



Prince Valiant

IN THE DAYS OF
KING ARTHUR
BY
HAROLD R. FOSTER



80TH ANNIVERSARY FREE COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLET



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Comics' Sweeping Graphic Novel, Prince Valiant, Turns 80

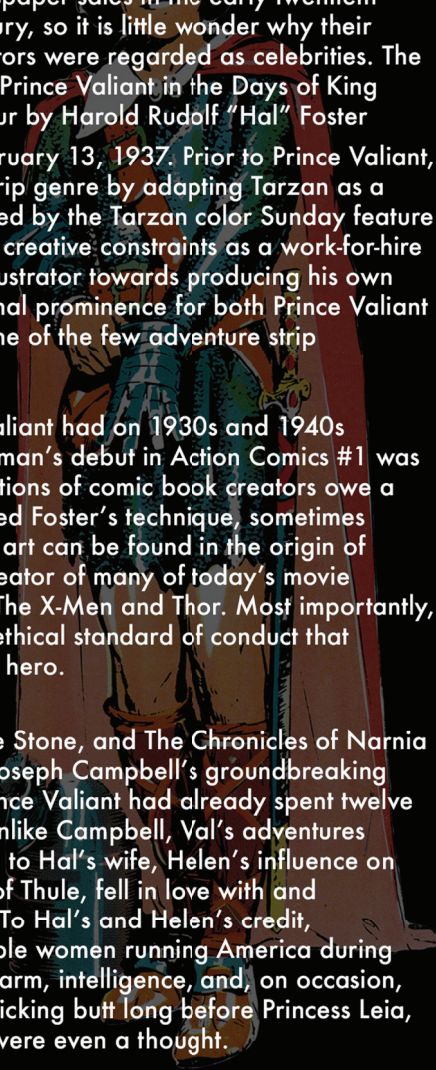
by Brian M. Kane

Before television, when most films were still black & white, the Sunday comics were an oasis of color in a Depression-era gray world. Highly popular comic strips drove newspaper sales in the early twentieth century, so it is little wonder why their creators were regarded as celebrities. The epic Prince Valiant in the Days of King Arthur by Harold Rudolf "Hal" Foster

Foster premiered in the color comics section on February 13, 1937. Prior to Prince Valiant, Foster originated the adult-protagonist adventure strip genre by adapting Tarzan as a black & white daily strip in 1928, which was followed by the Tarzan color Sunday feature from 1931-1937. Faced with imposing financial and creative constraints as a work-for-hire artist, Foster focused his considerable skills as an illustrator towards producing his own strip. The extraordinary effort resulted in international prominence for both Prince Valiant and Foster. Today, after 80 years, "Val" remains one of the few adventure strip characters still in print.

It is difficult to imagine the impact Foster's Prince Valiant had on 1930s and 1940s popular culture. When Prince Valiant began, Superman's debut in Action Comics #1 was still over a year away. Many of the first two generations of comic book creators owe a great debt to Foster. Young comic book artists studied Foster's technique, sometimes copying panels from his strips. "Swipes" of Foster's art can be found in the origin of Batman, and comics drawn by Jack Kirby, the co-creator of many of today's movie heroes, including Captain America, The Avengers, The X-Men and Thor. Most importantly, Val epitomized a knightly moral code, creating an ethical standard of conduct that exemplified truth, justice, and what it meant to be a hero.

