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 Short stories from 100 Selected Stories*, by O Henry*

* **The Gift of the Magi**
* **A Cosmopolite in a Café**
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**I**

***The Gift of the Magi***

ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS. That was all. And sixty
cents of it were in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by
bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher
until one's cheek burned with the silent imputation of parsimony
that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it.
One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be
Christmas.

There was clearly nothing left to do but flop down on the
shabby little couch and howl. So, Della did it. Which instigates the
moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles,
with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the
first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat
at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it cer­tainly had that word on the look-out for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter
would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger
could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing
the name 'Mr. James Dillingham Young.'

The 'Dillingham' had been flung to the breeze during a former
period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid $30 per
week. Now, when the income was shrunk to $20, the letters of
'Dillingham' looked blurred, as though they were thinking seri­ously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever
Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat
above he was called 'Jim' and greatly hugged by Mrs. James
Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is
all very good.

Delia finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the
powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a
grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard. To-morrow
would be Christmas Day, and she had only $1.87 with which to
buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for

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months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far.
Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always
are. Only $1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy
hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Some­
 thing fine and rare and sterling - something just a little bit near to
being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Per­
 haps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 flat. A very thin and very
agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence
of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his
looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the
glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its
color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair
and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham
Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold
watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other
was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the
airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some
day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had
King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the
basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he
passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shin­ing like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and
made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again
nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood
still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat.
With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her
eyes, she fluttered out of the door and down the stairs to the
street.

Where she stopped the sign read: 'Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods
of All Kinds.' One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, pant­ing. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the 'Sofronie.'

'Will you buy my hair?' asked Della.
'I buy hair,' said Madame. 'Take her hat off and let's have a

sight at the looks of it.'
Down rippled the brown cascade.
'Twenty dollars,' said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced

hand.

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'Give it to me quick,' said Della.
Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget

the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's
present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one
else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had
turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple
and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance
alone and not by meretricious ornamentation - as all good things
should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it
she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and
value - the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they
took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents.
With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about
the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes
looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he
used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to
prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the
gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity
added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends - a
mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-
 lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy.
She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and
critically.

'If Jim doesn't kill me,' she said to herself, 'before he takes a
second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl.
But what could I do - oh! what could I do with a dollar and
eighty-seven cents?'

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on
the back of the stove, hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and
sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered.
Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight,
and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying
little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now
she whispered: 'Please God, make him think I am still pretty.'

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked
thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two - and
to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he
was without gloves.

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Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the
scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an
expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It
was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any
of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared
at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.
'Jim, darling,' she cried, 'don't look at me that way. I had me

hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through
Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again - you
won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully
fast. Say "Merry Christmas!" Jim, and let's be happy. You don't
know what a nice - what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you.'

'You've cut off your hair?' asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had
not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental
labor.

'Cut it off and sold it,' said Della. 'Don't you like me just as
well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, am not I?'

Jim looked about the room curiously.
'You say your hair is gone?' he said with an air almost of idiocy.
'You needn't look for it,' said Della. 'It's sold, I tell you - sold

and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went
for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered,' she went on
with a sudden serious sweetness, 'but nobody could ever count me
love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?'

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his
Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some
inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week
or a million a year - what is the difference? A mathematician or a
wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable
gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be
illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon
the table.

'Don't make any mistake, Dell,' he said, 'about me. I don't think
there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo
that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that
package you may see why you had me going awhile at first.'

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then
an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to
hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment
of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

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For their lay The Combs - the set of combs, side and back, that

Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful
combs, pure tortoiseshell, with jeweled rims - just the shade to
wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs,
she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them
without the least hope of possession. And now they were hers, but
the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were
gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able
to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: 'My hair grows so
fast, Jim!'

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, 'Oh,
oh!'

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to
him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed
to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

'Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll
have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your
watch. I want to see how it looks on it.'

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his
hands under the back of his head and smiled.

'Dell,' said he, 'let's put our Christmas presents away and keep
'Me awhile. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the
watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you
put the chops on.'

The magi, as you know, were wise men - wonderfully wise men
- who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the
art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no
doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case
of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely
sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But
in a last word to the wise of these days, let it be said that of all who
give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive
gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are
the magi.

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**II**

***A Cosmopolite in a Café***

A T MIDNIGHT THE CAFÉ was crowded. By some chance the little
table at which I sat had escaped the eye of incomers, and two
vacant chairs at it extended their arms with venal hospitality to the
influx of patrons.

And then a cosmopolite sat in one of them, and I was glad, for
I held a theory that since Adam no true citizen of the world has
existed. We hear of them, and we see foreign labels on much
luggage, but we find travelers instead of cosmopolites.

I invoke your consideration of the scene - the marble-topped
tables, the range of leather-upholstered wall seats, the gay com­pany, the ladies dressed in demi-state toilets, speaking in an
exquisite visible chorus of taste, economy, opulence or art, the
sedulous and largess-loving *garçons,* the music wisely catering to all
with its raids upon the composers; the *mélange* of talk and laughter
- and, if you will, the Würzburger in the tall glass cones that bend
to your lips as a ripe cherry sway on its branch to the beak of a
robber jay. I was told by a sculptor from Mauch Chunk that the
scene was truly Parisian.

My cosmopolite was named E. Rushmore Colgan, and he will
be heard from next summer at Coney Island. He is to establish a
new 'attraction' there, he informed me, offering kingly diversion.
And then his conversation rang along parallels of latitude and lon­gitude. He took the great, round world in his hand, so to speak,
familiarly, contemptuously, and it seemed no larger than the seed
of a Maraschino cherry in a table-d'hôte grape fruit. He spoke dis­
 respectfully of the equator, he skipped from continent to conti­nent, he derided the zones, he mopped up the high seas with his
napkin. With a wave of his hand, he would speak of a certain
bazaar in Hyderabad. Whiff! He would have you on skis in Lap­
 land. Zip! Now you rode the breakers with the Kanakas at
Keala Kahiki. Presto! He dragged you through an Arkansas post-
 oak swamp, let you dry for a moment on the alkali plains of his
Idaho ranch, then whirled you into the society of Viennese arch­
 dukes. Anon he would be telling you of a cold he acquired in a
Chicago lake breeze and how old Escamilla cured it in Buenos
Ayres with a hot infusion of the *Chuc hula* weed. You would have

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addressed the letter to 'E. Rushmore Colgan, Esq., the Earth,
Solar System, the Universe,' and have mailed it, feeling confident
that it would be delivered to him.

I was sure that I had at last found the one true cosmopolite since
Adam, and I listened to his world-wide discourse fearful lest I
should discover in it the local note of the mere globe-trotter. But
his opinions never fluttered or drooped; he was as impartial to
cities, countries and continents as the winds or gravitation.

And as E. Rushmore Colgan prattled of this little planet I
thought with glee of a great almost-cosmopolite who wrote for the
whole world and dedicated himself to Bombay. In a poem he has
to say that there is pride and rivalry between the cities of the
earth, and that 'the men that breed from them, they traffic up and
down, but cling to their cities' hem as a child to the mother's
gown.' And whenever they walk 'by roaring streets unknown' they
remember their native city 'most faithful, foolish, fond; making
her mere-breathed name their bond upon their bond.' And me
glee was roused because I had caught Mr. Kipling napping. Here I
had found a man not made from dust; one who had no narrow
boasts of birthplace or country, one who, if he bragged at all,
would brag of his whole round globe against the Martians and the
inhabitants of the Moon.

Expression on these subjects was precipitated from E. Rush-
 more Colgan by the third corner to our table. While Colgan was
describing to me the topography along the Siberian Railway the
orchestra glided into a medley. The concluding air was 'Dixie,'
and as the exhilarating notes tumbled forth, they were almost over­
 powered by a great clapping of hands from almost every table.

It is worth a paragraph to say that this remarkable scene can be
witnessed every evening in numerous cafés in the City of New
York. Tons of brew have been consumed over theories to account
for it. Some have conjectured hastily that all Southerners in town
hie themselves to cafés at nightfall. This applause of the 'rebel' air
in a Northern city does puzzle a little; but it is not insolvable. The
war with Spain, many years' generous mint and water-melon
crops, a few long-shot winners at the New Orleans race-track, and
the brilliant banquets given by the Indiana and Kansas citizens
who compose the North Carolina Society, have made the South
rather a 'fad' in Manhattan. Your manicure will lisp softly that
your left forefinger reminds her so much of a gentleman's in Rich­mond, Va. Oh, certainly; but many a lady has to work now - the
war, you know.

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When 'Dixie' was being played a dark-haired young man
sprang up from somewhere with a Mosby guerrilla yell and waved
frantically his soft-brimmed hat. Then he strayed through the
smoke, dropped into the vacant chair at our table and pulled out
cigarettes.

The evening was at the period when reserve is thawed. One of
us mentioned three Wurzburgers to the waiter; the dark-haired
young man acknowledged his inclusion in the order by a smile and
a nod. I hastened to ask him a question because I wanted to try out
a theory I had.

'Would you mind telling me,' I began, 'whether you are from - '
The fist of E. Rushmore Colgan banged the table and I was

jarred into silence.
'Excuse me,' said he, 'but that's a question I never like to hear

asked. What does it matter where a man is from? Is it fair to judge
a man by his post-office address? Why, I've seen Kentuckians who
hated whisky, Virginians who weren't descended from Pocahon­tas, Indianians who hadn't written a novel, Mexicans who didn't
wear velvet trousers with silver dollars sewed along the seams,
funny Englishmen, spendthrift Yankees, cold-blooded Southern­ers, narrow-minded Westerners, and New Yorkers who were too
busy to stop for an hour on the street to watch a one-armed
grocer's clerk does up cranberries in paper bags. Let a man be a man
and don't handicap him with the label of any section.'

'Pardon me,' I said, 'but my curiosity was not altogether an idle
one. I know the South, and when the band plays "Dixie" I like to
observe. I have formed the belief that the man who applauds that
air with special violence and ostensible sectional loyalty is invari­ably a native of either Secaucus, N.J., or the district between
Murray Hill Lyceum and the Harlem River, this city. I was about
to put my opinion to the test by inquiring of this gentleman when
you interrupted with your own - larger theory, I must confess.'

And now the dark-haired young man spoke to me, and it
became evident that his mind also moved along its own set of
grooves.

'I should like to be a periwinkle,' said he, mysteriously, 'on the
top of a valley, and sing too-Rallo-Rallo.'

This was clearly too obscure, so I turned again to Colgan.
'I've been around the world twelve times,' said he. 'I know an

Esquimau in Upernivik who sends to Cincinnati for his neckties,
and I saw a goat-herder in Uruguay who won a prize in a Battle
Creek breakfast-food puzzle competition. I pay rent on a room in

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Cairo, Egypt, and another in Yokohama all the year round. I've
got slippers waiting for me in a tea-house in Shanghai, and I don't
have to tell 'me how to cook my eggs in Rio de Janeiro or Seattle.
It's a mighty little old world. What's the use of bragging about
being from the North, or the South, or the old manor-house in
the dale, or Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, or Pike's Peak, or Fairfax
County, Va., or Hooligan's Flats or any place? It'll be a better
world when we quit being fools about some mildewed town or ten
acres of swampland just because we happened to be born there.'

'You seem to be a genuine cosmopolite,' I said admiringly. 'But
it also seems that you would decry patriotism.'

'A relic of the stone age,' declared Colgan warmly. 'We are all
brothers - Chinamen, Englishmen, Zulus, Patagonians, and the
people in the bend of the Kaw River. Someday all this petty pride
in one's city or state or section or country will be wiped out, and
we'll all be citizens of the world, as we ought to be.'

'But while you are wandering in foreign lands,' I persisted, 'do
not your thoughts revert to some spot - some dear and - '

'Nary a spot,' interrupted E. R. Colgan flippantly. 'The Terres
 trial, globular, planetary hunk of matter, slightly flattened at the
poles, and known as the Earth, is my abode. I've met a good many
object-bound citizens of this country abroad. I've seen men from
Chicago sits in a gondola in Venice on a moonlight night and brag
about their drainage canal. I've seen a Southerner on being introduced to the King of England hand that monarch, without batting
his eyes, the information that his grandaunt on his mother's side
was related by marriage to the Parkinses, of Charleston. I knew a
New Yorker who was kidnapped for ransom by some Afghanistan
bandits. His people sent over the money and he came back to
Kabul with the agent. "Afghanistan?" the natives said to him
through an interpreter. "Well, not so slow, do you think?" "Oh, I
don't know," says he, and he begins to tell them about a cab-driver
at Sixth Avenue and Broadway. Those ideas don't suit me. I'm not
tied down to anything that isn't 8,000 miles in diameter. Just put
me down as E. Rushmore Colgan, citizen of the terrestrial sphere.'

My cosmopolite made a large adieu and left me, for he thought
that he saw someone through the chatter and smoke whom he
knew. So, I was left with the would-be periwinkle, who was reduced
to Würzburger without further ability to voice his aspirations to
perch, melodious, upon the summit of a valley.

I sat reflecting upon my evident cosmopolite and wondering
how the poet had managed to miss him. He was my discovery and

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I believed in him. How was it? 'The men that breed from them
they traffic up and down, but cling to their cities' hem as a child to
the mother's gown.'

Not so E. Rushmore Colgan. With the whole world for his -
 My meditations were interrupted by a tremendous noise and

conflict in another part of the café. I saw above the heads of the
seated patrons E. Rushmore Colgan and a stranger to me engaged
in terrific battle. They fought between the tables like Titans, and
glasses crashed, and men caught their hats up and were knocked
down, and a brunette screamed, and a blonde began to sing 'Teas­ing.'

My cosmopolite was sustaining the pride and reputation of the
Earth when the waiters closed in on both combatants with them
famous flying wedge formation and bore them outside, still resist­ing.

I called McCarthy, one of the French *garçons,* and asked him the
cause of the conflict.

'The man with the red tie' (that was my cosmopolite), said he,
'Got hot on account of things said about the bum sidewalks and
water supply of the place he come from by the other guy.'

'Why,' said I, bewildered, 'that man is a citizen of the world - a
cosmopolite. He - '

'Originally from Metapackage, Maine, he said,' continued
McCarthy, 'and he wouldn't stand for no knock in' the place.'

**III**
**Between Rounds**

THE MAY MOON SHONE BRIGHT upon the private boarding-house
of Mrs. Murphy. By reference to the almanac a large amount of
territory will be discovered upon which its rays also fell. Spring
was in its heyday, with hay fever soon to follow. The parks were
green with new leaves and buyers for the Western and Southern
trade. Flowers and summer-resort agents were blowing; the air
and answers to Lawson were growing milder; hand-organs, foun­
 tains and pinochle were playing everywhere.

The windows of Mrs. Murphy's boarding-house were open. A
group of boarders were seated on the high stoop upon round, flat
mats like German pancakes.

In one of the second-floor front windows Mrs. McCaskey

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awaited her husband. Supper was cooling on the table. Its heat
went into Mrs. McCaskey.

At nine Mr. McCaskey came. He carried his coat on his arm and
his pipe in his teeth; and he apologized for disturbing the boarders
on the steps as he selected spots of stone between them on which
to set his size 9, width Ds.

As he opened the door of his room, he received a surprise.
Instead of the usual stove-lid or potato-masher for him to dodge,
came only words.

Mr. McCaskey reckoned that the benign May moon had soft­
 ended the breast of his spouse.

'I heard ye, ' came the oral substitutes for kitchenware. 'Ye can
apologize to riff-raff of the streets for setting' her unhandy feet on
the tails of their frocks, but ye'd walk on the neck of her wife the
length of a clothes-line without so much as a "Kiss me foot," and
I'm sure, it's that long from rubbering' out the windy for ye and the
victuals cold such as there's money to buy after drink in' up her
wages at Gallegher's every Saturday even in', and the gas man here
twice to-day for his.'

'Woman!' said Mr. McCaskey, dashing his coat and hat upon a
chair, 'the noise of ye is an insult to me appetite. When ye run
down politeness ye take the mortar from between the bricks of the
foundations of society. 'Tis no more than exercising' the acrimony
of a gentleman when ye ask the dissent of ladies' block in' the way
for step-in' between them. Will ye bring the pig's face of ye out of
the windy and see to the food?'

Mrs. McCaskey arose heavily and went to the stove. There was
something in her manner that warned Mr. McCaskey. When the
corners of her mouth went down suddenly like a barometer it usually
foretold a fall of crockery and tinware.

'Pig's face, is it?' said Mrs. McCaskey, and hurled a stewpan full
of bacon and turnips at her lord.

Mr. McCaskey was no novice at repartee. He knew what should
follow the entree. On the table was a roast sirloin of pork, gar­nished with shamrocks. He retorted with this, and drew the
appropriate return of a bread pudding in an earthen dish. A hunk
of Swiss cheese accurately thrown by her husband struck Mrs.
McCaskey below one eye. When she replied with a well-aimed
coffee-pot full of a hot, black, semi-fragrant liquid the battle,
according to courses, should have ended.

But Mr. McCaskey was no 50-cent table d'hôtel. Let cheap
Bohemians consider coffee the end, if they would. Let them make

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that *faux pas.* He was foxier still. Finger-bowls were not beyond
the compass of his experience. They were not to be had in the
Pension Murphy; but their equivalent was at hand. Triumphantly
he sent the granite-ware wash-basin at the head of his matrimo­nial adversary. Mrs. McCaskey dodged in time. She reached for a
flat-iron, with which, as a sort of cordial, she hoped to bring the
gastronomical duel to a close. But a loud, wailing scream down­
 stairs caused both her and Mr. McCaskey to pause in a sort of
involuntary armistice.

On the sidewalk at the corner of the house Policeman Cleary
was standing with one ear upturned, listening to the crash of
household utensils.

' ' T I s Jawn McCaskey and his missus at it again,' meditated the
policeman. 'I wonder shall I go up and stop the row. I will not.
Married folks they are; and few pleasures they have. Twill not last
long. Sure, they'll have to borrow more dishes to keep it up with.'

And just then came the loud scream below-stairs, betokening
fear or dire extremity. ' 'Tis probably the cat,' said Policeman
Cleary, and walked hastily in the other direction.

The boarders on the steps were fluttered. Mr. Toomey, an
insurance solicitor by birth and an investigator by profession,
went inside to analyze the scream. He returned with the news that
Mrs. Murphy's little boy Mike was lost. Following the messenger,
out bounced Mrs. Murphy - two hundred pounds in tears and
hysterics, clutching the air and howling to the sky for the loss of
thirty pounds of freckles and mischief. Bathos, truly; but Mr.
Toomey sat down at the side of Miss Purdy, milliner, and them
hands came together in sympathy. The two old maids, Misses
Walsh, who complained every day about the noise in the halls,
inquired immediately if anybody had looked behind the clock.

Major Grigg, who sat by his fat wife on the top step, arose and
buttoned his coat. 'The little one lost?' he exclaimed. 'I will scour
the city.' His wife never allowed him out after dark. But now she
said: 'Go, Ludovic!' in a baritone voice. 'Whoever can look upon
that mother's grief without springing to her relief has a heart of
stone.' 'Give me some thirty or - sixty cents, my love,' said the
Major. 'Lost children sometimes stray far. I may need car-fares.'

Old man Denny, hall-room, fourth floor back, who sat on the
lowest step, trying to read a paper by the street lamp, turned over
a page to follow up the article about the carpenters' strike. Mrs.
Murphy shrieked to the moon: 'Oh, are-r-Mike, for God's sake,
where is my little bit av a boy?'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
'When'd ye see him last?' asked old man Denny, with one eye

on the report of the Building Trades League.
'Oh,' wailed Mrs. Murphy,' 'twas yesterday, or maybe four

hours ago! I Dunno. But it's lost he is, me little boy Mike. He was
play in' on the sidewalk only this morning' - or was it Wednesday?
I'm that busy with work 'tis hard to keep up with dates. But I've
looked the house over from top to cellar, and it's gone he is. Oh,
for the love av Heven - '

Silent, grim, colossal, the big city has ever stood against its
revilers. They call it hard as iron; they say that no pulse of pity
beats in its bosom; they compare its streets with lonely forests and
deserts of lava. But beneath the hard crust of the lobster is found a
delectable and luscious food. Perhaps a different simile would have
been wiser. Still, nobody should take offence. We would call no
one a lobster without good and sufficient claws.

No calamity so touches the common heart of humanity as does
the straying of a little child. Their feet are so uncertain and feeble;
the ways are so steep and strange.

Major Griggs hurried down to the corner, and up the avenue
into Billy's place. 'Gimme a rye-high,' he said to the servitor.
'Haven't seen a bow-legged, dirty-faced little devil of a six-year-
 old lost kid around here anywhere, have you?'

Mr. Toomey retained Miss Purdy's hand on the steps. 'Think of
that dear little babe,' said Miss Purdy, 'lost from his mother's side
- perhaps already fallen beneath the iron hoofs of galloping steeds
- oh, isn't it dreadful?'

'Isn't that, right?' agreed Mr. Toomey, squeezing her hand. 'Say
I start out and help look for um!'

'Perhaps,' said Miss Purdy, 'you should. But oh, Mr. Toomey,
you are so dashing - so reckless - suppose in your enthusiasm
some accident should befall you, then what - '

Old man Denny read on about the arbitration agreement, with
one finger on the lines.

In the second floor front Mr. and Mrs. McCaskey came to the
window to recover their second wind. Mr. McCaskey was scoop­ing turnips out of his vest with a crooked forefinger, and his lady
was wiping an eye that the salt of the roast pork had not benefited.
They heard the outcry below, and thrust their heads out of the
window.

' 'Tis little Mike is lost,' said Mrs. McCaskey in a hushed voice,
'The beautiful, little, trouble-making angel of a gossoon!'

'The bit of a boy mislaid?' said Mr. McCaskey leaning out of

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

the window. 'Why, now, that's bad enough, entirely. The chalder,
they be different. If 'twas a woman I'd be will in', for they leave
peace behind 'me when they go.'

Disregarding the thrust, Mrs. McCaskey caught her husband's
arm.

