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PHIL'S LION

BY LADDD PLUMLEY

Phil's father has a farm in Ontario near the Grand Trunk railroad, and close to the railroad track Phil has a chicken run. He is an enterprising fellow, seventeen years of age, and it can be mentioned, is stocky, and solidly-built, and has developed his muscles so that he has taken several prizes for athletic work in his school. He sells his poultry and eggs in a town at a little distance, and is saving the money for a course at O. A. C. which he proposes to enter just as soon as he has finished his course in high-school.

The chicken-run is far from the farm house, so far, indeed, that one evening, when Phil was studying his lessons for the next day, the sounds of the squawking of his chickens came but faintly into the room. But when he opened the kitchen door, he heard plainly a great commotion at the chicken yard over toward the railroad track. He lighted a lantern, and telling his mother that a fox was likely making a killing, hastened across the meadows. He has lost not a few fowls by foxes, and with an attack of a fox in mind, he stealthily approached where the fowls were making a great outcry.

Holding the lantern before him, he threw open the gate of the yard and entered. "That isn't a fox!" he exclaimed, as a far larger animal than a fox slipped into the shadows of the chicken house. And, at first, he thought the creature was a neighbor's bird dog, which sometimes chased his hens; but it seemed strange how a dog could have gained an entrance.

Phil swung his lantern so that the beams encircled the space before him, and as he did so his heart seemed to pound into his throat. It was not a dog which crouched on the ground within a few yards, gazing toward him with angry eyes, which gleamed red in the lantern light, meantime lashing its tail from side to side.

To behold a lion in a chicken yard was enough to make any one frenzied with fear, and there could be no question but that the brute directly in front of Phil was a lion. For several moments Phil's nerves went rigid with terror, and he found it impossible to change his position. Then his quick boy wits came to his rescue. Just as the lion was about to make its leap, Phil lifted the lantern and threw it into the beast's face, at the same moment leaping to one side, thus gaining the open door of the chicken house. Instantly he yanked the door shut, securing it inside with its hook.

The chicken house is a stout structure, which was designed as a small cattle barn, and which has been changed into a snug place for fowls. As the winters are severe in Ontario, an extra siding of one-inch hemlock boards has been added. There was, therefore, little danger that the lion could break into the building, but for a few moments Phil gasped with the fright of his narrow escape, as he listened to the growls of the lion, which remained just outside the door.

Except at a circus or a zoo, lions, of course, are unknown in these parts and Phil knew that the lion must have escaped from confinement, and, as the yard is directly above the railroad cut, it seemed equally clear that the lion had escaped from a circus train, or, possibly, from a freight car, while being transported to a zoo.

Presently Phil's nerves became less shaky, and although he still heard the lion growling outside the door, there had been no attempt to break into the building. And a few moments later the lion turned its attention to the chickens in the yard, evidently catching one which it devoured.

"I don't propose to stay here all night," whispered Phil. "The lion must be a circus brute, but if it should take the notion to visit our cattle barn it wouldn't do a thing to our calves!"

Another thought immediately came. Before long his father and mother would wonder why he did not return, and his father would probably come after him. If his father did, there was the certainty that he would be attacked by the lion.

"It's up to me!" whispered Phil. "I have got to do something. And if I could get the lion to come in here, and I was outside, I could close and padlock the door."

There are several small windows on one side of the building, and the windows are high up and just under the roof. Phil whispered again. "In here there are some setting hens. I'll pull them out of their nests, so

they'll make a lot of cackling and attract the notice of the lion. Then I'll push the door open and shin up on the poles of the chicken roosts. I've often climbed to one of the windows, and thanks to my practice in the school gym I can make the climb pretty quickly. Mighty risky, of course, but father may be here at any time now and I can't let him run chances with the brute."

Phil is a nervy chap, and without waiting for the thought of the risk he was assuming to weaken his determination to protect his father, he routed out the setting hens, which immediately began a loud cackling. Then, while the hens continued their shrill complaints, Phil snapped out the hook from its staple and threw the door open.

