me, Ma'am. I'm certainly thankful to ye."

Philip would rave when he'd hear. She'd tell him, of course. Why not? She thought, if Philip could be here, now; if he could just sit in a corner and watch, he would cast out of his mind all those ridiculous beliefs he had about these unfortunate human beings.

But she'd tell him, and she would laugh when he'd rave.

Back in the dining room, she sat down again and began finishing her meal.

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"Mamma?" "Yes, dear?" she glanced up. Connie's black eyes were staring peculiarly at her. "What is it, darling?" "That man opened your purse," Connie said.

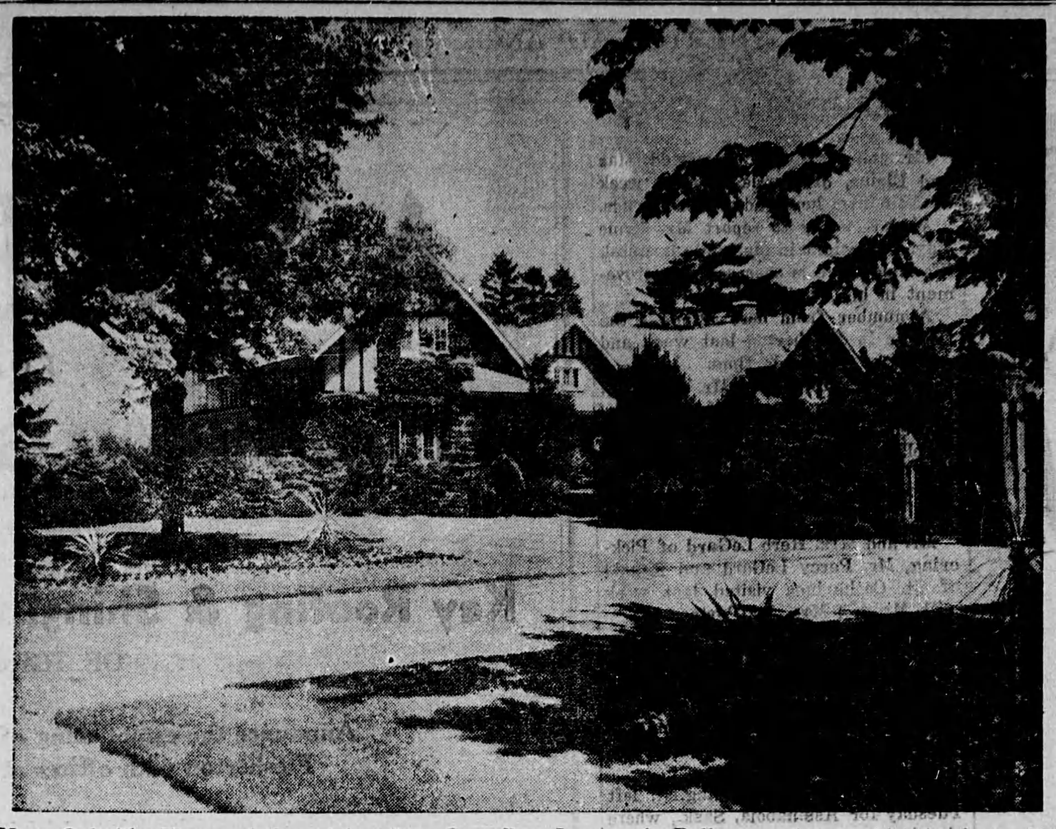
Naomi stared incredulously at her daughter. "Connie," her voice was sharp. "Are you sure?" "Yes, Mamma."

Immediately, she thought of Philip.

Quickly, she rose from the chair, swooped the purse off the top of the bureau. She flicked it open with her thumb, and sprawed into it with trembling fingers. And, suddenly—

"Connie!" Her voice shrilled high, bell-like. "Connie, look!" She was smiling radiantly.

The child stared blandly at the old, wrinkled, one-dollar bill Naomi was holding in her hand.



New Oakville Home of Ontario's Lieut.-Gov. Ray Lawson is Ballymena, here, which he is reported to have purchased. Buildings on the eight-and-a-half acre estate were erected in 1922 by the late Col. William Eaton who died three years ago. The property then was acquired by A. S. Auld.