'Jawn,' she said sentimentally, 'Missis Murphy's little bye is lost.
'Tis a great city for losing little boys. Six years old he was. Jawn,
'tis the same age our little bye would have been if we had had one
six years ago.'

'We never did,' said Mr. McCaskey, lingering with the fact.
'But if we had, Jawn, think what sorrow would be in our hearts

this night, with our little Phelan run away and stolen in the city
nowhere at all.'

'Ye talk foolishness,' said Mr. McCaskey. ' 'Tis Pat he would be
named, after me old father in Can trim.'

'Ye lie!' said Mrs. McCaskey, without anger. 'Me brother was
worth tin dozen bog-trotting McCaskey's. After him would the bye
be named.' She leaned over the window-sill and looked down at
the hurrying and bustle below.

'Jawn,' said Mrs. McCaskey softly, 'I'm sorry I was hasty wide
ye.'

' Twas hasty pudding', as ye say,' said her husband, 'and hurry-
 up turnips and get-a-move-on-ye coffee. Twas what ye could call
a quick lunch, all right, and tell no lie.'

Mrs. McCaskey slipped her arm inside her husband's and took
his rough hand in hers.

'Listen at the crying' of poor Mrs. Murphy,' she said. ' 'Tis an
awful thing for a bit of a bye to be lost in this great big city. If
'twas our little Phelan, Jawn, I'd be break-in' me heart.'

Awkwardly Mr. McCaskey withdrew his hand. But he laid it
around the nearing shoulders of his wife.

' 'Tis foolishness, of course,' said he, roughly, 'but I'd be cut up
some me self, if our little - Pat was kidnapped or anything. But
there never was any chalder for us. Sometimes I've been ugly and
hard with ye, Judy. Forget it.'

They leaned together, and looked down at the heart-drama
being acted below.

Long they sat thus. People surged along the sidewalk, crowding,
questioning, filling the air with rum ours and inconsequent sur­
 mises. Mrs. Murphy ploughed back and forth in their midst, like a
soft mountain down which plunged an audible cataract of tears.
Couriers came and went.

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

Loud voices and a renewed uproar were raised in front of the
boarding-house.

'What's up now, Judy?' asked Mr. McCaskey.
' 'Tis Missis Murphy's voice,' said Mrs. McCaskey, harking.

she says she's after finding little Mike asleep behind the roll of
old linoleum under the bed in her room.'

Mr. McCaskey laughed loudly.
'That's her Phelan,' he shouted sardonically 'Devil a bit would a

Pat have done that trick if the bye we never had is strayed and
stole, by the powers, call him Phelan, and see him hide out under
the bed like a mangy pup.'

Mrs. McCaskey arose heavily, and went toward the dish closet,
with the corners of her mouth drawn down.

Policeman Cleary came back around the corner as the crowd
dispersed. Surprised, he upturned an ear toward the McCaskey
apartment where the crash of irons and chinaware and the ring of
hurled kitchen utensils seemed as loud as before. Policeman
Cleary took out his timepiece.

'By the deported snakes!' he exclaimed, 'Jawn McCaskey and his
lady have been fighting in' for an hour and a quarter by the watch.
The missis could give him forty pounds weight. Strength to his
arm.'

Policeman Cleary strolled back around the corner.
Old man Denny folded his paper and hurried up the steps just

as Mrs. Murphy was about to lock the door for the night.

**IV**

***The Skylight Room***

FIRST M R S. PARKER would show you the double parlors. You
would not dare to interrupt her description of their advantages
and of the merits of the gentleman who had occupied them for
eight years. Then you would manage to stammer forth the confes­sion that you were neither a doctor nor a dentist. Mrs. Parker's
manner of receiving the admission was such that you could never
afterward entertain the same feeling toward your parents, who had
neglected to train you up in one of the professions that fitted Mrs.
Parker's parlors.

Next you ascended one flight of stairs and looked at the second
floor back at $8. Convinced by her second-floor manner that it

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

was worth the $12 that Mr. Rosenberry always paid for it until
he left to take charge of his brother's orange plantation in Florida
near Palm Beach, where Mrs. McIntyre always spent the winters
that had the double front room with private bath, you managed to
babble that you wanted something still cheaper.

If you survived Mrs. Parker's scorn, you were taken to look at
Mr. Skidder's large hall-room on the third floor. Mr. Skidder's
room was not vacant. He wrote plays and smoked cigarettes in it
all day long. But every room-hunter was made to visit his room to
admire the lambrequins. After each visit, Mr. Skidder, from the
fright caused by possible eviction, would pay something on his
rent.

Then - oh, then - if you still stood on one foot with your hot
hand clutching the three moist dollars in your pocket, and
hoarsely proclaimed your hideous and culpable poverty, never­
 more would Mrs. Parker be cicerone of yours. She would honk
loudly the word 'Clara,' she would show you her back, and march
downstairs. Then Clara, the colored maid, would escort you up
the carpeted ladder that served for the fourth flight, and show you
the Skylight Room. It occupied 7 by 8 feet of floorspace at the
middle of the hall. On each side of it was a dark lumber closet or
store-room.

In it was an iron cot, a washstand and a chair. A shelf was the
dresser. Its four bare walls seemed to close in upon you like the
sides of a coin. Your hand crept to your throat, you gasped, you
looked up as from a well - and breathed once more. Through the
glass of the little skylight you saw a square of blue infinity.

'Two dollars, Suh,' Clara would say in her half-contemptuous,
half-Tuskegee Nial tones.

One day Miss Leeson came hunting for a room. She carried a
typewriter made to be lugged around by a much larger lady. She
was a very little girl, with eyes and hair that kept on growing after
she had stopped and that always looked as if they were saying:
'Goodness me. Why didn't you keep up with us?'

Mrs. Parker showed her the double parlors. 'In this closet,' she
said, 'one could keep a skeleton or anesthetic or coal - '

'But I am neither a doctor nor a dentist,' said Miss Leeson with
a shiver.

Mrs. Parker gave her the incredulous, pitying, sneering, icy
stare that she kept for those who failed to qualify as doctors or
dentists, and led the way to the second floor back.

'Eight dollars?' said Miss Leeson. 'Dear me! I'm not Hetty if I

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
do look green. I'm just a poor little working girl. Show me some­
 thing higher and lower.'

Mr. Skidder jumped and strewed the floor with cigarette stubs
at the rap on his door.

'Excuse me, Mr. Skidder,' said Mrs. Parker, with her demon's
smile at his pale looks. 'I didn't know you were in. I asked the lady
to have a look at your lambrequins.'

'They're too lovely for anything,' said Miss Leeson, smiling in
exactly the way the angels do.

After they had gone Mr. Skidder got very busy erasing the
tall, black-haired heroine from his latest (unproduced) play and
inserting a small, roguish one with heavy, bright hair and vivacious
features.

'Anna Held'll jump at it,' said Mr. Skidder to himself, putting
his feet up against the lambrequins and disappearing in a cloud of
smoke like an aerial cuttlefish.

Presently the tocsin calls of 'Clara!' sounded to the world the
state of Miss Leeson's purse. A dark goblin seized her, mounted
a Stygian stairway, thrust her into a vault with a glimmer of light
in its top and muttered the menacing and cabalistic words 'Two
dollars!'

'I'll take it!' sighed Miss Leeson, sinking down upon the
squeaky iron bed.

Every day Miss Leeson went out to work. At night she brought
home papers with handwriting on them and made copies with her
typewriter. Sometimes she had no work at night, and then she
would sit on the steps of the high stoop with the other roomers.
Miss Leeson was not intended for a skylight room when the plans
were drawn for her creation. She was gay-hearted and full of
tender, whimsical fancies. Once she let Mr. Skidder read to her
three acts of his great (unpublished) comedy, 'It's No Kid; or, The
Heir of the Subway.'

There was rejoicing among the gentlemen roomers whenever
Miss Leeson had time to sit on the steps for an hour or two. But
Miss Longnecker, the tall blonde who taught in a public school
and said 'Well, really!' to everything you said, sat on the top step
and sniffed. And Miss Dorn, who shot at the moving ducks at
Coney every Sunday and worked in a department store, sat on the
bottom step and sniffed. Miss Leeson sat on the middle step, and
the men would quickly group around her.

Especially Mr. Skidder, who had cast her in his mind for the
star part in a private, romantic (unspoken) drama in real life. And

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

especially Mr. Hoover, who was forty-five, fat, flushed and foolish.
And especially very young Mr. Evans, who set up a hollow cough
to induce her to ask him to leave off cigarettes. The men voted her
'The funniest and jolliest ever,' but the sniffs on the top step and
the lower step was implacable.

• • • • •

I pray you let the drama halt while Chorus stalks to the foot­
 lights and drops an epicedian tear upon the fatness of Mr. Hoover.
Tune the pipes to the tragedy of tallow, the bane of bulk, the
calamity of corpulence. Tried out, Falstaff might have rendered
more romance to the ton than would have Romeo's rickety ribs to
the ounce. A lover may sigh, but he must not puff. To the train of
Momus are the fat men remanded. In vain beats the faith fullest
heart above a 52-inch belt. Avaunt, Hoover! Hoover, forty-five,
flush and foolish, might carry off Helen herself; Hoover, forty-
 five, flush, foolish and fat, is meat for perdition. There was never a
chance for you, Hoover.

As Mrs. Parker's roomers sat thus one summer's evening, Miss
Leeson looked up into the firmament and cried with her little gay
laugh:

'Why, there's Billy Jackson! I can see him from down here, too.'
All looked up - some at the windows of skyscrapers, some cast­ing about for an airship, Jackson-guided.
'It's that star,' explained Miss Leeson, pointing with a tiny

finger. 'Not the big one that twinkles - the steady blue one near it.
I can see it every night through my skylight. I named it Billy Jack­
 son.'

'Well, really!' said Miss Longnecker. 'I didn't know you were an
astronomer, Miss Leeson.'

'Oh, yes,' said the small star-gazer, 'I know as much as any of
them about the style of sleeves they're going to wear next fall in
Mars.'

'Well, really!' said Miss Longnecker. 'The star you refer to is
Gamma, of the constellation Cassiopeia. It is nearly of the second
magnitude, and its meridian passage is - '

'Oh,' said the very young Mr. Evans, 'I think Billy Jackson is a
much better name for it.

'Same here,' said Mr. Hoover, loudly breathing defiance to Miss
Longnecker. 'I think Miss Leeson has just as much right to name
stars as any of those old astrologers had.'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
'Well, really!' said Miss Longnecker.
'I wonder whether it's a shooting star,' remarked Miss Dorn. 'I

hit nine ducks and a rabbit out of ten in the gallery at Coney
Sunday.'

'He doesn't show up very well from down here,' said Miss
Leeson. 'You ought to see him from my room. You know you can
see stars even in the daytime from the bottom of a well. At night
my room is like the shaft of a coal-mine, and it makes Billy Jackson
look like the big diamond pin that Night fastens her kimono with.'

There came a time after that when Miss Leeson brought no for­
 midtable papers home to copy. And when she went in the morning,
instead of working, she went from office to office and let her heart
melt away in the drip of cold refusals transmitted through insolent
office boys. This went on.

There came an evening when she wearily climbed Mrs. Parker's
stoop at the hour when she always returned from her dinner at the
restaurant. But she had had no dinner.

As she stepped into the hall Mr. Hoover met her and seized his
chance. He asked her to marry him, and his fatness hovered above
her like an avalanche. She dodged, and caught the balustrade. He
tried for her hand, and she raised it and smote him weakly in the
face. Step by step she went up, dragging herself by the railing.
She passed Mr. Skidder's door as he was red-inking a stage direc­tion for Myrtle Delorme (Miss Leeson) in his (unaccepted)
comedy, to 'pirouette across stage from L to the side of the
Count.' Up the carpeted ladder she crawled at last and opened
the door of the skylight room.

She was too weak to light the lamp or to undress. She fell upon
the iron cot, her fragile body scarcely hollowing the worn springs.
And in that Erebus of a room, she slowly raised her heavy eyelids,
and smiled.

For Billy Jackson was shining down on her, calm and bright and
constant through the skylight. There was no world about her. She
was sunk in a pit of blackness, with but that small square of pallid
light framing the star that she had so whimsically, and oh, so inef­fectually, named. Miss Longnecker must be right; it was Gamma,
of the constellation Cassiopeia, and not Billy Jackson. And yet she
could not let it be Gamma.

As she lay on her back, she tried twice to raise her arm. The
third time she got two thin fingers to her lips and blew a kiss out
of the black pit to Billy Jackson. Her arm fell back limply.

'Good-bye, Billy,' she murmured faintly. 'You're millions of

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

miles away and you won't even twinkle once. But you kept where I
could see you most of the time up there when there wasn't any­
 thing else but darkness to look at, didn't you? . . . Millions of
m I l e s . . .. Good-bye, Billy Jackson.'

Clara, the colored maid, found the door locked at ten the next
day, and they forced it open. Vinegar, and the slapping of wrists
and even burnt feathers, proving of no avail, someone ran to
'Phone for an ambulance.

In due time it backed up to the door with much gong-clanging,
and the capable young medico, in his white linen coat, ready,
active, confident, with his smooth face half debonair, half grim,
danced up the steps.

'Ambulance call to 49,' he said briefly. 'What's the trouble?'
'Oh yes, doctor,' sniffed Mrs. Parker, as though her trouble that

there should be trouble in the house was the greater. 'I can't think
what can be the matter with her. Nothing we could do would
bring her to. It's a young woman, a Miss Elsie - yes, a Miss Elsie
Leeson. Never before in my house - '

'What room?' cried the doctor in a terrible voice, to which Mrs.
Parker was a stranger.

'The skylight rooms. It - '
Evidently the ambulance doctor was familiar with the location

of skylight rooms. He was gone up the stairs, four at a time. Mrs.
Parker followed slowly, as her dignity demanded.

On the first landing she met him coming back bearing the
astronomer in his arms. He stopped and let loose the practiced
scalpel of his tongue, not loudly. Gradually Mrs. Parker crumpled
as a stiff garment that slips down from a nail. Ever afterwards
they're remained crumples in her mind and body. Sometimes her
curious roomers would ask her what the doctor said to her.

'Let that be,' she would answer. 'If I can get forgiveness for
having heard it I will be satisfied.'

The ambulance physician strode with his burden through the
pack of hounds that follow the curiosity chase, and even they fell
back along the sidewalk abashed, for his face was that of one who
bears his own dead.

They noticed that he did not lay down upon the bed prepared
for it in the ambulance the form that he carried, and all that he
said was: 'Drive like h - l, Wilson,' to the driver.

That is all. Is it a story? In the next morning's paper, I saw a
little news item, and the last sentence of it may help you (as it
helped me) to weld the incidents together.

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
It recounted the reception into Bellevue Hospital of a young

woman who had been removed from No. 49 East - Street, suffer­ing from debility induced by starvation. It concluded with these
words:

'Dr. William Jackson, the ambulance physician who attended
the case, says the patient will recover.'

V
A Service of Love

WHEN ONE LOVES ONES ART no service seems too hard.
That is our premise. This story shall draw a conclusion from it,

and show at the same time that the premise is incorrect. That will
be a new thing in logic, and a feat in story-telling somewhat older
than the Great Wall of China.

Joe Larrabee came out of the post-oak flats of the Middle West
pulsing with a genius for pictorial art. At six he drew a picture of
the town pump with a prominent citizen passing it hastily. This
effort was framed and hung in the drug store window by the side
of the ear of corn with an uneven number of rows. At twenty he
left for New York with a flowing necktie and a capital tied up
somewhat closer.

Delia Caruthers did things in six octaves so promisingly in a
pine-tree village in the South that her relatives chipped in enough
in her chip hat for her to go 'North' and 'finish.' They could not
see her f -, but that is our story

Joe and Delia met in an atelier where a number of art and music
students had gathered to discuss chiaroscuro, Wagner, music,
Rembrandt's works pictures, Wald Teufel, wall-paper, Chopin, and
Oolong.

Joe and Delia became enamored one of the other or each of
the other, as you please, and in a short time were married - for
(See above), when one loves one's Art no service seems too hard.

Mr. and Mrs. Larrabee began housekeeping in a flat. It was a
lonesome flat - something like the A sharp way down at the left-
 hand end of the keyboard. And they were happy; for they had them
Art and they had each other. And my advice to the rich young man
would be - sell all thou hast, and give it to the poor - janitor for
the privilege of living in a flat with your Art and your Delia.

Flat-dwellers shall endorse my dictum that theirs is the only

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

true happiness. If a home is happy, it cannot fit too close - let the
dresser collapse and become a billiard table; let the mantel turn to
a rowing machine, the escritoire to a spare bedchamber, the wash-
 stand to an upright piano; let the four walls come together, if they
will, so you and your Delia are between. But if home be the other
kind, let it be wide and long - enter you at the Golden Gate, hang
your hat on Hatteras, your cape on Cape Horn, and go out by
Labrador.

Joe was painting in the class of the great Magister - you know
his fame. His fees are high; his lessons are light - his high-lights
have brought him renown. Delia was studying under Rosenstock -
 you know his repute as a disturber of the piano keys.

They were mighty happy as long as their money lasted. So is
every - but I will not be cynical. Their aims were very clear and
defined. Joe was to become capable very soon of turning out pic­tures that old gentlemen with thin side-whiskers and thick pocket-
 books would sandbag one another in his studio for the privilege of
buying. Delia was to become familiar and then contemptuous with
Music, so that when she saw the orchestra seats and boxes unsold
she could have sore throat and lobster in a private dining-room
and refuse to go on the stage.

But the best, in my opinion, was the home life in the little flat -
 the ardent, voluble chats after the day's study; the cozy dinners
and fresh, light breakfasts; the interchange of ambitions - ambi­tions interwoven each with the other's or else inconsiderable - the
mutual help and inspiration; and - overlook my artlessness -
 stuffed olives and cheese sandwiches at 11p.m.

But after a while Art flagged. It sometimes does, even if some
switchman doesn't flag it. Everything going out and nothing
coming in, as the vulgarians say. Money was lacking to pay Mr.
Magister and Herr Rosenstock their prices. When one loves one's
Art no service seems too hard. So, Delia said she must give music
lessons to keep the chafing dish bubbling.

For two or three days she went out canvassing for pupils. One
evening she came home elated.

'Joe, dear,' she said gleefully, 'I've a pupil. And, oh, the loveliest
people! General - General A. B. Pinkney's daughter - on Seventy-
 first Street. Such a splendid house, Joe - you ought to see the
front door! Byzantine, I think you would call it. And inside! Oh,
Joe, I never saw anything like it before.

'My pupil is his daughter Clementina. I dearly love her already.
She's a delicate thing - dresses always in white; and the sweetest,

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
simplest manners! Only eighteen years old. I'm to give three
lessons a week; and, just think, Joe! $5 a lesson. I don't mind it a
bit; for when I get two or three more pupils, I can resume me
lessons with Herr Rosenstock. Now, smooth out that wrinkle
between your brows, dear, and let's have a nice supper.'

'That's all right for you, Dele,' said Joe, attacking a can of peas
with a carving knife and a hatchet, 'but how about me? Do you
think I'm going to let you hustle for wages while I philander in the
regions of high art? Not by the bones of Benvenuto Cellini! I
guess I can sell papers or lay cobblestones, and bring in a dollar or
two.'

Delia came and hung about his neck.
'Joe, dear, you are silly. You must keep on at your studies. It is

not as if I had quit my music and gone to work at something else.
While I teach, I learn. I am always with my music. And we can live
as happily as millionaires on $15 a week. You mustn't think of
leaving Mr. Magister.'

'All right,' said Joe, reaching for the blue scalloped vegetable
dish. 'But I hate for you to be giving lessons. It isn't Art. But
you're a trump and a dear to do it.'

'When one loves one's Art no service seems too hard,' said
Delia.

'Magister praised the sky in that sketch I made in the park,' said
Joe. 'And Tinkle gave me permission to hang two of them in his
window. I may sell one if the right kind of a moneyed idiot sees
them.'

'I'm sure you will,' said Delia sweetly. 'And now let's be thankful
for General Pinkney and this veal roast.'

During all of the next week the Larrabee's had an early break­
 fast. Joe was enthusiastic about some morning-effect sketches he
was doing in Central Park, and Delia packed him off breakfasted,
coddled, praised, and kissed at seven o'clock. Art is an engaging
mistress. It was most times seven o'clock when he returned in the
evening.

At the end of the week Delia, sweetly proud but languid, tri­umphantly tossed three five-dollar bills on the 8 by 10 (inches)
center table of the 8 by 10 (feet) flat parlor.

'Sometimes,' she said, a little wearily, 'Clementina tries me. I'm
afraid she doesn't practice enough, and I have to tell her the same
things so often. And then she always dresses entirely in white, and
that does get monotonous. But General Pinkney is the dearest old
man! I wish you could know him, Joe. He comes in sometimes

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

when I am with Clementina at the piano - he is a widower, you
know - and stands there pulling his white goatee. "And how are
the semiquavers and the demi-semiquavers progressing?" he
always asks.

'I wish you could see the wainscoting in that drawing-room,
Joe! And those Astrakhan rug *portieres.* And Clementina has such a
funny little cough. I hope she is stronger than she looks. Oh, I
really am getting attached to her, she is so gentle and high bred.
General Pinkney's brother was once Minister to Bolivia.'

And then Joe, with the air of a Monte Cristo, drew forth a ten, a
five, a two and a one - all legal tender notes - and laid them beside
Delia's earnings.

'Sold that water-cooler of the obelisk to a man from Peoria,' he
announced overwhelmingly.

'Don't joke with me,' said Delia - 'not from Peoria!'
'All the way. I wish you could see him, Dele. Fat man with a

woolen muffler and a quill toothpick. He saw the sketch in
Tinkle's window and thought it was a windmill at first. He was
game, though, and bought it anyhow. He ordered another - an oil
sketch of the Lackawanna freight depot - to take back with him.
Music lessons! Oh, I guess Art is still in it.'

