

AN UNUSUAL SPRING.

Bill Nye Describes the Kind They Have in California—He Visits Another Ostrich Farm.

Habits of This Wonderful Bird—How They May Be Caught—A Picture of the Toy Cowboy.

(Copyright, 1933, by Edgar W. Nye.)

IN CALIFORNIA.

Florida is the home of the unusual winter, but California is the place where the unusual spring grows the rankest. The sun burst forth with a glad, wide smile a month ago as we entered San Francisco, and people told us we could now give our umbrellas away. I picked out a deserving poor man who had no other clothing and said to him, "Here, my man, take this and dress up." I handed him a costly umbrella marked down from 75 cents. "Here, my man," said the man with the style of clothing used by the California candidates for the Venus of Milo, "take this umbrella and sort of primp up a little."

ON THE OSTRICH FARM.

Then the heavens opened at San Diego, and another of those unusual springs that have caused me through life caught me with polished shoes and a high hat. When you come here, get a white hat of the rancho variety. They are made in Philadelphia, but grow to maturity in this climate. It has an embossed leather band suited to the owner's condition in life. It may cost from \$2 to \$10, and the hat is \$10. It is light gray, semi-stiff, with a flat brim, and becomes more valuable as it becomes disreputable and filled with dust and perspiration. With one of these hats and a pair of goat or dogskin "chaps" on the legs and a 3-pound spur on each foot, also a pair of riding pants made with a county seat to them, one is dressed for tea or an exhilarating ride in a street car.

Should you ride horseback, as some do, in these clothes, and the horse be malingering at the time, your horse clothes will add to the flavor of the meal, especially if you use corduroy for your suit, as it smells more like a day in Constantinople than anything you can get this side of the ocean.

Long since I have ceased to reproach the weather. The weather is what it was made to be. It means well, but very little religious advancement can be made this spring in southern California. Pastors here tell me that they can see a noted falling off in Santa Barbara in the attendance at the Look Up legion here and in the Lend a Hand society also since the weather fetched loose.

There is a Home for Disabled Spiritual Mediums also at Santa Barbara, and this spring there has been a retrogression there bordering on incomprehension. As the Do Good society's parlors members now hold their umbrellas in their hands even through service instead of leaving them in the hall or in the pastor's study where they can drain into his last year's sermons. They are ruined, for a sermon should be kept perfectly dry.

I have been given by Lieutenant Chase of the army a bag of seeds from the sequoia trees of the state. He says they will grow easily in North Carolina. I will plant them there, and friends are invited to come there when they mature, in 6,000 years from this spring, and we will have a basket picnic, after which I will speak.

The sequoia is like a number of men I have met here—chiefly remarkable for having been here first. I subscribed last week \$5 for the relief of a man who frankly admitted that, aside from that, there was nothing whatever the matter with him.

I visited another ostrich farm the other day. I can hardly keep away from this strange bird. Ostrich eggs are worth \$150.75 per dozen. They are good to eat, and six of them will make a man a meal.

The ostrich cannot be got by means of the horse. He never runs. He just walks; but, oh, how they do emerge from where they were and arrive elsewhere! They also do not run away in a bunch, but scatter at once in every direction, so that the swiftest rider is bewildered. The bird seems to raise the head, shrug shoulders, and with scarcely a feeling of interest in the chase it just simply awakes time for distance like a telephone.

The only way to catch an ostrich is to appeal to its appetite, which is its only intellect, for its brain and body are as unquiescent as those of a pugilist. You take a sack of corn in a bag and start out after a bird that seems to lag a little, and if you know how and also have a little salt put on the tail of the bird you are as likely to secure him inside of six weeks as you would be on horseback.

The first importer of ostriches to America told me that he got them off the boat at San Diego and put them in the corral, but in his gladness of being again on land an old gent ostrich kicked down a quarter of a mile of stone wall and escaped. So did the others. They saw no reason why they should remain, and so they went also, disliking as they did the business of laying large warm eggs at \$12.50

each with no freedom. It took that year to recover the birds. This is as awkward as raising pineapples on my upright farm in North Carolina. Making a study of the ostrich, I know very little of it as a shrub and did not know until recently whether it was a citrus or deciduous fruit. I have therefore been taken advantage of by dealers, I now see, and have in fact been trying to graft the Rhode Island Greening on the Jack pine.