Lieut.-Governor and Mrs. Lawson hope to take up residence at Ballymena before the end of August. Here Hon. Ray Lawson is seen with one of his Angus steers.

Seabirds of Gaspe Find Breeding Grounds Close to Pounding Surf

By James Montagnes in the Christian Science Monitor.

While ocean liners pass close to the little French-Canadian village of Perce, no man-made booming of boat horns sound above the pounding of the surf, the thunderous beating of countless wings, and the raucous calling of tens of thousands of birds. Though Perce is one of the first sights of land an ocean captain sees after his crossing, his whistles keep still, his salutes after a successful crossing wait until he is further up the Gaspe coast of Canada, for the regulations call for no man-made noise blasts off the little village of Perce.

For off this little fishermen's village, with its French-speaking Scots and Irish, are the two last breeding places on this continent of many types of seabirds, which flocked the coasts in countless millions when the first explorers discovered what is now the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Today Perce Rock, off the little village, and Bonaventure Island, three miles out to sea from Perce, are the remaining breeding places of gannets, cormorants, puffins, gulls, aulks, murres and other seafowl. Loud blasts from boats would startle the birds; they would upset their eggs in their haste to take flight.

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Bonaventure Island is about three miles long and a mile and a half wide. On its seaward side are great cliffs of red sandstone, whose broad ledges form secure nesting places for throngs of seabirds. It is like a huge apartment house for birds, with a sea view on all sides. Perce Rock is an isolated limestone mass about 1,500 feet long, 300 feet wide, and about as high above the sea.

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Brightly colored, rugged with steep cliffs which cannot be easily climbed, these two nesting rocks are secluded, according to the instincts of breeding birds, which pick hidden places to lay their eggs and hatch their young.

Perce Rock has no inhabitants except birds; its sides are too steep for the best climbers. Bonaventure Island has a few homes. an old church, ruins on its top, and can be climbed from one side, the other sides slipping almost straight down into the pounding sea. Some 10 families live on Bonaventure Island, but back in 1600 it was widely known to fishermen. The birds were so numerous they were like a "fog" to quote the early explorers.

Later Bonaventure became the home of bauccaneers and privateers who waged war on the ships of France. Settlers came from the British Channel Islands, and while their names are still of Scots and Irish descent, French is spoken on the island, and the customs of the Channel Islands prevail.

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When the birds on the two rocks appeared to be losing the battle of slaughter and pillaging of eggs about 25 years ago, the Canadian and Quebec governments declared the nesting places sanctuaries, and forbade the blowing of boat whistles and horns. Since then bird life has made a major comeback, and annually a growing number of visitors come by highway and boat to see the birds in their increasing number swarm the cliff sides.

Because from the top of Bonaventure Island the wheeling, circling birds can be studied at close range, naturalists flock to the island in Summer time. Aerodynamic engineers have also been reported on the island to study every action of the birds with fast cameras to aid the study of aviation.

The bird roosts are reached by climbing the western beach along a hardly visible trail through the spruce woods. Blueberries and strawberries grow wild for the picker on the narrow trail.

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Glimpses of the ocean far below are seen between the thickly grown bush, and here and there in the clearing near the lower part of the island the ruins of old homes are passed, while from a few ancient houses smoke curls from the chimneys.

After a long climb an open spot is reached from where can be seen the rows of birds as they sit in tiers on their rock ledges watching the continuous play of the waves in the sea below.

Most studied of the birds is the gannet, known to ancient mariners as solan geese, a bird as large as a goose, pure white with black wing tips and a slight creamy wash on the crown and its hind neck. Lines about its eyes resembling spectacles give it a slightly comic appearance.

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It is a large and powerful bird, measuring nearly three feet in length, and has pointed wings which spread to over six feet when in flight. It can fly swiftly, climb rapidly, or instantly check its flight and nose dive from 200 feet with unerring accuracy on a mackerel, its chief food.

When its landing area is not too small, the gannet lands on the edge of its nesting ledge, runs for several feet, sometimes falling on its breast if the speed is great. In limited space though the gannet is awkward on its feet, it can make a perfect spot landing.