The night was clear, and sufficient light came to Phil's eyes, now accustomed to the blackness in the building, so that he could see the poles of the chicken roosts. But he had not supposed the lion would so quickly make an entrance; and barely was he a few feet from the floor, when the lion, growling loudly, leaped within. Phil, his nerves like taut wire, scrambled to the higher poles, and he was not a fraction of a second too quick. For the lion, furious at the escape of its enemy, made a mighty spring, crashing against the side of the building and breaking the poles, smashing many to the floor. But Phil had grabbed the sill of one of the windows, and as he hung there desperately, the lion made another furious leap, almost ripping away one of Phil's shoes from his foot.

Afterward, Phil found several slits in the leather, where the claws of one of the lion's forefeet had cut the shoe. His teeth fairly chattering now, Phil drew himself up to the safety of the window ledge.

The window was barely large enough for him to pull himself through, but just as he managed this, and rested for a moment on the ledge he saw a swinging lantern above the path that led to the yard, and knew his father was coming. For fear that a cry would cause the lion to leave the building and make an attack on his father, Phil dared not risk a warning from the window. Silently he lowered himself from the ledge, then he dropped to the ground, landing lightly on his feet. Without waiting a second he slipped quietly but swiftly around the building, and gaining the door he quickly pushed it shut; and as quickly slipped the padlock through its ring. He had barely done this when his father called, "Phil, what's the matter?"

Phil leaped to his father's side. "A lion!" he gasped. "Padlocked in the chicken house! Listen!"

The lion had already turned its attention to the hens, and although some escaped through the runway, which was near the door, the brute had caught one of the others. And during the following ten minutes the lion devoured several more of the hens.

"Lion!" exclaimed Phil's father, after he had listened to the confusion inside the chicken house and Phil had gasped out his excited tale. "It doesn't seem possible, but those growls in there are certainly not coming from any ordinary beast!"

"It is a lion and a mighty big lion!" gasped Phil. "And, father, it's likely a circus lion, and probably escaped from a train on the railroad. And I've been thinking that the lion is used to being shut up in a cage, so perhaps after it's eaten all of my poor hens it can catch it won't try to break out. The building is pretty strong, anyhow."

"Run to the house and get my rifle," exclaimed Phil's father. "Tell your mother to use the phone and rout out all the neighbors. We've got to watch here. If the brute broke out, there'd be every kind of peril, and if it got into our cattle barn it would do a lot of killing of our stock."

Phil raced to the farmhouse, and after giving his father's message to his mother, returned on the run with the rifle. And, very soon, gathered by the news of a lion in a chicken house, a number of the neighbors hastened to the building, and continued all night to guard the imprisoned lion. But after its hearty chicken feast, it made no effort to break out.

Early next morning, a circus manager appeared at the farm, with several of his animal keepers.

"About dusk last night," explained the manager, "our circus train was stalled by a freight in the cut, right

below this farm. One of our animal feeders is a careless fellow, and it is evident that after he fed the lion its supper he did not properly secure the door of the cage, and the cage was on a flat car. Until we were more than fifty miles down the line we didn't know of the escape of the lion; then we stalled our train and began telephoning up the line. But, at first, we could get no information of the lion's whereabouts. Finally came a message that it was here at this farm in a chicken house, and we engaged an auto, reaching this place as soon as possible.

"Napoleon, as he is named, is an ugly old brute," went on the manager. "We can do nothing until the men bring his cage. It's coming on an auto truck. I shall, of course, pay for all the damage Napoleon has done, and in addition I shall give this plucky fellow here fifty dollars. There are mighty few men, let alone boys, who would have shown so much sense—and, yes, sand!"

Although Napoleon was said to be an ugly creature, he had greatly enjoyed his feast of chickens; and when the cage was trundled into the chicken yard, and the trainers had thrown the door open, there proved to be little difficulty in urging the lion to come out of the building and enter his cage.

Phil was paid for the chickens the lion devoured, and in addition received the fifty dollars, which sum he added to his fund for a course in the agricultural college. In telling the story, Phil calls the lion "my lion," and explains that for one night he considers that he actually owned a lion, by "right of capture," as he puts it.

(The End.)