'I'm so glad you've kept on,' said Delia heartily. 'You're bound
to win, dear. Thirty-three dollars! We never had so much to spend
before. We'll have oysters to-night.'

'And filet mignon with champignons,' said Joe. 'Where is the
olive fork?'

On the next Saturday evening Joe reached home first. He
spread his $18 on the parlor table and washed what seemed to be
a great deal of dark paint from his hands.

Half an hour later Delia arrived, her right hand tied up in a
shapeless bundle of wraps and bandages.

'How is this?' asked Joe after the usual greetings.
Delia laughed, but not very joyously.
'Clementina,' she explained, 'insisted upon a Welsh rabbit after

her lesson. She is such a queer girl. Welsh rabbits at five in the
afternoon. The General was there. You should have seen him run
for the chafing dish, Joe, just as if there wasn't a servant in the
house. I know Clementina isn't in good health; she is so nervous.
In serving the rabbit she spilled a great lot of it, boiling hot, over
my hand and wrist. It hurt awfully, Joe. And the dear girl was so
sorry! But General Pinkney! - Joe, that old man nearly went distracted. He rushed downstairs and sent somebody - they said the

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**
furnace man or somebody in the basement - out to a drug store
for some oil and things to bind it up with. It doesn't hurt so much
now.'

'What's this?' asked Joe, taking the hand tenderly and pulling at
some white strands beneath the bandages.

'It's something soft,' said Delia, 'that had oil on it. Oh, Joe, did
you sell another sketch?' She had seen the money on the table.

'Did I?' said Joe. 'Just ask the man from Peoria. He got his
depot to-day, and he isn't sure but he thinks he wants another
parks cape and a view on the Hudson. What time this afternoon
did you burn your hand, Dele?'

'Five o'clock, I think,' said Dele plaintively. 'The iron - I mean
the rabbit came off the fire about that time. You ought to have
seen General Pinkney, Joe, when - '

'Sit down here a moment, Dele,' said Joe. He drew her too the
couch, sat down beside her and put his arm across her shoulders.

'What have you been doing for the last two weeks, Dele?' he
asked.

She braved it for a moment or two with an eye full of love and
stubbornness, and murmured a phrase or two vaguely of General
Pinkney; but at length down went her head and out came the truth
and tears.

'I couldn't get any pupils,' she confessed. 'And I couldn't bear to
have you given up your lessons; and I got a place ironing shirt in
that big Twenty-fourth Street laundry. And I think I did very well
to make up both General Pinkney and Clementina, don't you,
Joe? And when a girl in the laundry set down a hot iron on me
hand this afternoon I was all the way home making up that story
about the Welsh rabbit. You're not angry are you, Joe? And if I
hadn't got the work you mightn't have sold your sketches to that
man from Peoria.'

'He wasn't from Peoria,' said Joe slowly.
'Well, it doesn't matter where he was from. How clever you are,

Joe - and - kiss me, Joe - and what made you ever suspect that I
wasn't giving music lessons to Clementina?'

'I didn't,' said Joe, 'until to-night. And I wouldn't have then,
only I sent up this cotton waste and oil from the engine-room this
afternoon for a girl upstairs who had her hand burned with a
smoothing-iron. I've been firing the engine in that laundry for the
last two weeks.'

'And then you didn't - '
'My purchaser from Peoria,' said Joe, 'and General Pinkney are

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

both creations of the same art - but you wouldn't call it either
painting or music.

And then they both laughed, and Joe began:
'When one loves one's Art no service seems - '
But Delia stopped him with her hand on his lips. 'No,' she said -

'just "When one loves." '

VI

***The Coming-out of Maggie***

EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT the Clover Leaf Social Club gave a hop
in the hall of the Give and Take Athletic Association on the East
Side. In order to attend one of these dances you must be a
member of the Give and Take - or, if you belong to the division
that starts off with the right foot in waltzing, you must work in
Rheingold's paper-box factory. Still, any Clover Leaf was privi­leged to escort or be escorted by an outsider to a single dance. But
mostly each Give and Take brought the paper-box girl that he
affected; and few strangers could boast of having shaken a foot at
the regular hops.

Maggie Toole, on account of her dull eyes, broad mouth and
left-handed style of footwork in the two-step, went to the dances
with Anna McCarty and her 'fellow.' Anna and Maggie worked
side by side in the factory, and were the greatest chums ever. So
Anna always made Jimmy Burns take her by Maggie's house every
Saturday night so that her friend could go to the dance with them.

The Give and Take Athletic Association lived up to its name. The
hall of the association in Orchard Street was fitted out with muscle-
 making inventions. With the fibers thus builder up the members
were wont to engage the police and rival social and athletic organiza­tions in joyous combat. Between these more serious occupations the
Saturday night hops with the paper-box factory girls came as a refin­ing influence and as an efficient screen. For sometimes the tip went
'Round, and if you were among the elect that tiptoed up the dark back
stairway you might see as neat and satisfying a little welter-weight
affair to a finish as ever happened inside the ropes.

On Saturdays Rheingold's paper-box factory closed at 3 p.m.
On one such afternoon Anna and Maggie walked homeward
together. At Maggie's door Anna said, as usual: 'Be ready at seven,
sharp, Mag; and Jimmy and me will come by for you.'

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But what was this? Instead of the customary humble and grateful thanks from the non-escorted one there was to be perceived a
high-poised head, a prideful dimpling at the corners of a broad
mouth, and almost a sparkle in a dull brown eye.

'Thanks, Anna,' said Maggie; 'but you and Jimmy needn't
bother to-night. I've a gentleman friend that's coming 'round to
escort me to the hop.'

The comely Anna pounced upon her friend, shook her, chided
and beseeched her. Maggie Toole catches a fellow! Plain, dear,
loyal, unattractive Maggie, so sweet as a chum, so unsought for a
two-step or a moonlit bench in the little park. How was it? When
did it happen? Who was it?

'You'll see to-night,' said Maggie, flushed with the wine of the
first grapes she had gathered in Cupid's vineyard. 'He's swell all
right. He's two inches taller than Jimmy, and an up-to-date
dresser. I'll introduce him, Anna, just as soon as we get to the hall.'

Anna and Jimmy were among the first Clover Leafs to arrive
that evening. Anna's eyes were brightly fixed upon the door of the
hall to catch the first glimpse of her friend's 'catch.'

At 8.30 Miss Toole swept into the hall with her escort. Quickly
her triumphant eye discovered her chum under the wing of her
faithful Jimmy.

'Oh, gee!' cried Anna, 'Mag isn't made a hit - oh, no! Swell
fellow? Well, I guess! Style? Look at 'um.'

'Go as far as you like,' said Jimmy, with sandpaper in his voice.
'Cop him out if you want him. These new guys always win out
with the push. Don't mind me. He doesn't squeeze all the limes, I
guess. Huh!'

'Shut up, Jimmy. You know what I mean. I'm glad for Mag.
First fellow she ever had. Oh, here they come.'

Across the floor Maggie sailed like a coquettish yacht convoyed
by a stately cruiser. And truly, her companion justified the
encomiums of the faithful chum. He stood two inches taller than
the average Give and Take athlete; his dark hair curled; his eyes
and his teeth flashed whenever he bestowed his frequent smiles.
The young men of the Clover Leaf Club pinned not their faith to
the graces of person as much as they did to its prowess, its
achievements in hand-to-hand conflicts, and its preservation from
the legal duress that constantly menaced it. The member of the
association who would bind a paper-box maiden to his conquering
chariot scorned to employ Beau Brummel airs. They were not
considered honorable methods of warfare. The swelling biceps,

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

the coat straining at its buttons over the chest, the air of conscious
conviction of the super-eminence of the male in the cosmogony of
creation, even a calm display of bow legs as subduing and enchant­ing agents in the gentle tourneys of Cupid - these were the
approved arms and ammunition of the Clover Leaf gallants. They
viewed, then, the Gen flexions and alluring poses of this visitor
with their chins at a new angle.

'A friend of mine, Mr. Terry O'Sullivan,' was Maggie's formula
of introduction. She led him around the room, presenting him to
each new-arriving Clover Leaf. Almost was she pretty now, with
the unique luminosity in her eyes that comes to a girl with her
first suitor and a kitten with its first mouse.

'Maggie Toole's got a fellow at last,' was the word that went
round among the paper-box girls. 'Pipe Mag's floor-walker' - thus
the Give and Takes expressed their indifferent contempt.

Usually at the weekly hops Maggie kept a spot on the wall warm
with her back. She felt and showed so much gratitude whenever a
self-sacrificing partner invited her to dance that his pleasure was
cheapened and diminished. She had even grown used to noticing
Anna joggles the reluctant Jimmy with her elbow as a signal for
him to invite her chum to walk over his feet through a two-step.

But to-night the pumpkin had turned to a coach and six. Terry
O'Sullivan was a victorious Prince Charming, and Maggie Toole
winged her first butterfly flight. And though our tropes of fairy­
 land be mixed with those of entomology they shall not spill one
drop of ambrosia from the rose-crowned melody of Maggie's one
perfect night.

The girls besieged her for introductions to her 'fellow.' The
Clover Leaf young men, after two years of blindness, suddenly
perceived charms in Miss Toole. They flexed their compelling
muscles before her and bespoke her for the dance.

Thus, she scored; but to Terry O'Sullivan the honors of the
evening felt thick and fast. He shook his curls; he smiled and went
easily through the seven motions for acquiring grace in your own
room before an open window ten minutes each day. He danced like
a faun; he introduced manner and style and atmosphere; his words
came trippingly upon his tongue, and - he waltzed twice in succes­sion with the paper-box girl that Dempsey Donovan brought.

Dempsey was the leader of the association. He wore a dress suit,
and could chin the bar twice with one hand. He was one of 'Big
Mike' O'Sullivan's lieutenants, and was never troubled by trouble.
No cop dared to arrest him. Whenever he broke a push-cart man's

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head or shot a member of the Heinrick B. Sweeney Outing and
Literary Association in the kneecap, an officer would drop around
and say:

'The Capon'd like to see ye a few minutes round to the office
whin ye have time, Dempsey, me boy.'

But there would be sundry gentlemen there with large gold fob
chains and black cigars; and somebody would tell a funny story,
and then Dempsey would go back and work half an hour with the
six-pound dumb-bells. So, doing a tight-rope act on a wire
stretched across Niagara was a safe terpsichorean performance
compared with waltzing twice with Dempsey Donovan's paper-
 box girl. At ten o'clock the jolly round face of 'Big Mike' O'Sullivan­
 van shone at the door for five minutes upon the scene. He always
looked in for five minutes, smiled at the girls and handed out real
perfectos to the delighted boys.

Dempsey Donovan was at his elbow instantly, talking rapidly.
'Big Mike' looked carefully at the dancers, smiled, shook his head
and departed.

The music stopped. The dancers scattered to the chairs along
the walls. Terry O'Sullivan, with his entrancing bow, relinquished
a pretty girl in blue to her partner and started back to find
Maggie. Dempsey intercepted him in the middle of the floor.

Some fine instinct that Rome must have bequeathed to us
caused nearly every one to turn and look at them - there was a
subtle feeling that two gladiators had met in the arena. Two or
three Give and Takes with tight coat-sleeves drew nearer.

'One moment, Mr. O'Sullivan,' said Dempsey. 'I hope you're
enjoying yourself. Where did you say you lived?

The two gladiators were well matched. Dempsey had, perhaps,
ten pounds of weight to give away. The O'Sullivan had breadth
with quickness. Dempsey had a glacial eye, a dominating slit of a
mouth, an indestructible jaw, a complexion like a belle's and the
coolness of a champion. The visitor showed more fire in his con­
 tempt and less control over his conspicuous sneer. They were ene­mies by the law written when the rocks were molten. They were
each too splendid, too mighty, too incomparable to divide pre­
 eminence. One only must survive.

'I live on Grand,' said O'Sullivan insolently; 'and no trouble to
find me at home. Where do you live?'

Dempsey ignored the question.
'You say your name's O'Sullivan,' he went on. 'Well, "Big

Mike" says he never saw you before.'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

'Lots of things he never saw,' said the favorite of the hop.
'As a rule,' went on Dempsey, huskily sweet, 'O'Sullivan's in this

district know one another. You escorted one of our lady members
here, and we want a chance to make good. If you've got a family
tree let's see a few historical O'Sullivan buds come out on it. Or
do you want us to dig it out of you by the roots?'

'Suppose you mind your own business,' suggested O'Sullivan
blandly.

Dempsey's eyes brightened. He held up an inspired forefinger
as though a brilliant idea had struck him.

'I've got it now,' he said cordially. 'It was just a little mistake.
You aren't no O'Sullivan. You are a ring-tailed monkey. Excuse us
for not recognizing you at first.'

O'Sullivan's eye flashed. He made a quick movement, but Andy
Geoghan was ready and caught his arm.

Dempsey nodded at Andy and William McMahan, the secretary of
the club, and walked rapidly toward a door at the rear of the hall.
Two other members of the Give and Take Association swiftly joined
the little group. Terry O'Sullivan was now in the hands of the Board
of Rules and Social Referees. They spoke to him briefly and softly,
and conducted him out through the same door at the rear.

This movement on the part of the Clover Leaf members
requires a word of elucidation. Back of the association hall was a
smaller room rented by the club. In this room personal difficulties
that arose on the ballroom floor were settled, man to man, with
the weapons of nature, under the supervision of the Board. No
lady could say that she had witnessed a fight at a Clover Leaf hop
in several years. Its gentlemen members guaranteed that.

So easily and smoothly had Dempsey and the Board done them
preliminary work that many in the hall had not noticed the check­ing of the fascinating O'Sullivan's social triumph. Among these
was Maggie. She looked about for her escort.

'Smoke up!' said Rose Cassidy. 'Weren't you on? Demps Dono­
 van picked a scrap with your Lizzie-boy, and they've waltzed out
to the slaughter-room with him. How's my hair look done up this
way, Mag?'

Maggie laid a hand on the bosom of her cheesecloth waist.
'Gone to fight with Dempsey!' she said breathlessly. 'They've

got to be stopped. Dempsey Donovan can't fight him. Why, he'll -
 he'll kill him!'

'Ah, what do you care?' said Rosa. 'Don't some of 'me fight
every hop?'

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**O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**

But Maggie was off, darting her zigzag way through the maze of
dancers. She burst through the rear door into the dark hall and
then threw her solid shoulder against the door of the room of
single combat. It gave way, and in the instant that she entered her
eye caught the scene - the Board standing about with open
watches; Dempsey Donovan in his shirt-sleeves dancing, light-
 footed, with the wary grace of the modern pugilist, within easy
reach of his adversary; Terry O'Sullivan standing with arm folded
and a murderous look in his dark eyes. And without slacking the
speed of her entrance she leaped forward with a scream - leaped in
time to catch and hang upon the arm of O'Sullivan that was sud­denly uplifted, and to whisk from it the long, bright stiletto that
he had drawn from his bosom.

The knife fell and rang upon the floor. Cold steel drawn in the
rooms of the Give and Take Association! Such a thing had never
happened before. Every one stood motionless for a minute. Andy
Geoghan kicked the stiletto with the toe of his shoe curiously, like
an antiquarian who has come upon some ancient weapon
unknown to his learning.

And then O'Sullivan hissed something unintelligible between
his teeth. Dempsey and the Board exchanged looks. And then
Dempsey looked at O'Sullivan without anger as one looks at a
stray dog, and nodded his head in the direction of the door.

'The back stairs, Giuseppi,' he said briefly. 'Somebody'll pitches
your hat down after you.'

Maggie walked up to Dempsey Donovan. There was a brilliant
spot of red in her cheeks, down which slow tears were running.
But she looked him bravely in the eye.

'I knew it, Dempsey,' she said, as her eyes grew dull even in
their tears. 'I knew he was a Guinea. His name's Tony Spinelli. I
hurried in when they told me you and him was scrapping'. Them
Guineas always carries knives. But you don't understand,
Dempsey. I never had a fellow in my life. I got tired of Comin'
with Anna and Jimmy every night, so I fixed it with him to call
himself O'Sullivan, and brought him along. I knew there'd be
nothing' doing' for him if he came as a Dago. I guess I'll resign from
the club now.'

Dempsey turned to Andy Geoghan.
'Chuck that cheese slicer out of the window,' he said, 'and tell

'Me inside that Mr. O'Sullivan has had a telephone message to go
down to Tammany Hall.'

And then he turned back to Maggie.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

'Say, Mag,' he said, 'I'll see you home. And how about next Sat­urday night? Will you come to the hop with me if I call around for
you?'

It was remarkable how quickly Maggie's eyes could change from
dull to a shining brown.

'With you, Dempsey?' she stammered. 'Say - will a duck swim?'

VII
The Cop and the Anthem

O N HIS BENCH IN MADISON SQUARE Soapy moved uneasily. When
wild goose honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin
coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves
uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is
near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soap's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is
kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair
warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets, he hands
his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All
Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soap's mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had
come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways
and means to provide against the coming rig ours. And therefore he
moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernator Al ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest.
In them were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of
soporific Southern skies or drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three
months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of
assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas
and bluecoats, seemed too Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quar­ters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought
their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy
had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the
Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three
Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles
and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his
bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the
Island loomed large and timely in Soap's mind. He scorned the
provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
In Soap's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy.
There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and
eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and
food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soap's proud
spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must
pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands
of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity
must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of
a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a
guest of the law, which, though conducted by rules, does not
meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about
accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing
this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive
restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over
quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating
magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across
the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow
together, Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café,
where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the
grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest
upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black,
ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady mis­sionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restau­rant unsuspected success would be his. The portion of him that
would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's
mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the
thing - with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse
and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total
would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of
revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave
him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head
waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes.
Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in
silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of
the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the cov­eted Island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of
entering limbo must be thought of.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly dis­
 played wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous.
Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People
came running round the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy
stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of
brass buttons.

'Where's the man that done that?' inquired the officer excitedly.
'Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do

with it?' said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one
greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue.
Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's
minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man half­
 way down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he
joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed
along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great
pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its
crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin.
Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and tell-tale trousers
without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flap­
 jacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the
fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

'Now, get busy and call a cop,' said Soapy. 'And don't keep a
gentleman waiting.'

'No cop for Youse,' said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes
and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. 'Hey, con!'

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters
pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens,
and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy
dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood
before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the
street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to
woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he
fatuously termed to himself a 'cinch.' A young woman of a modest
and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with
sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and
two yards from the window a large policeman of severe
demean our leaned against a water-plug.

It was Soap's design to assume the role of the despicable and
execrated 'masher.' The refined and elegant appearance of his

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
victim and the contiguity of the conscientious cop encouraged him
to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon
his arm that would ensure his winter quarters on the right little,
tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's ready-made tie,
dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing
can't and sidled toward the young woman. He made eyes at her,
was taken with sudden coughs and 'hems,' smiled, smirked and
went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of
the 'masher.' With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was
watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps,
and again, bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving
mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat
and said:

'Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in me
yard?'

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman
had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically *En route*
*for his insular haven. Already he imagined he could feel the cozy*
*warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and,*
*stretching out a hand, caught Soap's coat-sleeve.*

'Sure, Mike,' she said joyfully, 'if you'll blow me to a pail of
suds. I'd have spoken to you sooner, but the cop was watching.'

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak
Soapy walked past the policeman, overcome with gloom. He
seemed doomed to liberty.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He
halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets,
hearts, vows and librettos. Women in furs and men in greatcoats
moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some
dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The
thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon
another policeman lounging grandly in front of a resplendent
theatre he caught at the immediate straw of 'disorderly conduct.'

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the
top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise
disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and
remarked to a citizen:

' 'Tis one of them Yale lads celebrating' the goose egg they give
to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions
to leave them be.'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a

policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an
unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling
wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a
swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on enter­
 ing. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off
with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

'My umbrella,' he said sternly.
'Oh, is it?' sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. 'Well,

why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why
don't you call a cop? There stands one at the corner.'

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a
presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman
looked at the two curiously.

'Of course,' said the umbrella man - 'that is - well, you know
how these mistakes occur - I - if it's your umbrella I hope you'll
excuse me - I picked it up this morning in a restaurant - If you
recognize it as yours, why - I hope you'll - '

'Of course, it's mine,' said Soapy viciously.
The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist

a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street
car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improve­
 ments. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He
muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs.
Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to
regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east were
the glitter and turmoil were but faint. He set his face down this
toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even
when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill.
Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled.
Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, were, no
doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mas­tery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For their drifted out to
Soap's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed
against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene; vehicles and pedes­trians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves - for a
little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron
fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained
such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and
immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soap's receptive state of mind and the
influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful
change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which
he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes,
wrecked faculties and base motives that made up his existence.

And also, in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this
novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to
battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the
mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer
the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was
comparatively young yet; he would resurrect his old eager ambi­tions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet
organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would
go into the roaring down-town district and find work. A fur
importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find
him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody
in the world. He would -

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around
into the broad face of a policeman.

'What are you doing' here?' asked the officer.
'Nothing',' said Soapy.
'Then come along,' said the policeman.
'Three months on the Island,' said the Magistrate in the Police

Court the next morning.

**VIII**

***Memoirs of a Yellow Dog***

I DON'T SUPPOSE it will knock any of you people off your perch to
read a contribution from an animal. Mr. Kipling and a good many
others have demonstrated the fact that animals can express them­
 selves in remunerative English, and no magazine goes to press
nowadays without an animal story in it, except the old-style
monthlies that are still running pictures of Bryan and the Mont
Pelée horror.

But you needn't look for any stuck-up literature in my piece,

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

such as Beiro, the bear, and Sanko, the snake, and Tamano,
the tiger, talk in the jungle books. A yellow dog that's spent most
of his life in a cheap New York flat, sleeping in a corner on an old
sateen underskirt (the one she spilled port wine on at the Lady
Longshoremen's banquet), mustn't be expected to perform any
tricks with the art of speech.