Boatmen circle Bonaventure Island each Summer with the growing number of visitors. From the sea can be seen every ledge and shelf covered with white as though snow had been piled in drifts on the cliffs, allowing only the dull red color of the rock to show in a few spots.

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Perce Rock is mainly inhabited by double-crested cormorants. They raise their young on its rocky roof, the only place on the promontory which allows any sort of foothold. It is called Perce (French for Pierce) Rock because of the unique arch at one end of its base, through which a boat can sail, and which is passable at ebb tide on foot. Perce Rock is considered one of the beauty spots of the Atlantic coast, and has drawn geologists from all parts of the world to see its natural arch and its riot of color when a sunset plays on the limestone formation.

The birds of Bonaventure Island and Perce Rock are no friends of the fishermen, and yet the people of the Perce coast would miss the birds should they vanish

Verdict Satisfactory

A man bought a house on the boundary separating Russia from Rumania, but was uncertain which country it was in, especially as he received demand notes for rates from the officials of both.

A surveyor employed to determine the question had much difficulty in doing so. However, six months later he gave his verdict.

"The house," he said, "is definitely in Rumania."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated the owner; "I couldn't possibly stand another Russian winter."

Willing Helper

Jack: Let's give the bride a shower.

John: Count me in—I'll bring the soap.

The First Glass

Investigators seem to agree that the first glass probably was made in Egypt, but the point never has been satisfactorily settled.

According to Pliny's account, Phoenician merchants carrying a cargo of soda from Egypt, landed in Syria on the River Belus, near Mount Carmel, and made fires to cook their meals. Resting the iron pots on blocks of the (solidified) soda, the heat caused fusion of the alkali and sand, thus forming glass.

The legend of Josephus states that glass was discovered when the Israelites set fire to a wood and that nitre became fused with sand.

It takes 3,250 ties to carry a mile of C.N.R. track. There are 99,290,750 ties used in the 30,551 miles of C.N.R. track in Canada.

Natural State

The languid youth seated himself in the dentist's chair to have a tooth extracted. He wore a wonderful striped silk shirt, and an even more wonderful check suit. He also wore the vacant stare that so often goes with both.

"I'm afraid to give him gas," said the dentist to his assistant.

"Why?" asked the assistant. "Do you think his heart is groggy?"

"No," replied the dentist, "but just look at him. How will I know when he is unconscious?"

At the "Ex."

Theme of Canada's national women's organization at the Canadian National Exhibition this year is "We Build Canada".

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THE PROSPECTOR

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Men like this, some of Canada's finest, are in the service of the public—at *your* service.

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One of a series of advertisements in tribute to those Canadians in the service of the public

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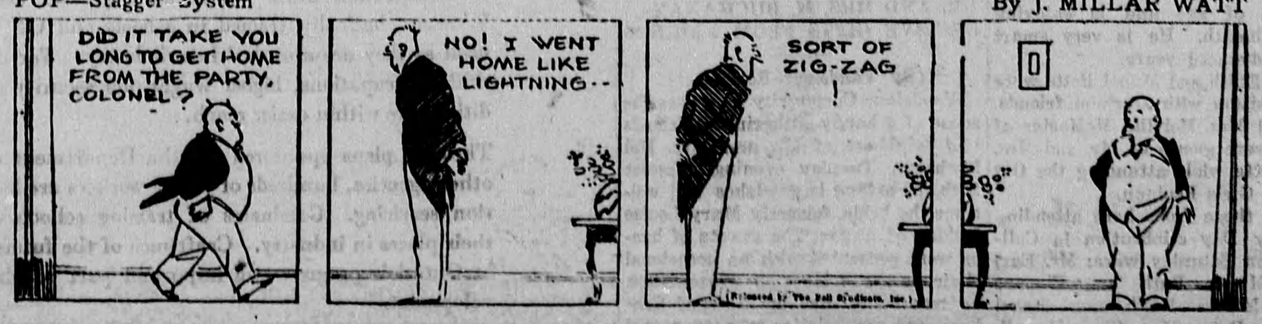
By J. MILLAR WATT