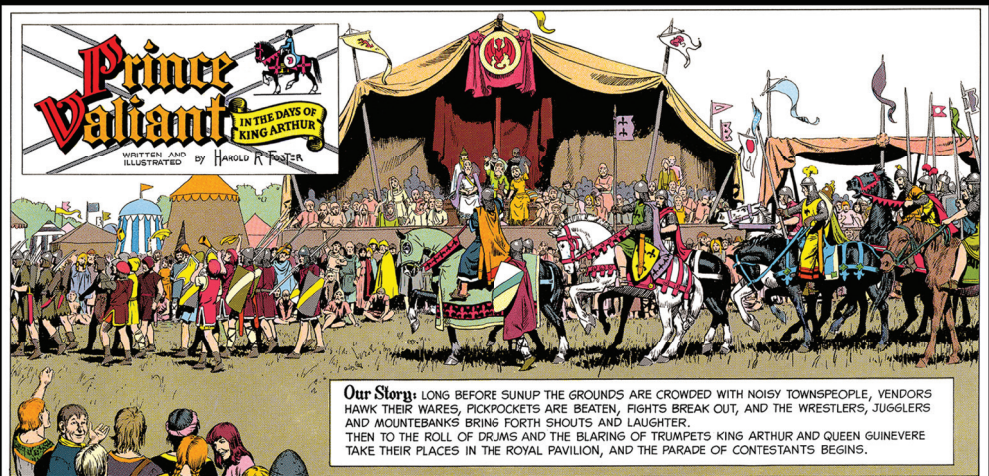
Seminal works such as *The Hobbit*, *The Sword in the Stone*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* were nonexistent in February of 1937. By the time Joseph Campbell's groundbreaking *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* was published, Prince Valiant had already spent twelve years on his own monomythic hero's journey. Yet, unlike Campbell, Val's adventures included strong, self-reliant, heroic women; attesting to Hal's wife, Helen's influence on the strip. To the uninitiated, Valiant, a lowly Prince of Thule, fell in love with and eventually married Aleta, Queen of the Misty Isles. To Hal's and Helen's credit, Aleta became a role model for the millions of capable women running America during World War II; fighting off offenders with her wit, charm, intelligence, and, on occasion, a hidden dagger strapped to her thigh. Aleta was kicking butt long before Princess Leia, Katniss Everdeen, or most of the Disney princesses were even a thought.



Though set in the time of King Arthur, Foster's Prince Valiant was surprisingly contemporary. During World War II, Val fought the Huns, resulting in the strip being canceled in German newspapers. In 1943, Val befriended a boy with a withered leg who could not "play soldier" with the other boys. Nevertheless, the boy was encouraged to hone his skills so that one day he could be "arrow-maker to King Arthur." The story appeared a year into a polio epidemic and 16 months after Pearl Harbor, and was a call to service to all who could not go off to fight. After the war, as American troops returned home, Val and Aleta sailed to the "New World" and had a son, heralding the coming baby boom. Then, as the demographics of 1950s America changed, multi-cultural couples in Prince Valiant married and had children just as they did in the popular sitcom I Love Lucy.



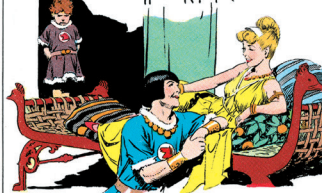
Foster's Prince Valiant is not just an adventure, or romance, or humor strip—though it is sprinkled with all those elements. Prince Valiant is a graphic novel about life where people fall in love, wars are fought, children are born and grow older, hearts are broken, friends die in battle, couples marry, and even disfigured and disabled characters young and old, male and female have a place and purpose in this brave world Foster fashioned. While some may feel Prince Valiant is archaic by today's standards, perhaps its unabashedly inclusive "Might for Right" message is simply ahead of its time. Long live Vall