I was born a yellow pup; date, locality, pedigree and weight
unknown. The first thing I can recollect, an old woman had me in
a basket at Broadway and Twenty-third trying to sell me to a
fat lady. Old Mother Hubbard was boosting me to beat the band
as a genuine Pomeranian-Hambletonian-Red-Irish-Cochin-China-
 Stoke-Pogi's fox terrier. The fat lady chased a V around among the
samples of Gros grain flannelette in her shopping-bag till she cor­nered it, and gave up. From that moment I was a pet - a mamma's
own woot Sey squid Lums. Say, gentle reader, did you ever have
a 200-pound woman breathing a flavors of Camembert cheese
and Peou d'Epargne pick you up and wallop her nose all over
you, remarking all the time in an Emma Eames tone of voice:
'Oh, coo's um Odlum, hoodlum, Woolum, to Odlum, bitsy-witty monopodiums?'

From a pedigreed yellow pup, I grew up to be an anonymous
yellow cur looking like a cross between an Angora cat and a box of
lemons. But my mistress never tumbled. She thought that the two
primeval pups that Noah chased into the ark were but a collateral
branch of my ancestors. It took two policemen to keep her from
entering me at the Madison Square Garden for the Siberian
bloodhound prize.

I'll tell you about that flat. The house was the ordinary thing
in New York, paved with Parian marble in the entrance hall and
cobblestones above the first floor. Our flat was three Fl - well,
not flights - climbs up. My mistress rented it unfurnished, and
put in the regular things - 1903 antique upholstered parlor set,
oil chromo of geishas in a Harlem tea-house, rubber plant and
husband.

By Sirius! there was a biped I felt sorry for. He was a little man
with sandy hair and whiskers, a good deal like mine. Hen-pecked?
- well, toucans and flamingoes and pelicans all had their bills in
him. He wiped the dishes and listened to my mistress talk about
the cheap, ragged things the lady with the squirrel-skin coat on
the second floor hung out on her line to dry. And every evening
while she was getting supper, she made him take me out on the end
of a string for a walk.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
If men knew how women pass the time when they are alone

they'd never marry. Laura Lean Jibbed, peanut brittle, a little
almond cream on the neck muscles, dishes unwashed, half an
hour's talk with the iceman, reading a package of old letters, a
couple of pickles and two bottles of malt extract, one hour peeking
through a hole in the window shade into the flat across the air-
 shaft - that's about all there is to it. Twenty minutes before time
for him to come home from work she straightens up the house,
fixes her rat so it won't show, and gets out a lot of sewing for a
ten-minute bluff.

I led a dog's life in that flat. 'Most all day I lay there in me
corner watching the fat woman kill time. I slept sometimes and
had pipe dreams about being out chasing cats into basements and
growling at old ladies with black mittens, as a dog was intended to
do. Then she would pounce upon me with a lot of that driveling
poodle palaver and kiss me on the nose - but what could I do? A
dog can't chew cloves.

I began to feel sorry for Hubby, dog my cats if I didn't. We
looked so much alike that people noticed it when we went out; so
we shook the streets that Morgan's cab drives down, and took to
climbing the piles of last December's snow on the streets were
cheap people live.

One evening when we were thus promenading, and I was trying
to look like a prize St. Bernard, and the old man was trying to look
like he wouldn't have murdered the. first organ-grinder he heard
play Mendelssohn's wedding-march, I looked up at him and said,
in my way:

'What are you looking so sour about, your oakum trimmed lob­ster? She doesn't kiss you. You don't have to sit on her lap and listen
to talk that would make the book of a musical comedy sound like
the maxims of Epictetus. You ought to be thankful you're not a
dog. Brace up, Benedick, and bid the blues begone.'

The matrimonial mishap looked down at me with almost canine
intelligence in his face.

'Why, doggie,' says he, 'good doggie. You almost look like you
could speak. What is it, doggie - Cats?'

Cats! Could speak!
But, of course, he couldn't understand. Humans were denied

the speech of animals. The only common ground of communica­tion upon which dogs and men can get together is in fiction.

In the flat across the hall from us lived a lady with a black-and-
 tan terrier. Her husband strung it and took it out every evening,

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

but he always came home cheerful and whistling. One day I
touched noses with the black-and-tan in the hall, and I struck him
for an elucidation.

'See, here, Wiggle-and-Skip,' I say, 'you know that it isn't the
nature of a real man to play dry-nurse to a dog in public. I never
saw one leashed to a bow-wow yet that didn't look like he'd like to
lick every other man that looked at him. But your boss comes in
every day as perky and set up as an amateur prestidigitator doing
the egg tricks. How does he do it? Don't tell me he likes it.'

'Him?' says the black-and-tan. 'Why, he uses Nature's Own
Remedy. He gets spifflicated. At first when we go out, he's as shy
as the man on the steamer who would rather play Pedro when they
make 'me all jackpots. By the time we've been in eight saloons he
don't care whether the thing on the end of his line is a dog or a
catfish. I've lost two inches of my tail trying to sidestep those
swinging doors.'

The pointer I got from that terrier - vaudeville please copy - set
me to thinking.

One evening about six o'clock my mistress ordered him to get
busy and do the ozone act for Lovey. I have concealed it until
now, but that is what she called me. The black-and-tan was called
'Tweeness.' I consider that I have the bulge on him as far as you
could chase a rabbit. Still 'Lovey' is something of a nomenclatural
tin-can on the tail of one's self-respect.

At a quiet place on a safe street, I tightened the line of my custo­dian in front of an attractive, refined saloon. I made a dead-ahead
scramble for the doors, whining like a dog in the press dispatches
that lets the family know that little Alice is bogged while gathering
lilies in the brook.

'Why, darn my eyes,' says the old man, with a grin; 'darn me
eyes if the saffron-colored son of a seltzer lemonade isn't asking
me in to take a drink. Lemme see - how long's it been since I saved
shoe leather by keeping one foot on the footrest? I believe I'll - '

I knew I had him. Hot Scotches he took, sitting at a table. For
an hour he kept the Campbells coming. I sat by his side rapping
for the waiter with my tail, and eating free lunch such as mamma
in her flat never equaled with her homemade truck bought at a
delicatessen store eight minutes before papa comes home.

When the products of Scotland were all exhausted except the
rye bread the old man unwound me from the table leg and played
me outside like a fisherman plays a salmon. Out there he took off
my collar and threw it into the street.

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

'Poor doggie,' says he; 'good doggie. She shan't kiss you any
more. ' S a darned shame. Good doggie, go away and get run over
by a street car and be happy.'

I refused to leave. I leaped and frisked around the old man's legs
happy as a pug on a rug.

'Your old flea-headed woodchuck-chaser,' I said to him - 'you
moon-baying, rabbit-pointing, egg-stealing old beagle, can't you
see that I don't want to leave you? Can't you see that we're both
Pups in the Wood and the missis is the cruel uncle after you with
the dish towel and me with the flea liniment and a pink bow to tie
on my tail. Why not cut that all out and be pards for evermore?'

Maybe you'll say he didn't understand - maybe he didn't. But
he kind of got a grip on the Hot Scotches, and stood still for a
minute, thinking.

'Doggie,' says he finally, 'we don't live more than a dozen lives
on this earth, and very few of us live to be more than 300. If I ever
see that flat any more I'm a flat, and if you do, you're flatter; and
that's no flattery. I'm offering 60 to 1 that Westward Ho wins out
by the length of a dachshund.'

There was no string, but I frolicked along with my master to the
Twenty-third Street ferry. And the cats on the route saw reason to
give thanks that prehensile claws had been given them.

On the Jersey side my master said to a stranger who stood
eating a currant bun:

'Me and my doggie, we are bound for the Rocky Mountains.'
But what pleased me most was when my old man pulled both of

my ears until I howled, and said:
'You common, monkey-headed, rat-tailed, Sulphur-colored

son of a door-mat, do you know what I'm going to call you?'
I thought of 'Lovey,' and I whined dolefully.
'I'm going to call you "Pete," ' says my master; and if I'd had

five tails I couldn't have done enough wagging to do justice to the
occasion.

**IX**

***The Love-philter of Ikey Schoenstein***

THE BLUE LIGHT DRUG STORE is down-town, between the Bowery
and First Avenue, where the distance between the two streets is the
shortest. The Blue Light does not consider that pharmacy is a thing

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

of bric-a-brac, scent and ice-cream soda. If you ask it for a pain-killer
it will not give you a bonbon.

The Blue Light scorns the labor-saving arts of modern phar­macy. It macerates its opium and percolates its own laudanum and
paregoric. To this day pills are made behind its tall prescription
desk - pills rolled out on its own pill-tile, divided with a spatula,
rolled with the finger and thumb, dusted with calcined magnesia
and delivered in little round, pasteboard pill-boxes. The store is on
a corner about which coveys of ragged-plumed, hilarious children
play and become candidates for the cough-drops and soothing
syrups that wait for them inside.

Ikey Schoenstein was the night clerk of the Blue Light and the
friend of his customers. Thus, it is on the East Side, were the
heart of pharmacy is not *glacé.* There, as it should be, the druggist
is a counsellor, a confessor, an adviser, an able and willing mis­sionary and mentor whose learning is respected, whose occult
wisdom is venerated and whose medicine is often poured,
untasted, into the gutter. Therefore, Ikey's coniform, bespecta­cled nose and narrow, knowledge-bowed figure was well known in
the vicinity of the Blue Light, and his advice and notice were
much desired.

Ikey roomed and breakfasted at Mrs. Riddle's, two squares
away. Mrs. Riddle had a daughter named Rosy. The circumlocu­tion has been in vain - you must have guessed it - Ikey adored
Rosy. She tinctured all his thoughts; she was the compound
extract of all that was chemically pure and officinal - the dispen­satory contained nothing equal to her. But Ikey was timid, and his
hopes remained insoluble in the menstruum of his backwardness
and fears. Behind his counter he was a superior being, calmly
conscious of special knowledge and worth; outside, he was a
weak-kneed, purblind, motorman-cursed rambler, with ill-fitting
clothes stained with chemicals and smelling of Soco trine aloes and
Valeria Nate of ammonia.

The fly in Ikey's ointment (thrice welcome, pat trope!) was
Chunk McGowan.

Mr. McGowan was also striving to catch the bright smiles
tossed about by Rosy. But he was no out-fielder as Ikey was; he
picked them off the bat. At the same time, he was Ikey's friend and
customer, and often dropped in at the Blue Light Drug Store to
have a bruise painted with iodine or get a cut rubber-plastered
after a pleasant evening spent along the Bowery.

One afternoon McGowan drifted in in his silent, easy way, and

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
sat, comely, smoothed-faced, hard, indomitable, good-natured,
upon a stool.

'Ikey,' said he, when his friend had fetched his mortar and sat
opposite, grinding gum benzoin to a powder, 'get busy with your
ear. It's drugs for me if you've got the line I need.'

Ikey scanned the countenance of Mr. McGowan for the usual
evidences of conflict, but found none.

'Take your coat off,' he ordered. 'I guess already that you have
been stuck in the ribs with a knife. I have many times told you
those Dagoes would do you up.'

Mr. McGowan smiled. 'Not them,' he said. 'Not any Dagoes.
But you've located the diagnosis all right enough - it's under me
coat, near the ribs. Speak! Ikey - Rosy and me are going' to run away
and get married to-night.'

Ikey's left forefinger was doubled over the edge of the mortar,
holding it steady. He gave it a wild rap with the pestle, but felt
it not. Meanwhile Mr. McGowan's smile faded to a look of
perplexed gloom.

'That is, ' he continued, 'if she keeps in the notion until the time
comes. We've been laying' pipes for the gateway for two weeks.
One day she says she will; the same evening' she says nixie. We've
agreed on to-night, and Rosy's stuck to the affirmative this time
for two whole days. But it's five hours yet till the time, and I'm
afraid she'll stand me up when it comes to the scratch.'

'You said you wanted drugs,' remarked Ikey.
Mr. McGowan looked ill at ease and harassed - a condition

opposed to his usual line of demeanor. He made a patent-medi­cine almanac into a roll and fitted it with unprofitable carefulness
about his finger.

'I wouldn't have this double handicap make a false start to-night
for a million,' he said. 'I've got a little flat up in Harlem all ready,
with chrysanthemums on the table and a kettle ready to boil. And
I've engaged a pulpit pounder to be ready at his house for us at
9.30. It's got to come off. And if Rosy don't change her mind
again!' - Mr. McGowan ceased, a prey to his doubts.

'I don't see then yet,' said Ikey shortly, 'what makes it that you
talk of drugs, or what I can be doing about it.'

'Old man Riddle don't like me a little bit,' went on the uneasy
suitor, bent upon marshalling his arguments. 'For a week he hasn't
let Rosy step outside the door with me. If it wasn't for losing' a
boarder they'd have bounced me long ago. I'm making' $20 a week
and she'll never regret flying' the coop with Chunk McGowan.'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

'You will excuse me, Chunk,' said Ikey. 'I must make a prescription
that is to be called for soon.'

'Say,' said McGowan, looking up suddenly, 'say, Ikey, isn't
there a drug of some kind - some kind of powders that'll make a
girl like you better if you give 'me to her?'

Ikey's lip beneath his nose curled with the scorn of superior
enlightenment; but before he could answer, McGowan continued:

'Tim Lacy told me once that he got some from a croaker up­
 town and fed 'me to his girl in soda water. From the very first dose
he was ace-high and everybody else looked like thirty cents to her.
They were married in less than two weeks.'

Strong and simple was Chunk McGowan. A better reader of
men than Ikey was could have seen that his tough frame was
strung upon fine wires. Like a good general who was about to
invade the enemy's territory he was seeking to guard every point
against possible failure.

'I thought,' went on Chunk hopefully, 'that if I had one of them
powders to give Rosy when I see her at supper to-night it might
brace her up and keep her from reneging on the proposition to
skip. I guess she don't need a mule team to drag her away, but
women are better at coaching than they are at running bases. If
the Stuff'll work just for a couple of hours it'll do the trick.'

'When is this foolishness of running away to be happening?'
asked Ikey.

'Nine o'clock,' said Mr. McGowan. 'Suppers at seven. At eight
Rosy goes to bed with a headache. At nine old Provenzano lets me
through to his backyard, where there's a board off Riddle's fence,
next door. I go under her window and help her down the fire-
 escape. We've got to make it early on the preacher's account. It's
all dead easy if Rosy don't balk when the flag drops. Can you fix
me one of them powders, Ikey?'

Ikey Schoenstein rubbed his nose slowly.
'Chunk,' said he, 'it is of drugs of that nature that pharma­

cueists must have much carefulness. To you alone of my acquain­tance would I entrust a powder like that. But for you I shall make
it, and you shall see how it makes Rosy to think of you.'

Ikey went behind the prescription desk. There he crushed to a
powder two soluble tablets, each containing a quarter of a grain of
morphia. To them he added a little sugar of milk to increase the
bulk, and folded the mixture neatly in a white paper. Taken by an
adult this powder would ensure several hours of heavy slumber
without danger to the sleeper. This he handed to Chunk

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
McGowan, telling him to administer it in a liquid, if possible, and
received the hearty thanks of the backyard Lochinvar.

The subtlety of Ikey's action becomes apparent upon recital of
his subsequent move. He sent a messenger for Mr. Riddle and dis­
 closed the plans of McGowan for eloping with Rosy. Mr. Riddle
was a stout man, brick-dusty of complexion and sudden in action.

'Much obliged,' he said briefly to Ikey. 'The lazy Irish loafer!
My own room's just above Rosy's, I'll just go up there myself after
supper and load the shot-gun and wait. If he comes in my back­
 yard he'll go away in an ambulance instead of a bridal chaise.'

With Rosy held in the clutches of Morpheus for a many-
 hours' deep slumber, and the bloodthirsty parent waiting, armed
and forewarned, Ikey felt that his rival was close, indeed, upon
discomfiture.

All night in the Blue Light Store he waited at his duties for
chance news of the tragedy, but none came.

At eight o'clock in the morning the day clerk arrived and Ikey
started hurriedly for Mrs. Riddle's to learn the outcome. And, lo!
as he stepped out of the store who but Chunk McGowan sprang
from a passing street-car and grasped his hand - Chunk McGowan
with a victor's smile and flushed with joy.

'Pulled it off,' said Chunk with Elysium in his grin. 'Rosy hit the
fire-escape on time to a second and we were under the wire at the
Reverends at 9. 3 0 1/4. She's up at the flat - she cooked eggs this
morning' in a blue kimono - Lord! how lucky I am! You must pace
up some day, Ikey, and feed with us. I've got a job down near the
bridge, and that's where I'm heading for now.'

'The - the powder?' stammered Ikey.
'Oh, that stuff you gave me!' said Chunk broadening his grin;

'Well, it was this way. I sat down at the supper table last night at
Riddle's, and I looked at Rosy, and I say to myself, "Chunk, if you
get the girl get her on the square - don't try any hocus-pocus with
a thoroughbred like her." And I keep the paper you give me in
my pocket. And then my lamps fall on another party present,
who, I say to myself, is fail in' in a proper affection toward his
Comin' son-in-law, so I watch my chance and dumps that
powder in old man Riddle's coffee - see?'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

moment immovable. For this Oduor belonged to Miss Leslie; it
was her own, and hers only.

The Oduor brought her vividly, almost tangibly before him. The
world of finance dwindled suddenly to a speck. And she was in the
next room - twenty steps away.

'By George, I'll do it now,' said Maxwell, half aloud. 'I'll ask her
now. I wonder I didn't do it long ago.'

He dashed into the inner office with the haste of a short trying
to cover. He charged upon the desk of the stenographer.

She looked up at him with a smile. A soft pink crept over her
cheek, and her eyes were kind and frank. Maxwell leaned one
elbow on her desk. He still clutched fluttering papers with both
hands and the pen were above his ear.

'Miss Leslie,' he began hurriedly, 'I have but a moment to spare.
I want to say something in that moment. Will you be my wife? I
haven't had time to make love to you in the ordinary way, but I
really do love you. Talk quick, please - those fellows are clubbing
the stuffing out of Union Pacific'

'Oh, what are you talking about?' exclaimed the young lady. She
rose to her feet and gazed upon him, round-eyed.

'Don't you understand?' said Maxwell restively. 'I want you to
marry me. I love you, Miss Leslie. I wanted to tell you, and I
snatched a minute when things had slackened up a bit. They're
calling me for the 'phone now. Tell 'me to wait a minute, Pitcher.
Won't you, Miss Leslie?'

The stenographer acted very queerly. At first, she seemed over­
 come with amazement; then tears flowed from her wondering
eyes; and then she smiled sunnily through them, and one of her
arms slid tenderly about the broker's neck.

'I know now,' she said softly. 'It's this old business that has
driven everything else out of your head for the time. I was fright­ened at first. Don't you remember, Harvey? We were married
last evening at eight o'clock in the Little Church Around the
Corner.'

**XVI**

***The Furnished Room***

RESTLESS, SHIFTING, FUGACIOUS as time itself, is a certain vast bulk
of the population of the redbrick district of the lower West Side.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
Homeless, they have a hundred homes. They flit from furnished
room to furnished room, transients for ever - transients in abode,
transients in heart and mind. They sing 'Home Sweet Home' in
ragtime; they carry their *Lares et penates* in a bandbox; their vine is
entwined about a picture hat; a rubber plant is their fig tree.

Hence the houses of this district, having had a thousand
dwellers, should have a thousand tales to tell, mostly dull ones, no
doubt; but it would be strange if there could not be found a ghost
or two in the wake of all these vagrant ghosts.

One evening after dark a young man prowled among these
crumbling red mansions, ringing their bells. At the twelfth he
rested his lean hand-baggage upon the step and wiped the dust
from his hat-band and forehead. The bell sounded faint and far
away in some remote, hollow depths.

To the door of this, the twelfth house whose bell he had rung,
came a housekeeper who made him think of an unwholesome, sur­feited worm that had eaten its nut to a hollow shell and now
sought to fill the vacancy with edible lodgers.

He asked if there was a room to let.
'Come in,' said the housekeeper. Her voice came from her

throat; her throat seemed lined with fur. 'I have the third floor
back, vacant since a week back. Should you wish to look at it?'

The young man followed her up the stairs. A faint light from no
particular source mitigated the shadows of the halls. They trod
noiselessly upon a stair carpet that its own loom would have for­
 sworn. It seemed to have become vegetable; to have degenerated
in that rank, sunless air to lush lichen or spreading moss that grew
in patches to the staircase and was viscid under the foot like
organic matter. At each turn of the stairs were vacant niches in the
wall. Perhaps plants had once been set within them. If so, they had
died in that foul and tainted air. It may be that statues of the saints
had stood there, but it was not difficult to conceive those imps and
devils had dragged them forth in the darkness and down to the
unholy depths of some furnished pit below.

'This is the room,' said the housekeeper, from her furry throat.
'It's a nice room. It isn't often vacant. I had some most elegant
people in its last summer - no trouble at all, and paid in advance to
the minute. The water's at the end of the hall. Sprowls and
Mooney-kept it three months. They done a vaudeville sketch.
Miss Bretta Sprowls - you may have heard of her - Oh, that was
just the stage names - right there over the dresser is where the
marriage certificate hung, framed. The gas is here, and you see

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**
there is plenty of closet room. It's a room everybody likes. It never
stays idle long.'

'Do you have many theatrical people rooming here?' asked the
young man.

'They come and goes. A good proportion of my lodgers is con­nected with the theatres. Yes, sir, this is the theatrical district.
Actor people never stays long anywhere. I get my share. Yes, they
comes and they go.'

He engaged the room, paying for a week in advance. He was
tired, he said, and would take possession at once. He counted out
the money. The room had been made ready, she said, even to
towels and water. As the housekeeper moved away, he put, for the
thousandth time, the question that he carried at the end of his
tongue.

'A young girl - Miss Vashner - Miss Eloise Vashner - do you
remember such a one among your lodgers? She would be singing
on the stage, most likely. A fair girl, of medium height and slender,
with reddish gold hair and a dark mole near her left eyebrow.'

'No, I don't remember the name. The stage people have names
they change as often as their rooms. They come and they go.
No, I don't call that one to mind.'