The ostrich can eat objects larger than the neck, which seems impossible. Big boots or mangals are used for food as well as grain. These mangals grow to the size of a person's thigh (I decline to give the person's name). And with a hatchet an ostrich hatchet—the owner chops off the big end of the best and tosses it to the bird, who swallows it entirely whole. You see it as it goes down the neck, sometimes before and then again on the side or back of the neck, like a traveling tumor, till it strikes the gizzard of this beautiful sonnet.

One of the female birds laid a set of croquet balls for the editor of the paper here and then began on a big Red Hot dog. With a bottle of diamond dye and a quart of cracked wheat she would surprise even people who have lived in New York and who know almost everything.

The birds are good to eat, and the second joint will relieve the range of hunger for hours. The ostrich has a wishbone that is often used to plow corn with or cultivate the soil of the orange orchard. The kick of an ostrich will split an oak stump or knock off \$5 on a hotel bill.

One of them seemed quite fond of me and ate a large stuffed horned toad out of my pocket. I got so I could hold him by one wing and feel of his plumes—the ostriches plumes, I mean. They have a sort of graceful yet awkward walk, which some critics have charged me with when exiting from the stage. It is called the Soudan teeter.

Here at Santa Barbara a strange incident occurred not long ago. General Burnett, a coast special agent for the pension bureau, told me about it. An old pensioner and livery and baggage man worth \$50,000 was discovered to be drawing pension for the loss of an arm, while his widow in the east was drawing a pension also.

He confessed that the wife's father had given her notice by forged papers of the husband's death and then assured the husband in like manner of the wife's death, so that after the war he had come to California alone, leaving his children, along with the villainous grandfather, who had taken this method of educating the children in the Catholic church, the father being a Protestant.

After some married here and for 13 years has lived with his second wife, totally ignorant of the other wife's existence. He could not of course succeed in getting possession of his children by his first marriage, but was blessed with a second crop of California children, which answered every purpose.

I found the house to be a rather interesting story framed situated between two brown stone fronts. You will find the same thing on a dozen streets in New York, Boston, Philadelphia or Chicago. The property belongs to an estate or to some one who is obstinate or indifferent to the march of improvement. The door was opened by a colored woman, who seated me in a very plainly furnished parlor and then disappeared. In about five minutes she returned and asked me to walk up stairs, and on reaching the second floor she opened the door of a back room and ushered me in. There were two occupants, both men. One was lying on a bed, coat and shoes off and a fan in his hand, and the other sat reading a newspaper at a centre table. The man was a free and easy looking fellow, but he was a burglar, but he had no luck with the cards. He became disgusted at the end of half an hour and threw down the pasteboards and began asking questions about newspaper work, while the one on the bed indulged in a nap. I explained to him how the staff of a newspaper was made up, the work required of the various individuals, the process of stereotyping, how the proof sheets were corrected and how the paper was printed. I listened with much interest. When midnight came, we were still talking, and he interrupted me to arouse his companion and say:

"We will now be going. We are going from here directly to the house of the free and easy looking fellow. If you think to give us the slip en route, let me tell you that it will result in your getting hurt. Conduct yourself in a sensible manner, and you'll come out of this all right."

I had two plans. One was to make a dash for it on the street, the other to call upon the first policeman we encountered. When we reached the street, I was placed between the two, and I realized I had no show to make a bolt. The streets were as quiet as a graveyard, and in the walk of one block did not even meet a dog. The house of the chief was a detached 3-story brick, with an alley in rear of it. The burglars must have "piped it off" beforehand, for they seemed to know just what to do. We went down the alley to a gate, passed through that into the back yard and advanced almost to the kitchen door before we halted. As we stopped I saw that the kitchen window to the left of the door was raised and had a fly screen in it. It had been a rainy afternoon, and I had on rubbers, and both men were shivering for cold.

"Now, then," whispered the one who had been called Jim, "you and I are going into the house through that window, and Tom is to remain on the lookout. We wouldn't have carried this thing along this far if we hadn't intended to get through to the end."

If I stubbornly refused, what course would they take? You will say that you would have run the chances. You may argue that you would have uttered a sudden shout for help, and that they would have shot. I believe that I should have done for help. I had plenty of time to take the men up, and I was satisfied that they were a couple of very desperate fellows. There was an old chair under the window. Jim stood on this and cut out the wire screen and entered the opening, while Tom urged me to follow. As I landed in the kitchen Jim whispered:

"Do you feel this revolver? I don't propose to shoot any of the family unless I am ordered, but let you try to play dirt on me I'll let you have it offhand! You are to follow me!"