Superficial Reconciliations.

The minister sighed as he tied his horse at the Thornton gate. Of late, troubled thoughts had come to him whenever he passed the big white house on the hill. John Thornton was an intelligent, well-informed man, highly esteemed in the community, for years a trustee in the church, twice supervisor of the town, now nominally a justice of the peace. He ought to know without being told how shallow his reasoning was in the matter of Reuben Graves.

The quarrel antedated the minister's pastorate at Hillsdale, but he knew all its ugly details. John Thornton had broached the subject every time he had entered the house, and he would hear again this morning all that sophistical reasoning to convince the listener that Reuben Graves was no "neighbor" of John Thornton's, but, by the teaching of the Good Book itself, a "heathen man and publican."

John Thornton had been three months bedridden, and the minister looked down pityingly at the silvery hair on the white pillow. Perhaps the genial kindness of the face, with some subtle suggestion of unrest, encouraged the minister in his faltering resolution.

"There was one thing about Graves—it happened years and years ago," the invalid began; but the clergyman checked him with a gesture.

"Don't, Mr. Thornton!" He was silent a moment, watching the surprised look in the eyes of the older man. "Pardon my abruptness; but if, as you say, you've convinced your own conscience that Reuben Graves does not fall within Christ's definition of a neighbor, there's no need of bringing more evidence. God knows all the circumstances from beginning to end. What you think or what I think doesn't matter a turn of the hand. We're all trying to make a superficial reconciliation between the plain teachings of the gospel and our own thinking and speaking and acting—whittling down God's yardstick, with the foolish idea that by this means we can 'measure up.' We don't seem to realize that it's our little foot rule we're using, and that God will use his own when the time comes. When Christ spoke of 'sin,' 'repentance,' 'love,' 'forgiveness,' 'neighbor,' and the like, those words meant something definite to Him. They mean just the same now. They will mean just the same when we're all judged by them by and by. Our little bickerings and surface reconciliations are like thinking we're nearer getting a piece of property by setting a ridiculously low price on it in our own mind without consulting the owner."

"If I'd been convinced I was on safe ground," John Thornton said slowly and reflectively, "I shouldn't have gone on talking about it the way I did. No, I can't put my arguments off on God, so what's the use of them? Stop at Reuben Graves's when you go home and tell him I want him to come and see me. Tell him I'd come to him if I could. Tell him—tell him I can't go out yonder without doing my part."

The Chinese are gradually adopting the European style of footwear. At the present time almost 40 per cent. of the footwear in China is reported to be of European style. Domestic factories, of which Canton has twenty, Hong Kong five, and nearly every port of China has at least one, are chiefly for the manufacture of the red leather used for the soles of the native shoes. The uppers of native shoes are generally made from cloth or an imitation box calf.

Minard's Liniment for sale everywhere.

Power of the Tides.

We are accustomed to look upon the tides as representing enormous unutilized power. If we could only put them to work, they would run all the machinery in the world.

But is this true? Undoubtedly—if we could put them to work on a scale sufficiently great. But that this will ever be practicable, economically, is declared doubtful.

Engineers who have made a study of the subject say that one acre of water rising and falling ten feet would yield only four horsepower. Taking into view cost of plant, that could never pay.

They say that tidal power would be worth developing only in a few localities—perhaps in the Bay of Fundy, where tides rise and fall seventy feet; in Cook's inlet, fifty feet; at Eastport, Me., eighteen feet.

Frog's Anatomy.

If size of skull were an index of brain-power, the frog would be an intellectual prodigy. Its cranium is huge, but, alas! its brain is very small.

The frog has only nine vertebrae—fewer than any other animal with a backbone possesses. Lacking ribs, it is obliged to swallow by gulps the air it breathes, instead of projecting its chest as we do and creating a vacuum for air to pour into.

Its pelvis hinges on to its backbone so as to give it a joint in the middle of its back, and it has another hinge in each foot. These extra joints are a great help in leaping.

Froggy is in his way the most wonderful animal we know, inasmuch as he begins life as a vegetable-eating fish (or the equivalent), and later on turns into a carnivorous air-breathing land quadruped.