No. Always no. Five months of ceaseless interrogation and the
inevitable negative. So much time spent by day in questioning
managers, agents, schools and choruses; by night among the audi­ences of theatres from all-star casts down to music-halls so low
that he dreaded to find what he most hoped for. He who had loved
her best had tried to find her. He was sure that since her disap­pearance from home this great water-girt city held her some­
 where, but it was like a monstrous quicksand, shifting its particles
constantly, with no foundation, its upper granules of to-day buried
to-morrow in ooze and slime.

The furnished room received its latest guest with a first glow of
pseudo-hospitality, a hectic, haggard, perfunctory welcome like
the specious smile of a demirep. The sophistical comfort came in
reflected gleams from the decayed furniture, the ragged brocade
upholstery of a couch and two chairs, a foot wide cheap pier glass
between the two windows, from one or two gilt picture frames and
a brass bedstead in a corner.

The guest reclined, inert, upon a chair, while the room, con­
 fused in speech as though it were an apartment in Babel, tried to
discourse to him of its divers tenantry.

A polychromatic rug like some brilliant-flowered, rectangular,

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
tropical islet lay surrounded by a billowy sea of soiled matting.
Upon the gay-papered wall were those pictures that pursue the
homeless one from house to house - The Huguenot Lovers, The
First Quarrel, The Wedding Breakfast, Psyche at the Fountain.
The mantel's chastely severe outline was ingloriously veiled behind
some pert drapery drawn rakishly askew like the sashes of the Ama­zonian ballet. Upon it was some desolate flotsam cast aside by the
room's marooned when a lucky sail had borne them to a fresh port
- a trifling vase or two, pictures of actresses, a medicine bottle,
some stray cards out of a deck.

One by one, as the characters of a cryptograph become explicit,
the little signs left by the furnished room's procession of guests
developed a significance. The threadbare space in the rug in front
of the dresser told that lovely woman had marched in the throng.
Tiny finger-prints on the wall spoke of little prisoners trying to
feel their way to sun and air. A splattered stain, raying like the
shadow of a bursting bomb, witnessed where a hurled glass or
bottle had splintered with its contents against the wall. Across the
pier glass had been scrawled with a diamond in staggering letters
the name 'Marie.' It seemed that the succession of dwellers in the
furnished room had turned in fury - perhaps tempted beyond for­
 bear Ance by its garish coldness - and wreaked upon it their pas­sions. The furniture was chipped and bruised; the couch, distorted
by bursting springs, seemed a horrible monster that had been slain
during the stress of some grotesque convulsion. Some more
potent upheaval had cloven a great slice from the marble mantel.
Each plank in the floor owned its particular cant and shriek as
from a separate and individual agony. It seemed incredible that all
this malice and injury had been wrought upon the room by those
who had called it for a time their home; and yet it may have been
the cheated home instinct surviving blindly, the resentful rage at
false household gods that had kindled their wrath. A hut that is
our own we can sweep and adorn and cherish.

The young tenant in the chair allowed these thoughts to file,
soft-shod, through his mind, while there drifted into the room
furnished sounds and furnished scents. He heard in one room a
tittering and incontinent, slack laughter; in others the monologue
of a scold, the rattling of dice, a lullaby, and one crying dully;
above him a banjo tinkled with spirit. Doors banged somewhere;
the elevated trains roared intermittently; a cat yowled miserably
upon a back fence. And he breathed the breath of the house - a
dank savor rather than a smell - a cold, musty effluvium as from

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

underground vaults mingled with the reeking exhalations of
linoleum and mildewed and rotten woodwork.

Then, suddenly, as he rested there, the room was filled with the
strong, sweet Oduor of mignonette. It came as upon a single buffet
of wind with such sureness and fragrance and emphasis that it
almost seemed a living visitant. And the man cried aloud, 'What,
dear?' as if he had been called, and sprang up and faced about. The
rich Oduor clung to him and wrapped him about. He reached out
his arms for it, all his senses for the time confused and commin­gled. How could one be peremptorily called by an Oduor? Surely it
must have been a sound. But, was it not the sound that had
touched, that had caressed him?

'She has been in this room,' he cried, and he sprang to wrest
from it a token, for he knew he would recognize the smallest thing
that had belonged to her or that she had touched. This enveloping
scent of mignonette, the Oduor that she had loved and made her
own - whence came it?

The room had been but carelessly set in order. Scattered upon
the flimsy dresser scarf were half a dozen hairpins - those discreet,
indistinguishable friends of womankind, feminine of gender, infi­nite of mood and uncommunicative of tense. These he ignored,
conscious of their triumphant lack of identity. Ransacking the
drawers of the dresser he came upon a discarded, tiny, ragged
handkerchief. He pressed it to his face. It was racy and insolent
with heliotrope; he hurled it to the floor. In another drawer he
found odd buttons, a theatre program me, a pawnbroker's card,
two lost marshmallows, a book on the divination of dreams. In the
last was a woman's black satin hair-bow, which halted him, poised
between ice and fire. But the black satin hair-bow also is feminin­ity's demure, impersonal, common ornament, and tells no tales.

And then he traversed the room like a hound on the scent,
skimming the walls, considering the corners of the bulging mat­
 ting on his hands and knees, rummaging mantel and tables, the
curtains and hangings, the drunken cabinet in the corner, for a vis­ible sign unable to perceive that she was there besides, around,
against, within, above him, clinging to him, wooing him, calling
him so poignantly through the finer senses that even his grosser
ones became cognizant of the call. Once again, he answered loudly,
'Yes, dear!' and turned, wild-eyed, to gaze on vacancy, for he
could not yet discern form and color and love and outstretched
arms in the Oduor of mignonette. Oh, God! whence that Oduor,
and since when have Oduors had a voice to call? Thus, he groped.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
He burrowed in crevices and corners, and found corks and ciga­rettes. These he passed in passive contempt. But once he found in
a fold of the matting a half-smoked cigar, and this he ground
beneath his heel with a green and trenchant oath. He sifted the
room from end to end. He found dreary and ignoble small records
of many a peripatetic tenant; but of her whom he sought, and who
may have lodged there, and whose spirit seemed to hover there, he
found no trace.

And then he thought of the housekeeper.
He ran from the haunted room downstairs and to a door that

showed a crack of light. She came out to his knock. He smothered
his excitement as best he could.

'Will you tell me, madam,' he besought her, 'who occupied the
room I have before I came?'

'Yes, sir. I can tell you again. Twas Sprowls and Mooney, as I
spoke. Miss Bretta Sprowls it was in the theatres, but Missis
Mooney she was. My house is well known for respectability. The
marriage certificate hung, framed, on a nail over - '

'What kind of a lady was Miss Sprowls - in looks, I mean?'
'Why, black-haired, sir, short and stout, with a comical face.

They left a week ago Tuesday.'
'And before they occupied it?'
'Why, there was a single gentleman connected with the draying

business. He left owing me a week. Before him was Missis Crowder
and her two children, that stayed four months; and back of them
was old Mr. Doyle, whose sons paid for him. He kept the room six
months. That goes back a year, sir, and further I do not remember.'

He thanked her and crept back to his room. The room was
dead. The essence that had vivified it was gone. The perfume of
mignonette had departed. In its place was the old, stale Oduor of
moldy house furniture, of atmosphere in storage.

The ebbing of his hope drained his faith. He sat staring at the
yellow, singing gaslight. Soon he walked to the bed and began to
tear the sheets into strips. With the blade of his knife, he drove
them tightly into every crevice around windows and door. When
all was snug and taut he turned out the light, turned the gas full on
again, and laid himself gratefully upon the bed.

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It was Mrs. McCool's night to go with the can for beer. So, she
fetched it and sat with Mrs. Purdy in one of those subterranean

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

retreats where housekeepers foregather and the worm diet
seldom.

'I rented out my third floor back, this evening,' said Mrs. Purdy,
across a fine circle of foam. 'A young man took it. He went up to
bed two hours ago.

'Now, did ye, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am?' said Mrs. McCool, with
intense admiration. 'You do be a wonder for renting' rooms of that
kind. And did ye tell him, then?' she concluded in a husky whisper,
laden with mystery.

'Rooms,' said Mrs. Purdy, in her furriest tones, 'are furnished
for to rent. I did not tell him, Mrs. McCool.'

' 'Tis right ye are, ma'am; 'tis by renting rooms we kale alive.
Ye have the rale sense for business, ma'am. There be many people
will reject the renting' of a room if they be told a suicide has been
after dying' in the bed of it.'

'As you say, we have our living to be making,' remarked Mrs.,
Purdy.

'Yes, ma'am; 'tis true. 'Tis just one wake ago this day I helped ye
lay out the third floor back. A pretty slip of a colleen she was to be
killing' herself wide the gas a swathe little face she had, Mrs. Purdy,
ma'am.'

'She'd a-been called handsome, as you say,' said Mrs. Purdy,
assenting but critical, 'but for that mole she had a-growing' by her
left eyebrow. Do fill up your glass again, Mrs. McCool.'

**XVII**

***The Brief Debut of Tildy***

IF YOU DO NOT KNOW Bogle's Chop House and Family Restau­rant it is your loss. For if you are one of the fortunate ones who
dine expensively you should be interested to know how the other
half consumes provisions. And if you belong to the half to whom
waiters' checks are things of moment, you should know Bogle's,
for there you get your money's worth - in quantity, at least.

Bogle's is situated in that highway of *bourgeoisie,* that boulevard
of Brown-Jones-and-Robinson, Eighth Avenue. There are two
rows of tables in the room, six in each row. On each table is a
castor-stand, containing cruets of condiments and seasons. From
the pepper cruet you may shake a cloud of something tasteless
and melancholy, like volcanic dust. From the salt cruet you may

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**O HENRY - 1 0 0 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

'A very sad one,' says he, laying the points of his manicured fin­gers together. 'An utterly incorrigible girl. I am Special Terrestrial
Officer the Reverend Jones. The case was assigned to me. The girl
murdered her fiancé and committed suicide. She had no defense.
My report to the court relates the facts in detail, all of which are
substantiated by reliable witnesses. The wages of sin are death.
Praise the Lord.'

The court officer opened the door and stepped out.
'Poor girl,' said Special Terrestrial Officer the Reverend Jones,

with a tear in his eye. 'It was one of the saddest cases that I ever
met with. Of course, she was - '

'Discharged,' said the court officer. 'Come here, Jonesy. First
thing you know you'll be switched to the pot-pie squad. How
would you like to be on the missionary force in the South Sea
Islands - hey? Now, you quit making these false arrests, or you'll
be transferred - see? The guilty party you've got to look for in this
case is a red-haired, unshaven, untidy man, sitting by the window
reading, in his stocking feet, while his children play in the streets.
Get a move on you.'

Now, wasn't that a silly dream?

**XXXIII**

***The Last Leaf***

IN A LITTLE DISTRICT west of Washington Square the streets have
run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called 'places.'
These 'places' make strange angles and curves. One street cross
itself a time or two. An artist once discovered a valuable possibility
in this street. Suppose a collector with a bill for paints, paper and
canvas should, in traversing this route, suddenly meet himself
coming back, without a cent having been paid on account!

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came
prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century
gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then they imported some
pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and
became a 'colony.'

At the top of a squatty, three-story brick Sue and Johnsy had
their studio. 'Johnsy' was familiar for Joanna. One was from
Maine, the other from California. They had met at the table
d'hôte of an Eighth Street 'Delmonico's,' and found their tastes in

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 **O HENRY - 1 0 0 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint
studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom
the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching
one here and there with his icy finger. Over on the East Side this
ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet
trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown
'Places.'

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gen­tleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by Californ­ian zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed
old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on
her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch
window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with
a shaggy, grey eyebrow.

'She has one chance in - let us say, ten,' he said, as he shook
down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. 'And that chance is
for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-up on the
side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopeia look silly.
Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get
well. Has she anything on her mind?'

'She - she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples someday,' said
Sue.

'Paint? - bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking
about twice - a man, for instance?'

'A man?' said Sue, with a Jews'-harp twang in her voice. 'Is a
man worth - but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind.'

'Well, it is the weakness, then,' said the doctor. 'I will do all that
science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish.
But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her
funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power
of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new
winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five
chance for her, instead of one in ten.'

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom and
cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into
Johnsy's room with her drawing-board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with
her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she
was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to

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 **O HENRY - 1 0 0 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must have their way to
Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors
write to pave their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers
and a monocle on the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she
heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the
bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window
and counting - counting backward.

'Twelve,' she said, and a little later, 'eleven'; and then 'ten,' and
'nine'; and then 'eight' and 'seven,' almost together.

Sue looked solicitously out the window. What was there to
count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the
blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy
vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half-way up the
brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from
the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the
crumbling bricks.

'What is it, dear?' asked Sue.
'Six,' said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. 'They're falling faster

now. Three days ago, there were almost a hundred. It made me
head ache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another
one. There are only five left now.'

'Five what, dear? Tell your Suddie.'
'Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls, I must go too.

I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?'
'Oh, I never heard of such nonsense,' complained Sue, with

magnificent scorn. 'What have old ivy leaves to do with your get­
 ting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl.
Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that
your chances for getting well real soon were - let's see exactly
what he said - he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's
almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on
the street-cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth
now, and let Suddie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the
editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork-
 chops for her greedy self.'

'You needn't get any more wine,' said Johnsy, keeping her eyes
fixed out the window.

'There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. Those leaves
just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then
I'll go too.'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**
'Johnsy, dear,' said Sue, bending over her, 'will you promise me

to keep your eyes closed, and not look out of the window until I
am done working? I must hand those drawings in by to-morrow. I
need the light or I would draw the shade down.'

'Couldn't you draw in the other room?' asked Johnsy coldly.
'I'd rather be here by you,' said Sue. 'Besides, I don't want you

to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves.'
'Tell me as soon as you have finished,' said Johnsy, closing her

eyes, and lying white and still as a fallen statue, 'because I want to
see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I
want to turn lose my hold on everything, and go sailing down,
down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves.'

'Try to sleep,' said Sue. 'I must call Behrman up to be my model
for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to
move till I come back.'

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor
beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses
beard curling down from the head of a satyr along the body of an
imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the
brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mis­
 tress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but
had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing
except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising.
He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in
the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank
gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the
rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in
anyone, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to
protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his
dimly-lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an
easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive
the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy's fancy, and
how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself,
float away when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his
contempt and derision for such idiotic imaginings.

'Vass!' he cried. 'Are deer people in de world met der foolishness
to die because leaf's day drop off from a confounded vine? I have not
heard of such a thing. No, I Vill not Bose as a model for your fool
hermit-dunderhead. Vy, do you allow dot silly pushiness to come in
der Prain of her? Ach, dot poor little Miss Johnsy.'

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**O HENRY - 1 0 0 S E L E C T E D STORIES**

'She is very ill arid weak,' said Sue, 'and the fever has left her
mind morbid and full of strange fancies. Very well, Mr. Behrman,
if you do not care to pose for me, you needn't. But I think you are
a horrid old - old filbert-gibbet.'

'You are just like a woman!' yelled Behrman. ' who said I Vill
not Bose? Go on. I come met you. For half an hour I have peen
trying to say dot I am ready to Bose. Gott! dis is not any Blace in
which one so got as Miss Johnsy shall lie sick. Someday I Vill Banit a masterpiece, and Ve shall all go away. Gott! yes.'

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the
shade down to the window-sill and motioned Behrman into the
other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the
ivy vine. Then they looked at each other for a moment without
speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow.
Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit-miner
on an upturned kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep the next morning, she
found Johnsy with dull, wide-open eyes staring at the drawn green
shade.

'Pull it up! I want to see,' she ordered, in a whisper.
Wearily Sue obeyed.
But, lo! after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had

endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against
the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last on the vine. Still dark
green near its stem, but with its serrated edges tinted with the
yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from a branch
some twenty feet above the ground.

'It is the last one,' said Johnsy. 'I thought it would surely fall
during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall to-day, and I shall
die at the same time.'

'Dear, dear!' said Sue, leaning her worn face down to the pillow;
'Think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?'

But Johnsy did not answer. The Lonesomes thing in all the
world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious,
far journey. The fancy seemed to possess her more strongly as
one by one the ties that bound her to friendship and to earth were
loosed.

The day wore away, and even through the twilight they could
see the lone ivy leaf clinging to its stem against the wall. And then,
with the coming of the night the north wind was again loosed,
while the rain still beat against the windows and pattered down
from the low Dutch eaves.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**
When it was light enough Johnsy, the merciless, commanded

that the shade be raised.
The ivy leaf was still there.
Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to

Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.
'I've been a bad girl, Suddie,' said Johnsy. 'Something has made

that last leaf stays there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to
want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk
with a little port in it, and - no; bring me a hand-mirror first; and
then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you
cook.'

An hour later she said -
 'Suddie, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples.'
The doctor came in the afternoon, and Sue had an excuse to go

into the hallway as he left.
'Even chances,' said the doctor, talking Sue's thin, shaking hand

in his. 'With good nursing you'll win. And now I must see another
case I have downstairs. Behrman, his name is -- some kind of an
artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man, and the
attack is acute. There is no hope for him; but he goes to the hospital
to-day to be made more comfortable.'

The next day the doctor said to Sue: 'She's out of danger.
You've won. Nutrition and care now - that's all.'

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, con­tentedly knitting a very blue and very useless Woollen shoulder
scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

'I have something to tell you, white mouse,' she said. 'Mr.
Behrman died of pneumonia today in hospital. He was ill only two
days. The janitor found him on the morning of the first day in his
room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were
wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had
been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still
lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some
scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colors
mixed on it, and - look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on
the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when
the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece - he painted
it there the night that the last leaf fell.'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

Presently Thomas moved tentatively in his seat, and thoughtfully
felt an abrasion or two on his knees and elbows.

'Say, Annie,' said he confidentially, 'maybe it's one of the last
dreams of the booze, but I've a kind of a recollection of riding in an
automobile with a swell guy that took me to a house full of eagles
and arc lights. He fed me on biscuits and hot air, and then kicked
me down the front steps. If it was the *d t's,* why am I so sore?'

'Shut up, you fool,' said Annie.
'If I could find that funny guy's house,' said Thomas, in conclusion,

'I'd go up there some day and punch his nose for him.'

**XLVII**

***The Poet and the Peasant***

THE OTHER DAY a poet friend of mine, who has lived in close
communication with nature all his life, wrote a poem and took it
to an editor.

It was a living pastoral, full of the genuine breath of the fields,
the song of birds, and the pleasant chatter of trickling streams.

When the poet called again to see about it, with hopes of a
beefsteak dinner in his heart, it was handed back to him with the
comment:

'Too artificial.'
Several of us met over spaghetti and Dutchess County chianti,

and swallowed indignation with the slippery forkfuls.
And there we dug a pit for the editor. With us was Conant, a

well-arrived writer of fiction - a man who had trod on asphalt all
his life, and who had never looked upon bucolic scenes except with
sensations of disgust from the windows of express trains.

Conant wrote a poem and called it 'The Doe and the Brook.' It
was a fine specimen of the kind of work you would expect from a
poet who had strayed with Amaryllis only as far as the florist's
windows, and whose sole ornithological discussion had been car­ried on with a waiter. Conant signed this poem, and we sent it to
the same editor.

But this has very little to do with the story.
Just as the editor was reading the first line of the poem, on the

next morning, a being stumbled off the West Shore ferryboat, and
loped slowly up Forty-second Street.

The invader was a young man with light blue eyes, a hanging

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
lip, and hair the exact color of the little orphan's (afterward dis­
 covered to be the earl's daughter) in one of Mr. Blaney's plays. His
trousers were corduroy, his coat short-sleeved, with buttons in the
middle of his back. One bootleg was outside the corduroys. You
looked expectantly, though in vain, at his straw hat for ear-holes,
its shape inaugurating the suspicion that it had been ravaged from
a former equine possessor. In his hand was a valise - description of
it is an impossible task; a Boston man would not have carried his
lunch and law books to his office in it. And above one ear, in his
hair, was a wisp of hay - the rustic's letter of credit, his badge of
innocence, the last clinging touch of the Garden of Eden lingering
to shame the goldbrick men.

Knowingly, smilingly, the city crowds passed him by. They saw
the raw stranger stand in the gutter and stretch his neck at the tall
buildings. At this they ceased to smile, and even to look at him. It
had been done so often. A few glanced at the antique valise to see
what Coney 'attraction' or brand of chewing-gum he might be thus dinning into his memory. But for the most part he was
ignored. Even the newsboys looked bored when he scampered like
a circus clown out of the way of cabs and street-cars.

At Eighth Avenue stood 'Bunco Harry,' with his dyed mous­tache and shiny, good-natured eyes. Harry was too good an artist
not to be pained at the sight of an actor overdoing his part. He
edged up to the countryman, who had stopped to open his mouth
at a jewelry store window, and shook his head.

'Too thick, pal,' he said critically - 'too thick by a couple of
inches. I don't know what your lay is; but you've got the properties
on too thick. That hay, now - why, they don't even allow that on
Proctor's circuit anymore.'

'I don't understand you, mister,' said the green one. 'I'm not
looking' for any circus. I've just run down from Ulster County to
look at the town, being' that the Hayan's over with. Gosh! but it's a
whopper. I thought Poughkeepsie was some punkies; but this here
town is five times as big.'

'Oh, well,' said 'Bunco Harry,' raising his eyebrows, 'I didn't
mean to butt in. You don't have to tell. I thought you ought to
tone down a little, so I tried to put you wise. Wish you success at
your graft, whatever it is. Come and have a drink, anyhow.'

'I wouldn't mind having a glass of lager beer,' acknowledged the
other.

They went to a café frequented by men with smooth faces and
shifty eyes, and sat at their drinks.