Prince Valiant

IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR

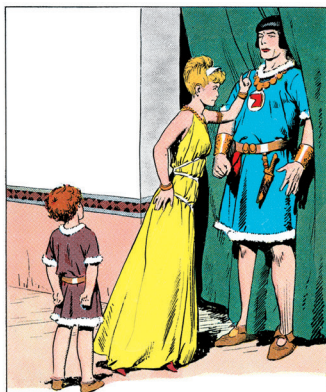
By HAROLD R. FOSTER



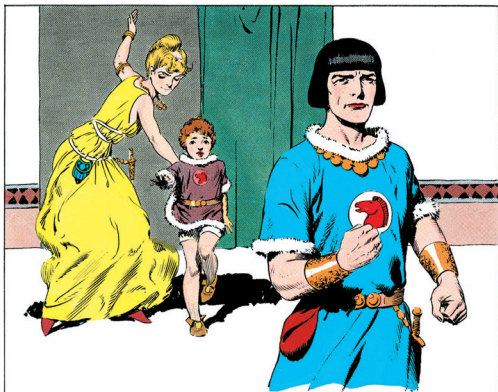
Our Story TURNS TO A CURIOUS INCIDENT AS TOLD BY PRINCE ARN: "I HAVE OFTEN HEARD MY SIRE CALL MOMMIE A LITTLE WITCH, BUT I KNOW SHE IS A GREAT SORCERESS AND CAN CAST A SPELL THAT MAKES A WARRIOR OR PRINCE ACT AS SILLY AS A PUPPY. THEN ONE DAY I DISCOVERED A MAGIC WORD THAT COULD BREAK HER SPELL!"



"MY SIRE CALLED HER A 'PLUMP LITTLE PIGEON' AND SHE SCREAMED 'PLUMP!' AND PUSHED HIM AWAY."



"I COULD SEE THAT ALL WAS OVER BETWEEN THEM, BUT I WAS GLAD MY SIRE DID NOT DRAW HIS SWORD AND SLAY HER, FOR SHE CALLED HIM THINGS NO ONE ELSE WOULD DARE!"



"I THOUGHT IT MY DUTY TO STAY AS HER PROTECTOR NOW THAT MY SIRE WAS LEAVING, BUT WHEN I TRIED TO USE THE MAGIC WORD STOOD BEFORE HER AND SAID 'PLUMP' SHE STOOPT TO VIOLENCE, SO I THREW IN WITH MY SIRE."



"WE STRODE OUT OF THE PALACE--HE DID; I HAD TO RUN. I OFFERED TO RETURN FOR THE SWORDS BUT HE DIDN'T ANSWER. THEN AS WE PASSED BENEATH A WINDOW MY SIRE RECEIVED A FELL BLOW UPON THE CROWN AND A VOICE HISSED: 'PLUMP, AM I?'"



"I WILL BE YOUR TRUE COMPANION AND WE WILL GO ADVENTURING TO AVALON, CARCASONNE AND FAR CATHAY," I CRIED. BUT HE ONLY SAID: 'GO JUMP IN THE SEA!' HE WAS NO FUN AT ALL!"

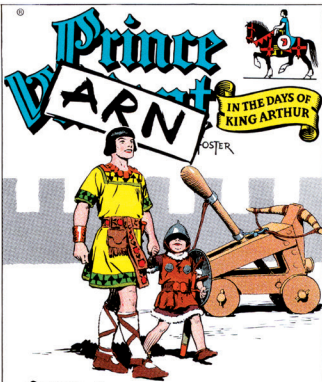


"THEN MOMMIE CAME AND LAUGHED THAT LITTLE LAUGH THAT SORT OF TICKLES INSIDE. I LEFT, FOR I KNEW WHAT WAS COMING BY THE SILLY LOOK ON HIS FACE. HOW SUCH PEOPLE CAN RULE A KINGDOM, I DON'T KNOW!"



"IF EVER A WOMAN TRIES TO GET ME UNDER HER SPELLS I SHALL LOOK HER IN THE EYE AND SAY: 'PLUMP!'"

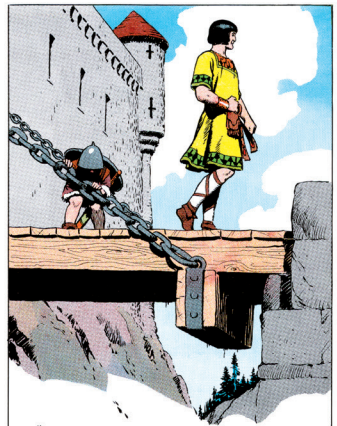
NEXT WEEK--The Pilgrimage.