We passed into the dining room without the aid of a light, but once in there the burglar produced a dark lantern which I held up before me. There was a fine display of silverware on the sideboard, but after picking up a sugar bowl and hefting it he shook his head and replaced it. He led the way into the front hall and up stairs and I followed him. As we turned at the top we were before the open door of a bedroom which was dimly lighted by a low gas jet. I made out two forms on the bed, and the heavy and regular breathing proved that both were asleep. There was a chair close to the door, and the burglar handed me the dark lantern and motioned me to the seat. He then advanced to the bed and took the chief's watch from under his pillow. The next move was to inspect the clothing hanging on a chair. He got a wallet, and he brought watch and wallet

to take care of. He then glided over to the dresser, and I caught the flash of a diamond earring as he lifted it up. Was I frightened? Yes, so much so that I was choked for breath. The very silence of the house was enough to rattle me. Chills ran up and down my spine, and I had to make a determined effort to prevent my teeth clicking together.

The burglar evidently thought the drawers of the dresser contained valuables, for he knelt down to investigate them. This dresser stood about six feet from the bed and on the side occupied by the chief. I was shaking and gasping and the burglar was inspecting the second drawer when there was a sudden flash and the report of a revolver. The chief had been awakened, and his pistol, overlooked by the burglar, was where he could reach it without any movement to betray himself. At the sound of the discharge I rose up, flung everything down and rushed for the stairs. I presume I rolled from top to bottom, for I don't remember passing through the dining room or crossing the kitchen. As I dropped from the window Tom was running away, and some one at a window above was shouting for the police. I dashed for the gate and out of the alley and ran a mile before stopping. After getting my breath and doing a little figuring I returned to the house. The police were taking a dead man away—a burglar who had been shot through the head and instantly killed. The other two of them, the chief and the burglar, had escaped. "Our esteemed contemporary" didn't happen around, and I got a "scoop." Furthermore, I wrote it up in a way to please the chief, and we bridged the chasm. Did I ever tell how that burglary had been? I said to myself that Jimmie was not before I had told him a tenth part of the story he laughingly interrupted me with:

"Oh, come off! Of all the newspaper larks on the face of the earth you take the cake!"

M. QUAD'S SKETCHES.

A Reporter's Experiences with Burglars—Hearing from Jimmie.

(Copyright, 1933, by Charles B. Lewis.)

"What! Another suburban burglary?" growled the city editor as I handed in a half column "scoop" one night at midnight.

"Yes, and the police have no clue." "How many does this make?" "This is the seventh in three weeks, and no arrests."

"Have you given the police fits yet?" "Yes. I have stated that the detectives have utterly failed to get on—chief of police seems to be perfectly helpless—citizens talk of a vigilance committee—gang calling out the police every official head. The mayor had better bounce the police force and then step down and out himself."

"Good! The old man will back us on the editorial page, and The Star will send to New York for a couple of first class detectives and have the honor of breaking up this gang. Keep mum, but hustle. It's our golden opportunity."

Seven residences in the eastern addition had been burglarized, one after another, and all doubtless by the same detective and have the honor of breaking up this gang. Keep mum, but hustle. It's our golden opportunity."

In two instances an intruder had been seen and his description furnished, but the police had arrested a score of "suspects" only to turn them loose again. After the first three cases I had been instructed to "turn loose" on the police, and I had followed instructions so vigorously as to endanger every official head.

I sprang up and was menaced with the revolver. I threatened and was ridiculed. I defied them, and the man at the table even threatened to tie me and give you a big "scoop" besides.

"What! Commit a burglary with you?" "Exactly. We are going to clean out the chief's police, just as Jimmie did. We are going to make our last haul to-night and then skip. You are going along with us!"

"After a little reflection I saw that my policy was to appear to submit. They came about the chief's house, while the burglar was in the house. I started to go out, but I did not doubt it. In my articles on the burglars I had advised citizens to shoot the fellows on sight and had hinted about ropes and lamp-posts in case of capture. In one case I had spoken of the burglars as cowards. On top of this The Star was to employ outside detectives to hunt them down. The men did not say they wanted revenge on me, but I made up my mind they were actuated by no other motive. After a brief council with myself I decided to call on the chief and the colored woman were the sole occupants of the house. She acted as housekeeper and probably knew all about them. Nothing was said by any of us for 10 minutes after the man had given me the recorded above record. Then the same one quietly observed:

"I suppose you play euchre?" "Yes." "All right. Let's have a game to kill time."