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
'I'm glad I come across you, mister,' said Haylock's. 'How'd you

like to play a game or two of seven-up? I've got the kerns.'
He fished them out of Noah's valise - a rare, inimitable deck,

greasy with bacon suppers and grimy with the soil of cornfields.
'Bunco Harry' laughed loud and briefly.
'Not for me, sport,' he said firmly. 'I don't go against that

make-up of yours for a cent. But I still say you've overdone it. The
Rebus haven't dressed like that since '79. I doubt if you could
work Brooklyn for a key-winding watch with that lay-out.'

'Oh, you needn't think I isn't got the money,' boasted Hay-
 locks. He drew forth a tightly rolled mass or bills as large as a
teacup, and laid it on the table.

'Got that for my share of grandmother's farm,' he announced.
'There's $950 in that roll. Thought I'd come into the city and
look around for a likely business to go into.'

'Bunco Harry' took up the roll of money and looked at it with
almost respect in his smiling eyes.

'I've seen worse,' he said critically. 'But you'll never do it in
the clothes. You want to get light tan shoes and a black suit and
a straw hat with a colored band, and talk a good deal about Pitts­
 burg and freight differentials, and drink sherry for breakfast in
order to work off phony stuff like that.'

'What's his line?' asked two or three shifty-eyed men of 'Bunco
Harry' after Haylock's had gathered up his impugned money and
departed.

'The queer, I guess,' said Harry. 'Or else he's one of Jerome's
men. Or some guy with a new graft. He's too much hayseed. Maybe
that his - I wonder now - oh no, it couldn't have been real money.'

Haylock's wandered on. Thirst probably assailed him again, for
he dived into a dark groggery on a side-street and bought beer.
Several sinister fellows hung upon one end of the bar. At first sight
of him their eyes brightened; but when his insistent and exagger­ated rusticity became apparent their expressions changed to wary
suspicion.

Haylock's swung his valise across the bar.
'Keep that awhile for me, mister,' he said, chewing at the end of

a virulent clay bank cigar. 'I'll be back after I knock around a spell.
And keep your eye on it, for there's $950 inside of it, though
maybe you wouldn't think so to look at me.'

Somewhere outside a phonograph struck up a band piece, and
Haylock's was off for it, his coat-tail buttons flopping in the middle
of his back.

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
'Divvy? Mike,' said the men hanging upon the bar, winking

openly at one another.
'Honest, now,' said the bartender, kicking the valise to one side.

'You don't think I'd fall to that, do you? Anybody can see he isn't
no jay. One of McAdoo's come-on squads, I guess. He's a shine if
he made himself up. There aren't no parts of the country now
where they dress like that since they run rural free delivery to
Providence, Rhode Island. If he's got nine-fifty in that valise it's a
ninety-eight-cent Waterbury that's stopped at ten minutes to ten.'

When Haylock's had exhausted the resources of Mr. Edison to
amuse he returned for his valise. And then down Broadway he gallivanted, culling the sights with his eager blue eyes. But still and
evermore Broadway rejected him with curt glances and sardonic
smiles. He was the oldest of the 'gags' that the city must endure.
He was so flagrantly impossible, so ultra-rustic, so exaggerated
beyond the most freakish products of the barnyard, the hayfield
and the vaudeville stage, that he excited only weariness and suspicion. And the wisp of hay in his hair was so genuine, so fresh and
redolent of the meadows, so clamorously rural, that even a shell-
 game man would have put up his peas and folded his table at the
sight of it.

Haylock's seated himself upon a flight of stone steps and once
more exhumed his roll of yellow-backs from the valise. The outer
one, a twenty, he shucked off and beckoned to a newsboy.

'Son,' said he, 'run somewhere and get this changed for me. I'm
mighty nigh out of chicken feed; I guess you'll get a nickel if you'll
hurry up.'

A hurt look appeared through the dirt on the news's face.
'Aw, watchers'! Gwan and get her funny bill changed yourself.

Dey isn't no farm clothes her got on. Gwan wit her stage money.'
On a corner lounged a keen-eyed steerer for a gambling-

house. He saw Haylock's, and his expression suddenly grew cold
and virtuous.

'Mister,' said the rural one. 'I've heard of places in this here
town where a fellow could have a good game of old sledge or peg a
card at keno. I got $950 in this valise, and I come down from old
Ulster to see the sights. Know where a fellow could get action on
about $9 or $10? I'm going' to have some sport, and then maybe I'll
buy out a business of some kind.'

The steerer looked pained, and investigated a white speck on his
left forefinger nail.

'Cheese it, old man,' he murmured reproachfully. 'The Central

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
Office must be bughouse to send you out looking like such a Gillie.
You couldn't get within two blocks of a sidewalk crap game in
them Tony Pastor props. The recent Mr. Scotty from Death
Valley has got you beat a crosstown block in the way of Eliza­
 Bethan scenery and mechanical accessories. Let it he skiddoos for
yours. Nay, I know of no gilded halls where one may bet a patrol
wagon on the ace.'

Rebuffed again by the great city that is so swift to detect artifi­cialities, Haylock's sat upon the Kreb and presented his thoughts to
hold a conference.

'It's my clothes,' said he; 'durned if it isn't. They think I'm a
hayseed and won't have nothing' to do with me. Nobody never
made fun of this hat in Ulster County. I guess if you want folks to
notice you in New York you must dress up like they do.'

So, Haylock's went shopping in the bazaars where men Spake
through their noses and rubbed their hands and ran the tape line
ecstatically over the bulge in his inside pocket where reposed a red
nubbin of corn with an even number of rows. And messengers
bearing parcels and boxes streamed to his hotel on Broadway
within the lights of Long Acre.

At nine o'clock in the evening one descended to the sidewalk
whom Ulster County would have forsworn. Bright tan was his
shoes; his hat the latest block. His light grey trousers were deeply
creased; a gay blue silk handkerchief flapped from the breast
pocket of his elegant English walking-coat. His collar might have
graced a laundry window; his blond hair was trimmed close; the
wisp of hay was gone.

For an instant he stood, resplendent, with the leisurely air of a
boulevardier concocting in his mind the route for his evening
pleasures. And then he turned down the gay, bright street with the
easy and graceful tread of a millionaire.

But in the instant that he had paused the wisest and keenest eyes
in the city had enveloped him in their field of vision. A stout man
with grey eyes picked two of his friends with a lift of his eyebrows
from the row of loungers in front of the hotel.

'The juiciest jay I've seen in six months,' said the man with grey
eyes. 'Come along.'

It was half-past eleven when a man galloped into the West
Forty-seventh Street police-station with the story of his wrongs.

'Nine hundred and fifty dollars,' he gasped, 'all my share of
grandmother's farm.'

The desk sergeant wrung from him the name Jabez Bull tongue,

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
of Locust Valley Farm, Ulster County, and then began to take
descriptions of the strong-arm gentlemen.

When Conant went to see the editor about the fate of his poem,
he was received over the head of the office boy into the inner
office that is decorated with the statuettes by Rodin and J. G.
Brown.

'When I read the first line of "The Doe and the Brook," ' said
the editor, 'I knew it to be the work of one whose life has been
heart to heart with nature. The finished art of the line did not
blind me to that fact. To use a somewhat homely comparison, it
was as if a wild, free child of the woods and fields were to don the
garb of fashion and walk down Broadway. Beneath the apparel the
man would show.'

'Thanks,' said Conant. 'I suppose the cheque will be round on
Thursday, as usual.'

The morals of this story have somehow gotten mixed. You can
take your choice of 'Stay on the Farm' or 'Don't write Poetry.'

**XLVIII**
**The Thing's the Play**

BEING ACQUAINTED WITH a newspaper reporter who had a couple
of free passes, I got to see the performance a few nights ago at one
of the popular vaudeville houses.

One of the numbers was a violin solo by a striking-looking man
not much past forty, but with very grey, thick hair. Not being
afflicted with a taste for music, I let the system of noises drift past
my ears while I regarded the man.

'There was a story about that chap a month or two ago,' said the
reporter. 'They gave me the assignment. It was to run a column
and was to be on the extremely light and joking order. The old
man seems to like the funny touch I give to local happenings. Oh
yes, I'm working on a farce comedy now. Well, I went down to the
house and got all the details; but I certainly fell down on that job. I
went back and turned in a comic write-up of an east side funeral
instead. Why? Oh, I couldn't seem to get hold of it with my funny
hooks, somehow. Maybe you could make a one-act tragedy out of
it for a curtain-raiser. I'll give you the details.'

After the performance my friend, the reporter, recited to me the
facts over the Würzburger.

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**O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

racking, petitionary music of a violin. The hag, music, bewitches
some of the noblest. The Daws may peck upon one's sleeve with­
 out in injury, but whoever wears his heart upon his tympanum
gets it not far from the neck.

This music and the musician called her, and at her side honor
and the old love held her back.

'Forgive me,' he pleaded.
'Twenty years is a long time to remain away from the one you

say you love,' she declared, with a purgatorial touch.
'How could I tell?' he begged. 'I will conceal nothing from you.

That night when he left, I followed him. I was mad with jealousy.
On a dark street I struck him down. He did not rise. I examined
him. His head had struck a stone. I did not intend to kill him. I
was mad with love and jealousy. I hid nearby and saw an ambu­lance take him away. Although you married him, Helen - '

*'Who are you?'* cried the woman, with wide-open eyes, snatching
her hand away.

'Don't you remember me, Helen - the one who has always
loved you the best? I am John Delaney. If you can forgive - '

But she was gone, leaping, stumbling, hurrying, flying up the
stairs toward the music and him who had forgotten, but who had
known her for his in each of his two existences, and as she climbed
up she sobbed, cried and sang: 'Frank! Frank! Frank!'

Three mortals thus juggling with years as though they were bil­liard balls, and my friend, the reporter, couldn't see anything
funny in it!

**XL1X**

***A Ramble in Aphasia***

M Y WIFE AND I PARTED on that morning in precisely our usual
manner. She left her second cup of tea to follow me to the front
door. There she plucked from my lapel the invisible strand of lint
(The universal act of woman to proclaim ownership) and bade me
take care of my cold. I had no cold. Next came her kiss of parting
- the level kiss of domesticity flavored with Young Hyson. There
was no fear of the extemporaneous, of variety spicing her infinite
custom. With the deft touch of long malpractice, she dabbed awry
my well-set scarf-pin; and then, as I closed the door, I heard her
morning slippers pattering back to her cooling tea.

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
When I set out, I had no thought or premonition of what was to

occur. The attack came suddenly.
For many weeks I had been toiling, almost night and day, at a

famous railroad law case that I won triumphantly but a few days
previously. In fact, I had been digging away at the law almost
without cessation for many years. Once or twice good Doctor
Volney, my friend and physician, had warned me.

'If you don't slacken up, Belford,' he said, 'you'll go suddenly to
pieces. Either your nerves or your brain will give way. Tell me,
does a week pass in which you do not read in the papers of a case
of aphasia - of some man lost, wandering nameless, with his past
and his identity blotted out - and all from that little brain-clot
made by overwork or worry?'

'I always thought,' said I, 'that the clot in those instances was
really to be found on the brains of the newspaper reporters.'

Dr. Volney shook his head.
'The disease exists,' he said. 'You need a change or a rest.

Court-room, office and home - there is the only route you travel.
For recreation you - read law books. Better take warning in time.'

'On Thursday nights,' I said defensively, 'my wife and I play
cribbage. On Sundays she reads to me the weekly letter from her
mother. That law books are not a recreation remains yet to be
established.'

That morning as I walked, I was thinking of Doctor Volney's
words. I was feeling as well as I usually did - possibly in better
spirits than usual.

I awoke with stiff and cramped muscles from having slept long
on the incommodious seat of a day coach. I leaned my head
against the seat and tried to think. After a long time, I said to
myself: 'I must have a name of some sort.' I searched my pockets.
Not a card; not a letter; not a paper or monogram could I find.
But I found in my coat pocket nearly $3,000 in bills of large
denomination. 'I must be someone, of course,' I repeated to
myself, and began again to consider.

The car was well crowded with men, among whom I told myself,
there must have been some common interest, for they intermingled
freely, and seemed in the best good-humor and spirits. One of
them - a stout, spectacled gentleman enveloped in a decided Oduor
of cinnamon and aloes - took the vacant half of my seat with a
friendly nod, and unfolded a newspaper. In the intervals between
his periods of reading, we conversed, as travelers will, on current

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
affairs. I found myself able to sustain the conversation on such sub­
 jects with credit, at least to my memory. By and by my companion
said:

'You are one of us, of course. Fine lot of men the West sends in
this time. I'm glad they held the convention in New York; I've
never been East before. My name's R. P. Bolder - Bolder & Son,
of Hickory Grove, Missouri.'

Though unprepared, I rose to the emergency, as men will
when put to it. Now must I hold a christening, and be at once
babe, parson and parent. My senses came to the rescue of me
slower brain. The insistent Oduor of drugs from my companion
supplied one idea; a glance at his newspaper, where my eye met a
conspicuous advertisement, assisted me further.

'My name,' said I glibly, 'is Edward Pink hammer. I am a drug­
 gist, and my home is in Corno polis, Kansas.'

'I knew you were a druggist,' said my fellow-traveler affably. 'I
saw the callous spot on your right forefinger where the handle of
the pestle rubs. Of course, you are a delegate to our National
Convention.'

'Are all these men druggists?' I asked wonderingly.
'They are. This car came through from the West. And they're

your old-time druggists, too - none of your patent tablet-and-gran­
 ule pharma shootists that use slot machines instead of a prescription
desk. We percolate our own paregoric and roll our own pills, and
we aren't above handling a few garden seeds in the spring, and carry­ing a sideline of confectionery and shoes. I tell you, Ham pinker, I've
got an idea to spring on this convention - new ideas is what they
want. Now, you know the shelf bottles of tartar emetic and Rochelle
salt Ant. et Pot. Tart. and Sod. et Pot. Tart. - one's poison, you
know, and the others harmless. It's easy to mistake one label for the
other. Where do druggists mostly keep 'me? Why, as far apart as
possible, on different shelves. That's wrong. I say keep 'me side by
side so when you want one you can always compare it with the other
and avoid mistakes. Do you catch the idea?'

'It seems to me a very good one,' I said.
'All right! When I spring it on the convention you back it up.

We'll make some of these Eastern orange-phosphate-and-mas-
 sage-cream professors that think they're the only lozenges in the
market looks like hypodermic tablets.'

'If I can be of any aid,' I said, warming, 'the two bottles of - er - '
'Tartrate of antimony and potash, and tartrate of soda and

potash.'

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
'Shall henceforth sit side by side,' I concluded firmly.
'Now, there's another thing,' said Mr. Bolder. 'For an excipient

in manipulating a pill mass which do you prefer - the magnesia
carbonate or the pulverized glycyrrhiza radix?'

'The - er - magnesia,' I said. It was easier to say than the other
word.

Mr. Bolder glanced at me distrustfully through his spectacles.
'Give me the glycyrrhiza,' said he. 'Magnesia cakes.'
'Here's another one of these fake aphasia cases,' he said,

presently, handing me his newspaper, and laying his finger upon
an article. 'I don't believe in 'me. I put nine out of ten of 'me
down as frauds. A man gets sick of his business and his folks and
wants to have a good time. He skips out somewhere, and when
they find him he pretends to have lost his memory - don't know
his own name, and won't even recognize the strawberry mark on
his wife's left shoulder. Aphasia! Tut! Why can't they stay at home
and forget?'

I took the paper and read, after the pungent headlines, the fol­lowing:

'DENVER, June 12. - Elwyn C. Belford, a prominent lawyer, is mysteri­ously missing from his home for three days ago, and all efforts to locate him
have been in vain. Mr. Belford is a well-known citizen of the highest stand­ing, and has enjoyed a large and lucrative law practice. He is married and
owns a fine home and the most extensive private library in the State. On the
day of his disappearance, he drew quite a large sum of money from his bank.
No one can be found who saw him after he left the bank. Mr. Belford was a
man of singularly quiet and domestic tastes, and seemed to find his happiness
in his home and profession. If any clue at all exists to his strange disappear­ance, it may be found in the fact that for some months he had been deeply
absorbed in an important law case in connection with the Q. Y. and Z. Rail­
 road Company. It is feared that overwork may have affected his mind. Every
effort is being made to discover the whereabouts of the missing man.'

'It seems to me you are not altogether uncynical Mr. Bolder,' I
said, after I had read the dispatch. 'This has the sound, to me, of a
genuine case. Why should this man, prosperous, happily married
and respected, choose suddenly to abandon everything? I know that
these lapses of memory do occur, and that men do find themselves
adrift without a name, a history or a home.'

'Oh, gammon and jalap!' said Mr. Bolder. 'It's larks they're
after. There's too much education nowadays. Men know about
aphasia, and they use it for an excuse. The women are wise, too.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
When it's all over they look you in the eye, as scientific as you
please, and say: "He hypnotized me." '

Thus Mr. Bolder diverted, but did not aid me with his com­ments and philosophy.

We arrived in New York about ten at night. I rode in a cab to
a hotel, and I wrote my name 'Edward Pink hammer' in the regis­ter. As I did so I felt pervade me a splendid, wild, intoxicating
buoyancy - a sense of unlimited freedom, of newly attained possi­bilities. I was just born into the world. The old fetters - whatever
they had been - were stricken from my hands and feet. The future
lay before me a clear road such as an infant enters, and I could set
out upon it equipped with a man's learning and experience.

I thought the hotel clerk looked at me five seconds too long. I
had no baggage.

'The Druggists' Convention,' I said. 'My trunk has somehow
failed to arrive.' I drew out a roll of money.

'Ah!' said he, showing an auriferous tooth, 'we have quite a
number of the Western delegates stopping here.' He struck a bell
for the boy.

I endeavored to give color to my role.
'There is an important movement on foot among us Western­ers,' I said, 'in regard to a recommendation to the convention that
the bottles containing the tartrate of antimony and potash, and the
tartrate of sodium and potash, be kept in a contiguous position on
the shelf.'

'Gentleman to three-fourteen,' said the clerk hastily. I was
whisked away to my room.

The next day I bought a trunk and clothing, and began to live
the life of Edward Pink hammer. I did not tax my brain with
endeavors to solve problems of the past.

It was a piquant and sparkling cup that the great island city held
up to my lips. I drank of it gratefully. The keys of Manhattan
belong to him who is able to bear them. You must be either the
city's guest or its victim.

The following few days were as gold and silver. Edward
Pink hammer, yet counting back to his birth by hours only, knew
the rare joy of having come upon so diverting a world full-fledged
and unrestrained. I sat entranced on the magic carpets provided in
theatres and roof-gardens, that transported one into strange and
delightful lands full of frolicsome music, pretty girls and
grotesque, drolly extravagant parodies upon humankind. I went
here and there at my own dear will, bound by no limits of space,

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
time or comportment. I dined in weird cabarets, at weirder tables
d'hôte to the sound of Hungarian music and the wild shouts of
mercurial artists and sculptors. Or, again, where the night life
quivers in the electric glare like a kinetoscope picture, and the
millinery of the world, and its jewels, and the ones whom they
adorn, and the men who make all three possible are met for good
cheer and the spectacular effect. And among all these scenes that I
have mentioned I learned one thing that I never knew before. And
that is that the key to liberty is not in the hands of License, but
Convention holds it. Comity has a toll-gate at which you must
pay, or you may not enter the land of Freedom. In all the glitter,
the seeming disorder, the parade, the abandon, I saw this law,
unobtrusive, yet like iron, prevail. Therefore, in Manhattan you
must obey these unwritten laws, and then you will be freest of the
free. If you decline to be bound by them, you put on shackles.

Sometimes, as my mood urged me, I would seek the stately,
softly murmuring palm-rooms, redolent with high-born life and
delicate restraint, in which to dine. Again, I would go down to the
waterways in steamers packed with vociferous, bedecked,
unchecked, love-making clerks and shop-girls to their crude plea­
 sures on the island shores. And there was always Broadway - glis­tening, opulent, wily, varying, desirable Broadway - growing upon
one like an opium habit.

One afternoon as I entered my hotel a stout man with a big nose
and a black moustache blocked my way in the corridor. When I
would have passed around him, he greeted me with offensive
familiarity.

'Hallo, Belford!' he cried loudly. 'What the deuce are you
doing in New York? Didn't know anything could drag you away
from that old book den of yours. Is Mrs. B. along or is this a little
business run alone, eh?'

'You have made a mistake, sir,' I said coldly, releasing my hand
from his grasp. 'My name is pink hammer. You will excuse me.'

The man dropped to one side, apparently astonished. As I
walked to the clerk's desk I heard him call to a bell-boy and speak
something about telegraph blanks.

'You will give me my bill,' I said to the clerk, 'and have my bag­
 gage brought down in half an hour. I do not care to remain were
I am annoyed by confidence men.'

I moved that afternoon to another hotel, a sedate, old-fashioned
one on lower Fifth Avenue.

There was a restaurant a little way off Broadway where one

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
could be served almost *alfresco* in a tropic array of screening flora.
Quiet and luxury and a perfect service made it an ideal place in
which to take luncheon or refreshment. One afternoon I was there
picking my way to a table among the ferns when I felt my sleeve
caught.

'Mr. Belford!' exclaimed an amazingly sweet voice.
I turned quickly to see a lady seated alone - a lady of about

thirty, with exceedingly handsome eyes, who looked at me as
though I had been her very dear friend.

'You were about to pass me,' she said accusingly. 'Don't tell me
you did not know me. Why should we not shake hands - at least
once in fifteen years?'

I shook hands with her at once. I took a chair opposite her at
the table. I summoned with my eyebrows a hovering waiter. The
lady was philandering with an orange ice. I ordered a *crème de*
*menthe.* Her hair was reddish bronze. You could not look at it,
because you could not look away from her eyes. But you were con­scious of it as you are conscious of sunset while you look into the
profundities of a wood at twilight.

'Are you sure you know me?' I asked.
'No,' she said, smiling, 'I was never sure of that.'
'What would you think,' I said, a little anxiously, 'if I were to

tell you that my name is Edward Pink hammer, from Coraopolis,
Kansas.'

'What would I think?' she repeated, with a merry glance. 'Why,
that you had not brought Mrs. Belford to New York with you, of
course. I do wish you had. I would have liked to see Marian.' Her
voice lowered slightly - 'You haven't changed much, Elwyn.'