Synopsis: "MY LIFE OF ADVENTURE BEGAN WHEN MY SIRE, PRINCE VALIANT, RETURNED FROM HIS LONG QUEST AND DISCOVERED THAT I HAD BECOME A MAN-ALMOST. I DECIDED TO BE HIS TRUSTED COMPANION AND WE WOULD GO QUESTING TOGETHER."



"WHILE HE WAS INSPECTING THE HORSES I TRIED TO PICK ONE OUT FOR MYSELF, BUT THEY WERE ALL SO TERRIBLY BIG!"



"NEXT WE HAD TO GO TO THE RIVER TO SEE IF THE SALMON WERE RUNNING YET. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD BEEN OUTSIDE THE CASTLE GROUNDS."



"I STOPPED TO BATTLE A HORDE OF DAVES WITH GOLDEN HELMETS, AND SLEW HUNDREDS"

"WHEN I REACHED THE RIVER MY SHIELD SLIPPED OFF MY ARM AND I HAD TO CLIMB DOWN THE CLIFF TO GET IT. MY FATHER WAS NOWHERE IN SIGHT."

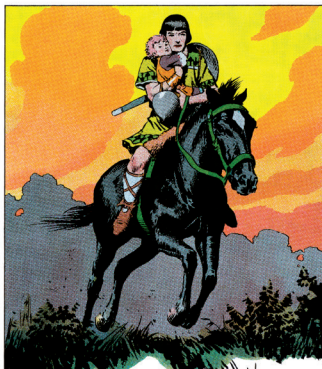


"BUT SOME PEOPLE ACROSS THE RIVER WERE AWFULLY EXCITED. I COULD NOT HEAR WHAT THEY WERE SHOUTING, FOR THE RIVER ROARS ANGRY HERE."

"I STARTED HOME, BUT THE WAY WAS VERY LONG AND STRANGE. THE CASTLE WAS NOT WHERE I LEFT IT, BUT I COULD HEAR PEOPLE CALLING MY NAME IN THE DISTANCE."



"I WAS HUNGRY AND MET A BEAST THAT LOOKED HUNGRY TOO! CLOSE AT HAND I COULD HEAR MY SIRE SHOUTING AND THE THUNDER OF HOOFs."




"THEN A SPEAR HURTLIED BY AND THE BEAST FELL. MY SIRE, THE PRINCE, HELD ME VERY TIGHT AS WE GALLOPPED HOME"



"SOON I WAS SAFE IN MOMMIE'S ARMS WHERE NO HARM CAN EVER TOUCH ME. IN A STRANGE, TIGHT LITTLE VOICE SHE SAID TO MY FATHER: 'SOON ENOUGH HE WILL HAVE THE LOOK OF EAGLES AND THEN YOU WILL TAKE HIM OUT INTO THE WORLD AND TEACH HIM MAN'S WAYS. UNTIL THEN HE IS MINE.'"

NEXT WEEK - The Treaty.



AND THESE TWO WHO WANTED A ROYAL WEDDING PERFORMED BY THE POPE, NO LESS, ARE QUITE CONTENT. THE WIND IN THE TREE-TOPS THEIR ORGAN MUSIC, BIRD-SONG THEIR CHORUS; AS AN EX-CARDINAL JOINS FOR-EVER THE EX-EMPEROR OF SARAMAND AND THE EX-QUEEN OF THE MISTY ISLES. AN EX-EMPRESS OF ROME IS WITNESS.

HAL FOSTER

NOW HERE, ACCORDING TO APPROVED WRITERS OF ROMANCE, THE SAGA OF PRINCE VALIANT SHOULD END. BUT THE WINNING OF ALETA IS ONE THING, COSTING VAL NO MORE THAN HIS HEART, BUT LIVING WITH HER IS ANOTHER STORY..... AND WE THINK THE STORY WORTH TELLING.

NEXT WEEK - *A Small Mating.*