I drew up to the table, and we began playing. There was no question of his skill as a burglar, but he had no luck with the cards. He became disgusted at the end of half an hour and threw down the pasteboards and began asking questions about newspaper work, while the one on the bed indulged in a nap. I explained to him how the staff of a newspaper was made up, the work required of the various individuals, the process of stereotyping, how the proof sheets were corrected and how the paper was printed. I listened with much interest. When midnight came, we were still talking, and he interrupted me to arouse his companion and say:

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"Now, then," whispered the one who had been called Jim, "you and I are going into the house through that window, and Tom is to remain on the lookout. We wouldn't have carried this thing along this far if we hadn't intended to get through to the end."

If I stubbornly refused, what course would they take? You will say that you would have run the chances. You may argue that you would have uttered a sudden shout for help, and that they would have shot. I believe that I should have done for help. I had plenty of time to take the men up, and I was satisfied that they were a couple of very desperate fellows. There was an old chair under the window. Jim stood on this and cut out the wire screen and entered the opening, while Tom urged me to follow. As I landed in the kitchen Jim whispered:

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The man on the cot to my right in the hospital had been wounded by a fragment of shell, and for the first three or four days the surgeons said he had a living chance, but then there was a change for the worse, and one afternoon the nurse told him that his hours were numbered. Two or three times a day he had asked if any letter had come for him, and one night I had heard him talking about "Jimmie," and praying that he might live to see him.

"I suppose you play euchre?" "Yes." "All right. Let's have a game to kill time."

I drew up to the table, and we began playing. There was no question of his skill as a burglar, but he had no luck with the cards. He became disgusted at the end of half an hour and threw down the pasteboards and began asking questions about newspaper work, while the one on the bed indulged in a nap. I explained to him how the staff of a newspaper was made up, the work required of the various individuals, the process of stereotyping, how the proof sheets were corrected and how the paper was printed. I listened with much interest. When midnight came, we were still talking, and he interrupted me to arouse his companion and say:

"We will now be going. We are going from here directly to the house of the free and easy looking fellow. If you think to give us the slip en route, let me tell you that it will result in your getting hurt. Conduct yourself in a sensible manner, and you'll come out of this all right."

I had two plans. One was to make a dash for it on the street, the other to call upon the first policeman we encountered. When we reached the street, I was placed between the two, and I realized I had no show to make a bolt. The streets were as quiet as a graveyard, and in the walk of one block did not even meet a dog. The house of the chief was a detached 3-story brick, with an alley in rear of it. The burglars must have "piped it off" beforehand, for they seemed to know just what to do. We went down the alley to a gate, passed through that into the back yard and advanced almost to the kitchen door before we halted. As we stopped I saw that the kitchen window to the left of the door was raised and had a fly screen in it. It had been a rainy afternoon, and I had on rubbers, and both men were shivering for cold.

"Now, then," whispered the one who had been called Jim, "you and I are going into the house through that window, and Tom is to remain on the lookout. We wouldn't have carried this thing along this far if we hadn't intended to get through to the end."

If I stubbornly refused, what course would they take? You will say that you would have run the chances. You may argue that you would have uttered a sudden shout for help, and that they would have shot. I believe that I should have done for help. I had plenty of time to take the men up, and I was satisfied that they were a couple of very desperate fellows. There was an old chair under the window. Jim stood on this and cut out the wire screen and entered the opening, while Tom urged me to follow. As I landed in the kitchen Jim whispered:

"Do you feel this revolver? I don't propose to shoot any of the family unless I am ordered, but let you try to play dirt on me I'll let you have it offhand! You are to follow me!"

We passed into the dining room without the aid of a light, but once in there the burglar produced a dark lantern which I held up before me. There was a fine display of silverware on the sideboard, but after picking up a sugar bowl and hefting it he shook his head and replaced it. He led the way into the front hall and up stairs and I followed him. As we turned at the top we were before the open door of a bedroom which was dimly lighted by a low gas jet. I made out two forms on the bed, and the heavy and regular breathing proved that both were asleep. There was a chair close to the door, and the burglar handed me the dark lantern and motioned me to the seat. He then advanced to the bed and took the chief's watch from under his pillow. The next move was to inspect the clothing hanging on a chair. He got a wallet, and he brought watch and wallet

to take care of. He then glided over to the dresser, and I caught the flash of a diamond earring as he lifted it up. Was I frightened? Yes, so much so that I was choked for breath. The very silence of the house was enough to rattle me. Chills ran up and down my spine, and I had to make a determined effort to prevent my teeth clicking together.

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The burglar evidently thought the drawers of the dresser contained valuables, for he knelt