I felt her wonderful eyes searching mine and my face more
closely.

'Yes, you have,' she amended, and there was a soft, exultant note
in her latest tones; 'I see it now. You haven't forgotten. You
haven't forgotten for a year or a day or an hour. I told you you
never could.'

I poked my straw anxiously in the *crème de menthe.*
*'I'm sure I beg your pardon,' I said, a little uneasy at her gaze.*

'But that is just the trouble. I have forgotten. I've forgotten
everything.'

She flouted my denial. She laughed deliciously at something she
seemed to see in my face.

'I've heard of you at times,' she went on. 'You're quite a big
lawyer out West - Denver, isn't it, or Los Angeles? Marian must

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
be very proud of you. You knew, I suppose, that I married six
months after you did. You may have seen it in the papers. The
flowers alone cost two thousand dollars.'

She had mentioned fifteen years. Fifteen years is a long time.
'Would it be too late,' I asked somewhat timorously, 'to offer

your congratulations?'
'Not if you dare do it,' she answered, with such fine intrepidity

that I was silent, and began to crease patterns on the cloth with me
thumb-nail.

'Tell me one thing,' she said, leaning toward me rather eagerly -
 'a thing I have wanted to know for many years - just from a
woman's curiosity, of course - have you ever dared since that
night to touch, smell or look at white roses - at white roses wet
with rain and dew?'

I took a sip of *crème de menthe.*
*I t would be useless, I suppose,' I said, with a sigh, 'for me*

to repeat that I have no recollection at all about these things.
My memory is completely at fault. I need not say how much I
regret it.'

The lady rested her arms upon the table, and again her eyes dis­dained my words and went travelling by their own route direct to
my soul. She laughed softly, with a strange quality in the sound -
 it was a laugh of happiness yes, and of content - and of misery. I
tried to look away from her.

'You lie, Elwyn Belford,' she breathed blissfully. 'Oh, I know
you lie!'

I gazed dully into the ferns.
'My name is Edward Pink hammer,' I said. 'I came with the del­egates to the Druggists' National Convention. There is a move­ment on foot for arranging a new position for the bottles of
tartrate of antimony and tartrate of potash, in which, very likely,
you would take little interest.'

A shining landau stopped before the entrance. The lady rose. I
took her hand, and bowed.

'I am deeply sorry,' I said to her, 'that I cannot remember. I
could explain, but fear you would not understand. You will not
concede pink hammer; and I really cannot at all conceive of the -
 the roses and other things.'

'Good-bye, Mr. Belford,' she said, with her happy, sorrowful
smile, as she stepped into her carriage.

I attended the theatre that night. When I returned to my hotel,
a quiet man in dark clothes, who seemed interested in rubbing his

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D STORIES**
finger-nails with a silk handkerchief, appeared, magically, at me
side.

'Mr. Pink hammer,' he said casually, giving the bulk of his atten­tion to his forefinger, 'may I request you to step aside with me for
a little conversation? There is a room here.'

'Certainly,' I answered.
He conducted me into a small, private parlor. A lady and a

gentleman was there. The lady, I surmised, would have been
unusually good-looking had her features not been clouded by an
expression of keen worry and fatigue. She was of a style of figure
and possessed coloring and features that were agreeable to me
fancy. She was in a travelling-dress; she fixed upon me an earnest
look of extreme anxiety, and pressed an unsteady hand to her
bosom. I think she would have started forward, but the gentleman
arrested her movement with an authoritative motion of his hand.
He then came, himself, to meet me. He was a man of forty, a little
grey about the temples, and with a strong, thoughtful face.

'Belford, old man,' he said cordially, 'I'm glad to see you again.
Of course, we know everything is all right. I warned you, you
know, that you were overdoing it. Now, you'll go back with us,
and be yourself again in no time.'

I smiled ironically.
'I have been "Bell forded" so often,' I said, 'that it has lost its

edge. Still, in the end, it may grow wearisome. Would you be will­ing at all to entertain the hypothesis that my name is Edward
Pink hammer, and that I never saw you before in my life?'

Before the man could reply a wailing cry came from the woman.
She sprang past his detaining arm. 'Elwyn!' she sobbed, and cast
herself upon me, and clung tight. 'Elwyn,' she cried again, 'don't
break my heart. I am your wife - call my name once - just once! I
could see you dead rather than this way.'

I unwound her arms respectfully, but firmly.
'Madam,' I said severely, 'pardon me if I suggest that you

accept a resemblance too precipitately. It is a pity,' I went on,
with an amused laugh, as the thought occurred to me, 'that this
Belford and I could not be kept side by side upon the same shelf
like tartrates of sodium and antimony for purposes of identifica­tion. In order to understand the allusion,' I concluded airily, 'it
may be necessary for you to keep an eye on the proceedings of
the Druggists' National Convention.'

The lady turned to her companion, and grasped his arm.
'What is it, Doctor Volney? Oh, what is it?' she moaned.

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
He led her to the door.
'Go to your room for a while,' I heard him say. 'I will remain

and talk with him. His mind? No, I think not - only a portion of
the brain. Yes, I am sure he will recover. Go to your room and
leave me with him.'

The lady disappeared. The man in dark clothes also went out­
 side, still manicuring himself in a thoughtful way. I think he
waited in the hall.

'I would like to talk with a while, Mr. Pink hammer, if I
may,' said the gentleman who remained.

'Very well, if you care to,' I replied, 'and will excuse me if I take
it comfortably; I am rather tired.' I stretched myself upon a couch
by a window and lit a cigar. He drew a chair nearby.

'Let us speak to the point,' he said soothingly. 'Your name is not
Pink hammer.'

'I know that as well as you do,' I said coolly. 'But a man must
have a name of some sort. I can assure you that I do not extrava­gantly admire the name of pink hammer. But when one christens
one's self, suddenly the fine names do not seem to suggest them­
 selves. But suppose it had been Scharringhausen or Scroggins! I
think I did very well with pink hammer.'

'Your name,' said the other man seriously, 'is Elwyn C. Belford.
You are one of the first lawyers in Denver. You are suffering from
an attack of aphasia, which has caused you to forget your identity.
The cause of it was over-application to your profession, and, per­
 haps, a life too bare of natural recreation and pleasures. The lady
who has just left the room is your wife.'

'She is what I would call a fine-looking woman,' I said, after a
judicial pause. 'I particularly admire the shade of brown in her
hair.'

'She is a wife to be proud of. Since your disappearance, nearly
two weeks ago, she has scarcely closed her eyes. We learned that
you were in New York through a telegram sent by Isidore
Newman, a travelling man from Denver. He said that he had met
you in a hotel here, and that you did not recognize him.'

'I think I remember the occasion,' I said. 'The fellow called me
"Belford," if I am not mistaken. But don't you think it about time,
now, for you to introduce yourself?'

'I am Robert Volney - Doctor Volney. I have been your close
friend for twenty years, and your physician for fifteen. I came with
Mrs. Belford to trace you as soon as we got the telegram. Try,
Elwyn, old man - try to remember!'

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
'What's the use to try!' I asked, with a little frown. ' You say you

are a physician. Is aphasia curable? When a man loses his memory,
does it return slowly, or suddenly?'

'Sometimes gradually and imperfectly; sometimes as suddenly as
it went.'

'Will you undertake the treatment of my case, Doctor Volney?'
I asked.

'Old friend,' said he, 'I'll do everything in my power, and will
have done everything that science can do to cure you.'

'Very well,' said I. 'Then you will consider that I am your patient.
Everything is in confidence now - professional confidence.'

'Of course,' said Doctor Volney.
I got up from the couch. Someone had set a vase of white roses

on the center table - a cluster of white roses freshly sprinkled and
fragrant. I threw them far out of the window, and then I laid
myself upon the couch again.

'It will be best, Bobby,' I said, 'to have this cure happen sud­denly. I'm rather tired of it all, anyway. You may go now and
bring Marian in. But, oh, Doc,' I said, with a sigh, as I kicked him
on the shin - 'good old Doc - it was glorious!'

**L**

***A Municipal Report***
***The cities are full of pride,***

Challenging each to each -
 This from her mountainside,

That from her burthened beach.
R. KIPLING.

Fancy a novel about Chicago or Buffalo, let us say, or Nashville, Tennessee!
There are just three big cities in the United States that are 'story cities' - New
York, of course, New Orleans, and, best of the lot, San Francisco. - FRANK
NORRIS.

EAST IS EAST, and West is San Francisco, according to Californi­ans. Californians are a race of people; they are not merely inhabitants of a State. They are the Southerners of the West. Now,
Chicagoans are no less loyal to their city; but when you ask them
why, they stammer and speak of lake fish and the new Odd Fellows
Building. But Californians go into detail.

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
Of course, they have, in the climate, an argument that is good

for half an hour while you are thinking of your coal bills and heavy
underwear. But as soon as they come to mistake your silence for
conviction, madness comes upon them, and they picture the city
of the Golden Gate as the Bagdad of the New World. So far, as a
matter of opinion, no refutation is necessary. But, dear cousins all
(From Adam and Eve descended), it is a rash one who will lay his
finger on the map and say: 'In this town there can be no romance
- what could happen here?' Yes, it is a bold and a rash deed to
challenge in one sentence history, romance, and Rand and
McNally.

NASHVILLE. - A city, port of delivery, and the capital of the State of Ten­nessee, is on the Cumberland River and on the N.C. & St. L. and the L. & N.
railroads. This city is regarded as the most important educational center in the
South.

I stepped off the train at 8 p.m. Having searched the thesaurus in
vain for adjectives, I must, as a substitution, hie me to comparison
in the form of a recipe.

Take of London fog 30 parts; malaria 10 parts; gas leaks 20
parts; dewdrops, gathered in a brickyard at sunrise, 25 parts; odor
of honeysuckle 15 parts. Mix.

The mixture will give you an approximate conception of a
Nashville drizzle. It is not so fragrant as a moth-ball nor as thick
as pea-soup; but 'tis enough - 'twill serve.

I went to a hotel in a tumbril. It required strong self-suppres­sion for me to keep from climbing to the top of it and giving an
imitation of Sidney Carton. The vehicle was drawn by beasts of a
bygone era and driven by something dark and emancipated.

I was sleepy and tired, so when I got to the hotel I hurriedly
paid it the fifty cents it demanded (with approximate lagniappe, I
assure you). I knew its habits; and I did not want to hear it prate
about its old 'Marster' or anything that happened 'before' de Wah.'

The hotel was one of the kinds described as 'renovated.' That
means $20,000 worth of new marble pillars, tiling, electric lights
and brass cuspidors in the lobby, and a new L. & N. time table
and a lithograph of Lookout Mountain in each one of the great
rooms above. The management was without reproach, the atten­tion full of exquisite Southern courtesy, the service as slow as the
progress of a snail and as good-humored as Rip Van Winkle.
The food was worth travelling a thousand miles for. There is no

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**O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**

other hotel in the world where you can get such chicken livers *En*
*brochette.*

At dinner I asked a negro waiter if there was anything doing in
town. He pondered gravely for a minute, and then replied:
'Well, boss, I don't really reckon there's anything at all doing'
after sundown.'

Sundown had been accomplished; it had been drowned in the
drizzle long before. So that spectacle was denied me. But I went
forth upon the streets in the drizzle to see what might be there.

It is built on undulating grounds; and the streets are lighted by electricity at
a cost of $32,470 per annum.

As I left the hotel there was a race riot. Down upon me charged
a company of freedmen, or Arabs, or Zulus, armed with - no, I
saw with relief that they were not rifles, but whips. And I saw
dimly a caravan of black, clumsy vehicles; and at the reassuring
shouts, 'Kyra you anywhere in the town, boss, Fuh fifty cents,' I
reasoned that I was merely a 'fare' instead of a victim.

I walked through long streets, all leading uphill. I wondered how
those streets ever came down again. Perhaps they didn't until they
were 'graded.' On a few of the 'main streets' I saw lights in stores
here and there; saw street-cars go by conveying worthy burghers
hither and yon; saw people pass engaged in the art of conversation,
and heard a burst of semi-lively laughter issuing from a soda-water
and ice-cream parlor. The streets other than 'main' seemed to
have enticed upon their border's houses consecrated to peace and
domesticity. In many of them lights shone behind discreetly drawn
window shades; in a few pianos tinkled orderly and irreproachable
music. There was, indeed, little 'doing.' I wished I had come before
sundown. So, I returned to my hotel.

In November, 1864, the Confederate General Hood advanced against
Nashville, where he shut up a National force under General Thomas. The
latter then sallied forth and defeated the confederates in a terrible conflict.

All my life I have heard of, admired, and witnessed the fine
marksmanship of the South in its peaceful conflicts in the tobacco-
 chewing regions. But in my hotel a surprise awaited me. There
were twelve bright, new, imposing, capacious brass cuspidors in
the great lobby, tall enough to be called urns and so wide-
 mouthed that the crack pitcher of a lady baseball team should

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
have been able to throw a ball into one of them at five paces dis­
 tant. But, although a terrible battle had raged and was still raging,
the enemy had not suffered. Bright, new, imposing, capacious,
untouched, they stood. But shades of Jefferson Brick! the tile
floor - the beautiful tile floor! I could not avoid thinking of the
battle of Nashville, and trying to draw, as is my foolish habit,
some deductions about hereditary marksmanship.

Here I first saw Major (by misplaced courtesy) Wentworth
Caswell. I knew him for a type the moment my eyes suffered from
the sight of him. A rat has no geographical habitat. My old friend,
A. Tennyson, said, as he so well said almost everything:

'Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,
And curse me the British vermin, the rat.'

Let us regard the word 'British' as interchangeable *ad lib.* A rat
is a rat.

This man was hunting about the hotel lobby like a starved dog
that had forgotten where he had buried a bone. He had a face of
great acreage, red, pulpy, and with a kind of sleepy massiveness
like that of Buddha. He possessed one single virtue - he was very
smoothly shaven. The mark of the beast is not indelible upon a
man, until he goes about with a stubble. I think that if he had not
used his razor that day I would have repulsed his advances, and the
criminal calendar of the world would have been spared the addi­tion of one murder.

I happened to be standing within five feet of a cuspidor when
Major Caswell opened fire upon it. I had been observant enough
to perceive that the attacking force was using Gatlings instead of
squirrel rifles; so, I side-stepped so promptly that the major seized
the opportunity to apologize to a non-combatant. He had the
blabbing lip. In four minutes, he had become my friend and had
dragged me to the bar.

I desire to interpolate here that I am a Southerner. But I am not
one by profession or trade. I eschew the string tie, the slouch hat,
the prince Albert, the number of bales of cotton destroyed by
Sherman, and plug chewing. When the orchestra plays Dixie, I do
not cheer. I slide a little lower on the leather-cornered seat and,
well, order another Würzburger and wish that Longstreet had -
 but what's the use?

Major Caswell banged the bar with his fist, and the first gun at
Fort Sumter re-echoed. When he fired the last one at Appomattox

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
I began to hope. But then he began on family trees, and demon­
 started that Adam was only a third cousin of a collateral branch of
the Caswell family. Genealogy disposed of, he took up, to my dis­
 taste, his private family matters. The spoke of his wife, traced her
descent back to Eve, and profanely denied any possible rumor
that she may have had relations in the land of Nod.

By this time, I began to suspect that he was trying to obscure by
noise the fact that he had ordered the drinks, on the chance that I
would be bewildered into paying for them. But when they were
down he crashed a silver dollar loudly upon the bar. Then, of
course, another serving was obligatory. And when I had paid for
that I took leave of him brusquely; for I wanted no more of him.
But before I had obtained my release he had prated loudly of an
income that his wife received, and showed a handful of silver
money.

When I got my key at the desk the clerk said to me courteously:
'If that man Caswell has annoyed you, and if you would like to
make a complaint, we will have him ejected. He is a nuisance, a
loafer, and without any known means of support, although he
seems to have some money most the time. But we don't seem to
be able to hit upon any means of throwing him out legally.'

'Why, no,' said I, after some reflection; 'I don't see my way
clear to making a complaint. But I would like to place myself on
record as asserting that I do not care for his company. Your town,'
I continued, 'seems to be a quiet one. What manner of entertain­ment, adventure, or excitement have you to offer to the stranger
within your gates?'

'Well, sir,' said the clerk, 'there will be a show here next Thurs­
 day. It is - I'll look it up and have the announcement sent up to
your room with the ice water. Good night.'

After I went up to my room I looked out of the window. It was
only about ten o'clock, but I looked upon a silent town. The driz­zle continued, spangled with dim lights, as far apart as currants in
a cake sold at the Ladies' Exchange.

'A quiet place,' I said to myself, as my first shoe struck the ceil­ing of the occupant of the room beneath mine. 'Nothing of the
life here that gives color and variety to the cities in the East and
West. Just a good, ordinary, humdrum business town.'

Nashville occupies a foremost place among the manufacturing centers of the
country. It is the fifth boot and shoe market in the United States, the largest
candy and cracker manufacturing city in the South, and does an enormous
wholesale dry goods, grocery and drug business.

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
I must tell you how I came to be in Nashville, and assure you

the digression brings as much tedium to me as it does to you. I
was travelling elsewhere on my own business, but I had a com­
 mission from a Northern literary magazine to stop over there and
establish a personal connection between the publication and one
of its contributors, Azalea Adair.

Adair (there was no clue to the personality except the handwrit­ing) had sent in some essays (lost art!) and poems that had made
the editors swear approvingly over their one o'clock luncheon. So
they had commissioned me to round up said Adair and corner by
contract his or her output at two cents a word before some other
publisher offered her ten or twenty.

At nine o'clock the next morning, after my chicken livers *En bro*­*chette* (try them if you can find that hotel), I strayed out into the
drizzle, which was still on for an unlimited run. At the first corner
I came upon Uncle Cæsar. He was a stalwart negro, older than the
pyramids, with grey wool and a face that reminded me of Brutus,
and a second afterwards of the late King Cutaway. He wore the
most remarkable coat that I ever had seen or expect to see. It
reached to his ankles and had once been a Confederate grey in
colors. But rain and sun and age had so variegated it that Joseph's
coat, beside it, would have faded to a pale monochrome. I must
linger with that coat for it has to do with the story - the story that
is so long in coming, because you can hardly expect anything to
happen in Nashville.

Once it must have been the military coat of an officer. The cape
of it had vanished, but all adown its front it had been frogged and
tasseled magnificently. But now the frogs and tassels were gone.
In their stead had been patiently stitched (I surmised by some sur­viving 'black mammy') new frogs made of cunningly twisted
common hempen twine. This twine was frayed and disheveled. It
must have been added to the coat as a substitute for vanished
splendors, with tasteless but painstaking devotion, for it followed
faithfully the curves of the long-missing frogs. And, to complete
the comedy and pathos of the garment, all its buttons were gone
save one. The second button from the top alone remained. The
coat was fastened by other twine strings tied through the button­
 holes and other holes rudely pierced in the opposite side. There
was never such a weird garment so fantastically bedecked and of so
many mottled hues. The lone button was the size of a half-dollar,
made of yellow horn and sewed on with coarse twine.

This negro stood by a carriage so old that Ham himself might

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
have started a hack line with it after he left the ark with the two
animals hitched to it. As I approached, he threw open the door,
drew out a leather duster, waved it, without using it, and said in
deep, rumbling tones:

'Step right in, Suh; aren't a speck of dust in it - jus' back from a
funeral, Suh.'

I inferred that on such gala occasion's carriages were given an
extra cleaning. I looked up and down the street and perceived that
there was little choice among the vehicles for hire that lined the
Kreb. I looked in my memorandum book for the address of Azalea
Adair.

'I want to go to 861 Jessamine Street,' I said, and was about to
step into the hack. But for an instant the thick, long, gorilla-like
arm of the old negro barred me. On his massive and saturnine face
a look of sudden suspicion and enmity flashed for a moment.
Then, with quickly returning conviction, he asked blandishingly:
'What are you Gwyne there for, boss?'

'What is that to you?' I asked a little sharply.
'Nothing', Suh, jus' nothing'. Only it's a lonesome kind of part of

town and few folks ever have business out there. Step right in. The
seats are clean - Jes' got back from a funeral, Suh.'

A mile and a half it must have been to our journey's end. I could
hear nothing but the fearful rattle of the ancient hack over the
uneven brick paving; I could smell nothing but the drizzle, now
further flavored with coal smoke and something like a mixture of
tar and oleander blossoms. All I could see through the streaming
windows were two rows of dim houses.

The city has an area of 10 square miles; 181 miles of streets, of which 137
miles are paved; a system of waterworks that cost $2,000,000, with 77 miles of
mains.

Eight-sixty-one Jessamine Street was a decayed mansion. Thirty
yards back from the street it stood, out merged in a splendid grove
of trees and untrimmed shrubbery. A row of box bushes over­
 flowed and almost hid the paling fence from sight; the gate was
kept closed by a rope noose that encircled the gate-post and the
first paling of the gate. But when you got inside you saw that 861
was a shell, a shadow, a ghost of former grandeur and excellence.
But in the story, I have not yet got inside.

When the hack had ceased from rattling and the weary
quadrupeds came to a rest I handed my jehu his fifty cents with an

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
additional quarter, feeling a glow of conscious generosity as I did
so. He refused it.

'It's two dollars, Suh,' he said.
'How's that?' I asked. 'I plainly heard you call out at the hotel:

"Fifty cents to any part of the town." '
'It's two dollars, Suh,' he repeated obstinately. 'It's a long way

from the hotel.'
'It is within the city limits and well within them,' I argued.

'Don't think that you have picked up a greenhorn Yankee. Do you
see those hills over there?' I went on, pointing toward the east (I
could not see them, myself, for the drizzle); 'well, I was born and
raised on their other side. You old fool nigger, can't you tell
people from other people when you see me?'

The grim face of King Cutaway softened. 'Is you from the
South, Suh? I reckon it was the shoes of your fooled me. There
is something' sharp in the toes for a Southern gentleman to wear.'

