

THE ALBATROSS

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gentlemen of the colony would strike you as being much like the habits of human beings. We apologize if this sounds like satire.

An unattached female usually finds several males trying to attract her attention. These young swains will gather around her, throwing out their chests, stretching their long, beautiful wings, strutting and dancing, and screeching in their best imitation of a love song. Occasionally they squabble and swear at each other like chipmunks, never fighting but definitely protesting at each other's presence. All this time the female is coyly wandering among them, giving each a little attention and being very sweet,—the Scarlet O'Hara of the Antarctic. When finally she chooses the mate with whom she will wander off the others walk slowly away hanging their heads and swaying their bodies from side to side. With doleful backward glances at the lucky male they cast throaty noises at him, grumbling their disdain or lament, and disappear among the rocks and weeds.

The newlyweds then are faced with the task of selecting a site and building their home. They, too, have domestic duties and obligations. First they gather bundles of tussock stocks and twigs. This is mixed with mud from the edge of the ocean and is then shaped into a truncated cone with a shallow hollow on top. An odd and homely nest, but a practical one for the district. Living in the suburbs of the world, the mother albatross cannot be too insistent on having a beautiful home.

In this moss-lined hollow she sits, and her mate squats before her on the ground. If you have the effrontery to stay and watch the albatross making love to his wife you will see him sitting there, profoundly proclaiming his affection and loyalty and demonstrating with motions of endearment. They cross bills, stroke each other's neck, chatter with their bills together until you can only see a blur. Then they point their bills skyward and squeal like little pigs. With a resounding clap they strike their bills together, gobble, caterwaul and chatter. Then the male rises, struts about like a general, poses head held high and wings out-stretched, and thus calls her to come down.

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This she does and he takes her place, bowing and declaring his love.

A single white egg, 4 inches long, and smoothly shaped, is laid on the dais-like nest. Then begins the long incubation period. One of the pair stays with the nest, never moving from its position, while the other flies away to sea. It climbs to the top of a hill, and racing down the slope, wings outstretched like a glider, takes off into the wind. Mother Nature, like man, seems to have found that to make a large ship which could fly long distances she must compromise with a long and tedious ascent. To fly from the surface of the water, the albatross must first taxi 70 to 80 feet on the surface, propelling itself with its paddle-like feet.

The holiday from duty may last from 6 to 10 days, and in the time the bird will travel many miles across the ocean. On its search for food it will probably convoy a ship on part of its voyage. If the offal from the ship is not enough to satisfy its appetite it will swing toward shore and feed in the inlets and bays or around the islands. Mollusks, fish spawn, carrion and small marine animals make up the diet. Then, heavy with food and barely able to take off into the air, it wings back to the other parent, who has been patiently waiting at home. The two change places and the free bird flies away to take a holiday and fill its stomach. The new guardian of the nest is then able to digest its meal. Piles of indigestible bones of the creatures it has eaten, beaks of cuttlefish, etc., regurgitated in a circle around the base of the cone, are proof of the fact that it never leaves the nest.

Hatching from the egg, the young albatross sits on weak, gangling legs and waits to be fed just the same as a young robin nestling. It is covered with a coat of snow-white down from its head to the tips of its awkward, pointed wings. This color it keeps till adulthood. For the first few weeks it stays in the nest, crawling frantically back up if removed from it. Later in the summer it becomes more bold and ventures out to play with other young. At the end of the summer it is big enough to fly away. This is a great occasion for the youngster, who finds himself suddenly left alone by his parents and obliged to protect himself. Unceremoniously he is given his wings. Mystified by his inexperience he flies away from his island training school and over the adventurous ocean. High in a gray and white sky soars this graceful gray and white bird—quietly making his way into the world and its criss-crossing shipping lanes.

Into these vital shipping lanes upon which the world depends so much for harmonious living go the young and the old albatross. Wings from the blue protect them. Wings that rise from the ground with the throaty roar of man-made motors. Wings which dive and climb, turn and twist, and fight with furied and vicious movements of revenge. Wings which climb to the sky at dawn to circle and patrol, and return in the blue of the night satisfied that nothing has been harmed.

Blow your nose gently to clean it, not vigorously and dirty up your sinuses.

RED TAPE LANGUAGE

(From Time Magazine)

Latest organization in Washington is The Wafflebottom Club, so named because its businessmen members wait long hours on cane-seated chairs in Government ante-rooms. (World War I also saw wafflebottoms.)

Other recent additions to the language, from the Washington scene: The "Milk Route" is the daily round of visits a businessman makes trying to get a defence order, to OPM, SPAB, OPA, ODT, War, Navy, Treasury and Agriculture Departments. A "Torch Bearer" is a sympathetic Government subordinate who actually takes up a case and follows its through.

The Air Forces News Letter compiled a glossary of red-tape official-ese in wartime Washington:

Under consideration means: never heard of it.

Under active consideration means: will have a shot at finding the file. Has received careful consideration: A period of inactivity covering time lag.

Have you any remarks?: Give me some idea of what it's all about. That project is in the air: Am completely ignorant of the subject. You will remember: You have forgotten, or never knew, because I don't.

Transmitted to you: You hold the bag a while—I'm tired of it.

Concur generally: Haven't read the document and don't want to be bound by anything I say.

In conference: Gone out—don't know where he is.

Kindly expedite reply: For God's sake try and find the papers.

Passed to higher authority: Pigeon-holed in more sumptuous office.

In abeyance: A state of grace for

OF COURSE YOU KNOW

Sergeants always talk out of the side of their mouths and look tough, but underneath it all they have a heart of gold . . . all the meals are beans and potatoes, day in and day out, but nobody minds . . . you really don't have to get up at reveille if you don't want to . . . a timely wisecrack will always keep you off fatigue duty . . . Officers always consult Rookies on intricate military problems . . . aviators always stick gum on the side of their plane before a take-off . . . and, whenever you're short of money, your buddies are always good for a ten buck touch . . . **—IN THE MOVIES!**
—Mather. Field (U.S.A.)
Wing Tips.

a disgraceful state.

Appropriate action: Do you know what to do with it? We don't.

Giving him the picture: Long, confusing and inaccurate statement to a newcomer.

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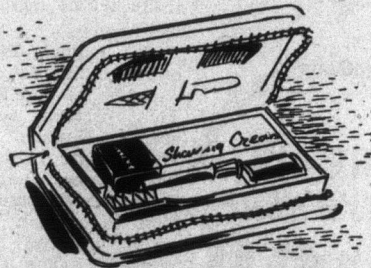
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