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"Shall I buy more land?" is a question which keeps coming. Here is our answer: If you would have to do poorer farming on the land you now have, don't get any more on your hands. If you can make better the land you now own, and if you are sure you do the work on the new part well and thoroughly without shortening your life or running any risk for the rest of the family it would be all right to buy. But first of all ask: "Would I really be the gainer in the long run? Would it be better for me, for my wife and the boys and girls?"

Knockers.

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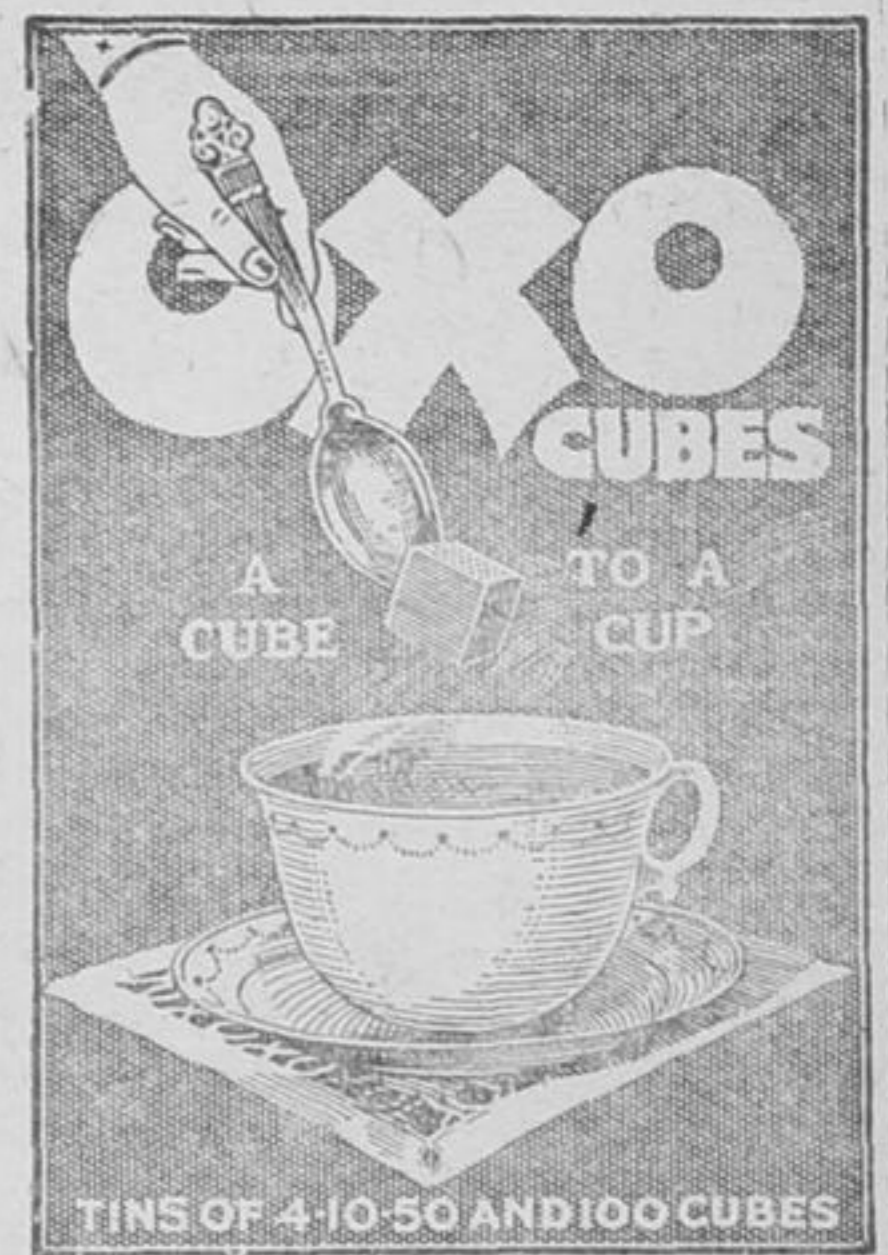
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