'Then the charge is fifty cents, I suppose?' said I inexorably.
His former expression, a mingling of cupidity and hostility,

returned, remained ten minutes, and vanished.
'Boss,' he said, 'fifty cents is right; but *I need* two dollars, Suh;

I'm *obliged* to have two dollars. I'm not *demand in'* it now, Suh;
after I knows whir You's from; I'm just' saying' that I *has* to have
two dollars to-night, and business is mighty po'.'

Peace and confidence settled upon his heavy features. He had
been luckier than he had hoped. Instead of having picked up a
greenhorn, ignorant of rates, he had come upon an inheritance.

'You confounded old rascal,' I said, reaching down into me
pocket, 'you ought to be turned over to the police.'

For the first time I saw him smile. He knew; *he knew;* HE KNEW.
I gave him two one-dollar bills. As I handed them over, I noticed

that one of them had seen parlous times. Its upper right-hand
corner was missing, and it had been torn through in the middle
but joined again. A strip of blue tissue-paper, pasted over the split,
preserved its negotiability.

Enough of the African bandit for the present: I left him happy,
lifted the rope and opened the creaky gate.

The house, as I said, was a shell. A paint-brush had not touched
it in twenty years. I could not see why a strong wind should not
have bowled it over like a house of cards until I looked again at the
trees that hugged it close - the trees that saw the battle of
Nashville and still drew their protecting branches around it
against storm and enemy and cold.

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 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
Azalea Adair, fifty years old, white-haired, a descendant of the

cavaliers, as thin and frail as the house she lived in, robed in the
cheapest and cleanest dress I ever saw, with an air as simple as a
queen's, received me.

The reception-room seemed a mile square, because there was
nothing in it except some rows of books, on unpainted, white-pine
bookshelves, a cracked, marble-top table, a rag rug, a hairless horse­
 hair sofa and two or three chairs. Yes, there was a picture on the wall,
a colored crayon drawing of a cluster of pansies. I looked around
for the portrait of Andrew Jackson and the pine-cone hanging
basket, but they were not there.

Azalea Adair and I had conversation, a little of which will be
repeated to you. She was a product of the old South, gently nur­tured in the sheltered life. Her learning was not broad, but was
deep and of splendid originality in its somewhat narrow scope. She
had been educated at home, and her knowledge of the world was
derived from inference and by inspiration. Of such is the precious,
small group of essayists made. While she talked to me, I kept
brushing my fingers, trying, unconsciously, to rid them guiltily of
the absent dust from the half-calf backs of Lamb, Chaucer,
Hazlitt, Marcus Aurelius, Montaigne and Hood. She was exquis­ite, she was a valuable discovery. Nearly everybody nowadays
knows too much - oh, so much too much - of real life.

I could perceive clearly that Azalea Adair was very poor. A
house and a dress she had, not much else, I fancied. So, divided
between my duty to the magazine and my loyalty to the poets and
essayists who fought Thomas in the valley of the Cumberland, I
listened to her voice, which was like a harpsichord, and found
that I could not speak of contracts. In the presence of the Nine
Muses and the Three Graces one hesitated to lower the topic to
two cents. There would have to be another colloquy after I had
regained my commercialism. But I spoke of my mission, and
three o'clock of the next afternoon was set for the discussion of
the business proposition.

'Your town,' I said, as I began to make ready to depart (which is
the time for smooth generalities), 'seems to be a quiet, sedate
place. A home town, I should say, where few things out of the
ordinary ever happen.'

It carries on an extensive trade in stoves and hollow ware with the West and
South, and its flouring mills have a daily capacity of more than 2,000 barrels.

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Azalea Adair seemed to reflect.
'I have never thought of it that way,' she said, with a kind of sin­

cere intensity that seemed to belong to her. 'Isn't it in the still,
quiet places that things do happen? I fancy that when God began
to create the earth on the first Monday morning one could have
leaned out one's windows and heard the drop of mud splashing
from His trowel as He built up the everlasting hills. What did the
noisiest project in the world - I mean the building of the tower of
Babel - result in finally? A page and a half of Esperanto in the
North American Review.'

'Of course,' said I platitudinous Ly, 'human nature is the same
everywhere; but there is more color - er - more drama and
movement and - er - romance in some cities than in others.'

'On the surface,' said Azalea Adair. 'I have travelled many
times around the world in a golden airship wafted on two wings
- print and dreams. I have seen (on one of my imaginary tours)
the Sultan of Turkey bow-string with his own hands one of his
wives who had uncovered her face in public. I have seen a man in
Nashville tears up his theatre tickets because his wife was going
out with her face covered - with rice powder. In San Francisco's
Chinatown, I saw the slave girl Sing Yee dipped slowly, inch by
inch, in boiling almond oil to make her swear she would never
see her American lover again. She gave in when the boiling oil
had reached three inches above her knee. At a euchre party in
East Nashville the other night I saw Kitty Morgan cut dead by
seven of her schoolmates and lifelong friends because she had
married a house painter. The boiling oil was sizzling as high as
her heart; but I wish you could have seen the fine little smile that
she carried from table to table. Oh yes, it is a humdrum town.
Just a few miles of redbrick houses and mud and stores and
lumber yards.'

Someone knocked hollowly at the back of the house. Azalea
Adair breathed a soft apology and went to investigate the sound.
She came back in three minutes with brightened eyes, a faint flush
on her cheeks, and ten years lifted from her shoulders.

'You must have a cup of tea before you go,' she said, 'and a
sugar cake.'

She reached and shook a little iron bell. In shuffled a small
negro girl about twelve, bare-foot, not very tidy, glowering at me
with thumb in mouth and bulging eyes.

Azalea Adair opened a tiny, worn purse and drew out a dollar
bill, a dollar bill with the upper right-hand corner missing, torn in

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two pieces and pasted together again with a strip of blue tissue-
 paper. It was one of the bills I had given the piratical negro - there
was no doubt of it.

'Go up to Mr. Baker's store on the corner, Impey,' she said,
handing the girl, the dollar bill, 'and get a quarter of a pound of tea
- the kind he always sends me - and ten cents worth of sugar
cakes. Now, hurry. The supply of tea in the house happens to be
exhausted,' she explained to me.

Impey left by the back way. Before the scrape of her hard, bare
feet had died away on the back porch, a wild shriek - I was sure it
was hers - filled the hollow house. Then the deep, gruff tones of
an angry man's voice mingled with the girl's further squeals and
unintelligible words.

Azalea Adair rose without surprise or emotion and disappeared.
For two minutes I heard the hoarse rumble of the man's voice;
then something like an oath and a light scuffle, and she returned
calmly to her chair.

'This is a roomy house,' she said, 'and I have a tenant for part of
it. I am sorry to have to rescind my invitation to tea. It was impos­sible to get the kind I always use at the store. Perhaps to-morrow
Mr. Baker will be able to supply me.'

I was sure that Impey had not had time to leave the house. I
inquired concerning street-car lines and took my leave. After I was
well on my way I remembered that I had not learned Azalea
Adair's name. But to-morrow would do.

That same day I started in on the course of iniquity that this
uneventful city forced upon me. I was in the town only two days,
but in that time, I managed to lie shamelessly by telegraph, and to
be an accomplice - after the fact, if that is the correct legal term -
 to a murder.

As I rounded the corner nearest my hotel the Afritel coachman
of the polychromatic, nonpareil coat seized me, swung open the
dungeon door of his peripatetic sarcophagus, flirted his feather
duster and began his ritual: 'Step right in, boss. Carriage is clean -
 jus' got back from a funeral. Fifty cents to any - '

And then he knew me and grinned broadly. ' 'Scouse me, boss;
you are de gentleman what rid out with me dis Manwin'. Thank you
kindly, Suh.'

'I am going out to 861 again to-morrow afternoon at three,' said
I, 'and if you will be here, I'll let you drive me. So, you know Miss
Adair?' I concluded, thinking of my dollar bill.

'I belonged to her father, Judge Adair, Suh,' he replied.

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 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**

'I judge that she is pretty poor,' I said. 'She hasn't much money
to speak of, has she?'

For an instant I looked again at the fierce countenance of King
Cutaway, and then he changed back to an extortionate old negro
hack-driver.

'She isn't Gwyne to starve, Suh,' he said slowly. 'She has Resorces,
Suh; she has Resorces.'

'I shall pay you fifty cents for the trip,' said I.
'Dat is perfectly correct, Suh,' he answered humbly; 'I just' *had*

to have data two dollars dis Manwin, boss.'
I went to the hotel and lied by electricity. I wired the magazine:

'A. Adair holds out for eight cents a word.'
The answer that came back was: 'Give it to her quick, you

duffer.'
Just before dinner 'Major' Wentworth Caswell bore down upon

me with the greetings of a long-lost friend. I have seen few men
whom I have so instantaneously hated, and of whom it was so dif­ficult to be rid. I was standing at the bar when he invaded me;
therefore, I could not wave the white ribbon in his face. I would
have paid gladly for the drinks, hoping thereby to escape another,
but he was one of those despicable, roaring, advertising bibbers
who must have brass bands and fireworks attend upon every cent
that they waste in their follies.

With an air of producing millions, he drew two one-dollar bills
from a pocket and dashed one of them upon the bar. I looked once
more at the dollar bill with the upper right-hand corner missing, torn
through the middle, and patched with a strip of blue tissue-paper. It
was my dollar bill again. It could have been no other.

I went up to my room. The drizzle and the monotony of a
dreary, eventless Southern town had made me tired and listless. I
remember that just before I went to bed, I mentally disposed of the
mysterious dollar bill (which might have formed the clue to a
tremendously fine detective story of San Francisco) by saying to
myself sleepily: 'Seems as if a lot of people here own stock in the
Hack-Driver's Trust. Pays dividends promptly, too. Wonder if - '
Then I fell asleep.

King Cutaway was at his post the next day, and rattled me
bones over the stones out to 861. He was to wait and rattle me
back again when I was ready.

Azalea Adair looked paler and cleaner and frailer than she had
looked on the day before. After she had signed the contract at eight
cents per word she grew still paler and began to slip out of her chair.

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Without much trouble I managed to get her up on the antediluvian
horsehair sofa and then I ran out to the sidewalk and yelled to the
coffee-colored Pirate to bring a doctor. With a wisdom that I had
not suspected in him, he abandoned his team and struck off up the
street afoot, realizing the value of speed. In ten minutes, he returned
with a grave, grey-haired and capable man of medicine. In a few
words (worth much less than eight cents each) I explained to him
my presence in the hollow house of mystery. He bowed with stately
understanding, and turned to the old negro.

'Uncle Cæsar,' he said calmly, 'run up to my house and ask Miss
Lucy to give you a cream pitcher full of fresh milk and half a tum­bler of port wine. And hurry back. Don't drive - run. I want you
to get back sometime this week.'

It occurred to me that Dr. Merriman also felt a distrust as to the
speeding powers of the land pirate's steeds. After Uncle Cæsar was
gone, lumberingly, but swiftly, up the street, the doctor looked me
over with great politeness and as much careful calculation until he
had decided that I might do.

'It is only a case of insufficient nutrition,' he said. 'In other
words, the result of poverty, pride, and starvation. Mrs. Caswell
has many devoted friends who would be glad to aid her, but she
will accept nothing except from that old negro, Uncle Cæsar, who
was once owned by her family.'

'Mrs. Caswell!' said I, in surprise. And then I looked at the
contract and saw that she had signed it 'Azalea Adair Caswell.'

'I thought she was Miss Adair,' I said.
'Married to a drunken, worthless loafer, sir,' said the doctor. 'It

is said that he robs her even of the small sums that her old servant
contributes toward her support.'

When the milk and wine had been brought, the doctor soon
revived Azalea Adair. She sat up and talked of the beauty of the
autumn leaves that were then in season, and their height of color.
She referred lightly to her fainting seizure as the outcome of an
old palpitation of the heart. Impey fanned her as she lay on the
sofa. The doctor was due elsewhere, and I followed him to the
door. I told him that it was within my power and intentions to
make a reasonable advance of money to Azalea Adair on future
contributions to the magazine, and he seemed pleased.

'By the way,' he said, 'perhaps you would like to know that you
have had royalty for a coachman. Old Cæsar's grandfather was a
king in Congo. Cæsar himself has royal ways, as you may have
observed.'

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As the doctor was moving off, I heard Uncle Cæsar's voice

inside: 'Did the git bore of dem two dollars from you, Mis' Zalea?'
'Yes, Cæsar,' I heard Azalea Adair answer weakly. And then I

went in and concluded business negotiations with our contributor.
I assumed the responsibility of advancing fifty dollars, putting it as
a necessary formality in binding our bargain. And then Uncle
Cæsar drove me back to the hotel.

Here ends all the story as far as I can testify as a witness. The
rest must be only bare statements of facts.

At about six o'clock I went out for a stroll. Uncle Cæsar was at
his corner. He threw open the door of his carriage, flourished his
duster and began his depressing formula: 'Step right in, Suh. Fifty
cents to anywhere in the city - hack's perfectly clean, Suh - jus' got
back from a funeral - '

And then he recognized me. I think his eyesight was getting
bad. His coat had taken on a few more faded shades of color, the
twine strings were more frayed and ragged, the last remaining
button - the button of yellow horn - was gone. A motley descen­dant of kings was Uncle Caesar.

About two hours later I saw an excited crowd besieging the
front of a drug store. In a desert where nothing happens this was
manna; so, I edged my way inside. On an extemporized couch of
empty boxes and chairs were stretched the mortal corporeality of
Major Wentworth Caswell. A doctor was testing him for the
immortal ingredient. His decision was that it was conspicuous by
its absence.

The erstwhile Major had been found dead on a dark street and
brought by curious and ennuied citizens to the drug store. The
late human being had been engaged in terrific battle - the details
showed that. Loafer and reprobate though he had been, he had
been also a warrior. But he had lost. His hands were yet clenched
so tightly that his fingers would not be opened. The gentle citi­zens who had known him stood about and searched their vocabu­laries to find some good words, if it were possible, to speak of him.
One kind-looking man said, after much thought: 'When "Cas"
was about fifteen he was one of the best spellers in school.'

While I stood there the fingers of the right hand of 'the man
that was,' which hung down the side of a white pine box, relaxed,
and dropped something at my feet. I covered it with one-foot qui­etly, and a little later on I picked it up and pocketed it. I reasoned
that in his last struggle his hand must have seized that object
unwittingly and held it in a death-grip.

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At the hotel that night the main topic of conversation, with the
possible exceptions of politics and prohibition, was the demise of
Major Caswell. I heard one man say to a group of listeners:

'In my opinion, gentlemen, Caswell was murdered by some of
these no-account niggers for his money. He had fifty dollars this
afternoon which he showed to several gentlemen in the hotel.
When he was found the money was not on his person.'

I left the city the next morning at nine, and as the train was
crossing the bridge over the Cumberland River I took out of me
pocket a yellow, horn, overcoat button the size of a fifty-cent
piece, with frayed ends of coarse twine hanging from it, and cast it
out of the window into the slow, muddy waters below.

*I wonder what's doing in Buffalo!*

**LI**
**Compliments of the Season**

THERE ARE NO MORE Christmas stories to write. Fiction is
exhausted; and newspaper items the next best, are manufactured
by clever young Journalists who have married early and have an
engagingly pessimistic view of life. Therefore, for seasonable
diversion, we are reduced to two very questionable sources - facts
and philosophy. We will begin with - whichever you choose to
call it.

Children are pestilential little animals with which we have to
cope under a bewildering variety of conditions. Especially when
childish sorrows overwhelm them are we put to our wits' end. We
exhaust our paltry store of consolation; and then beat them, sob­bing, to sleep. Then we grovel in the dust of a million years, and
ask God why. Thus, we call out of the rat-trap. As for the chil­dren, no one understands them except old maids, hunchbacks,
and shepherd dogs.

Now come the facts in the case of the Rag-Doll, the Tatterde­malion, and the Twenty-fifth of December.

On the tenth of that month the Child of the Millionaire lost her
rag-doll. There were many servants in the Millionaire's palace on
the Hudson, and these ransacked the house and grounds, but
without finding the lost treasure. The Child was a girl of five, and
one of those perverse little beasts that often wound the sensibili­ties of wealthy parents by fixing their affections upon some vulgar,

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'P-pardon, lady,' he said, 'but couldn't leave without exchanging'
comments season with lady the' house. ' 'Gains principles
gentleman do show.'

And then he began the ancient salutation that was a tradition in
the House when men wore lace ruffles and powder.

'The blessings of another year - '
Fuzzy's memory failed him. The Lady prompted:
' - Be upon this hearth.'
' - The guest - ' stammered Fuzzy.
' - And upon her who - ' continued the Lady, with a leading

smile.
'Oh, cut it out,' said Fuzzy ill-manneredly. 'I can't remember.

Drink hearty.'
Fuzzy had shot his arrow. They drank. The Lady smiled again

the smile of her caste. James enveloped Fuzzy and re-conducted
him toward the front door. The harp music still softly drifted
through the house.

Outside, Black Riley breathed on his cold hands and hugged the
gate.

'I wonder,' said the Lady to herself, musing 'who - but there
were so many who came. I wonder whether memory is a curse or a
blessing to them after they have fallen so low.'

Fuzzy and his escort were nearly at the door. The Lady called:
'James!'

James stalked back obsequiously, leaving Fuzzy waiting
unsteadily, with his brief spark of the divine fire gone.

Outside, Black Riley stamped his cold feet and got a firmer grip
on his section of gas-pipe.

'You will conduct this gentleman,' said the Lady, 'downstairs.
Then tell Louis to get out the Mercedes and take him to whatever
place he wishes to go.'

**LII**
**Proof of the Pudding**

SPRING WINKED a vitreous optic at Editor Westbrook, of the *Min­erva Magazine,* and deflected him from his course. He had lunched
in his favorite corner of a Broadway hotel, and was returning to
his office when his feet became entangled in the lure of the vernal
coquette. Which is by way of saying that he turned eastward in

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Twenty-sixth Street, safely forded the spring freshet of vehicles in
Fifth Avenue, and meandered along the walks of budding Madison
Square.

The lenient air and the settings of the little park almost formed
a pastoral; the color motif was green - the presiding shade at the
creation of man and vegetation.

The callow grass between the walks was the color of verdigris,
a poisonous green, reminiscent of the horde of derelict humans
that had breathed upon the soil during the summer and autumn.
The bursting tree-buds looked strangely familiar to those who had
botanized among the garnishing's of the fish course of a forty-cent
dinner. The sky above was of that pale aquamarine tint that hall-
 room poets rhyme with 'true' and 'Sue' and 'coo.' The one natural
and frank color visible was the ostensible green of the newly
painted benches - a shade between the color of a pickled cucum­ber and that of a last year's fast-back caravanette raincoat. But, to
the city-bred eye of Editor Westbrook, the landscape appeared a
masterpiece.

And now, whether you are of those who rush in, or of the gentle
concourse that fears to tread, you must follow in a brief invasion
of the editor's mind.

Editor Westbrook's spirit was contented and serene. The April
number of the *Minerva* had sold its entire edition before the tenth
day of the month - a newsdealer in Keokuk had written that he
could have sold fifty copies more if he had had 'me. The owners of
the magazine had raised his (the editor's) salary; he had just
installed in his home a jewel of a recently imported cook who was
afraid of policemen; and the morning papers had published in full
a speech he had made at a publishers' banquet. Also, there were
echoing in his mind the jubilant notes of a splendid song that his
charming young wife had sung to him before he left his uptown
apartment that morning. She was taking enthusiastic interest in
her music of late, practicing early and diligently. When he had
complimented her on the improvement in her voice she had fairly
hugged him for joy at his praise. He felt, too, the benign, tonic
medicament of the trained nurse, Spring, tripping softly adown
the wards of the convalescent city.

While Editor Westbrook was sauntering between rows of park
benches (already filling with vagrants and the guardians of lawless
childhood) he felt his sleeve grasped and held. Suspecting that he
was about to be panhandled, he turned a cold and unprofitable
face, and saw that his captor was - Dawe - Shackleford Dawe,

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dingy, almost ragged, the genteel scarcely visible in him through
the deeper lines of the shabby.

While the editor is pulling himself out of his surprise, a flash­
 light biography of Dawe is offered.

He was a fiction writer, and one of Westbrook's old acquain­tances. At one time they might have called each other old friends.
Dawe had some money in those days, and lived in a decent apart­ment-house near Westbrook's. The two families often went to
theatres and dinners together. Mrs. Dawe and Mrs. Westbrook
became 'dearest' friends. Then one day a little tentacle of the
octopus, just to amuse itself, ingurgitated Dawe's capital, and he
moved to the Gramercy Park neighborhood, where one, for a
few groats per week, may sit upon one's trunk under eight-
 branched chandeliers and opposite Carrara marble mantels and
watch the mice play upon the floor. Dawe thought to live by writ­ing fiction. Now and then he sold a story. He submitted many to
Westbrook. The *Minerva* printed one or two of them; the rest
were returned. Westbrook sent a careful and conscientious per­sonal letter with each rejected manuscript, pointing out in detail
his reasons for considering it unavailable. Editor Westbrook had
his own clear conception of what constituted good fiction. So, had
Dawe. Mrs. Dawe was mainly concerned about the constituents
of the scanty dishes of food that she managed to scrape together.
One day Dawe had been spouting to her about the excellences
of certain French writers. At dinner they sat down to a dish that
a hungry schoolboy could have encompassed at a gulp. Dawe
commented.

'It's Maupassant hash,' said Mrs. Dawe. 'It may not be art, but I
do wish you would do a five course Marion Crawford serial with
an Ella Wheeler Wilcox sonnet for dessert. I'm hungry.'

As far as this from success was Shackleford Dawe when he
plucked Editor Westbrook's sleeve in Madison Square. That was
the first time the editor had seen Dawe in several months.

'Why, Shack, is this you?' said Westbrook somewhat awk­wardly, for the form of this phrase seemed to touch upon the
other's changed appearance.

'Sit down for a minute,' said Dawe, tugging at his sleeve. 'This
is my office. I can't come to yours, looking as I do. Oh, sit down -
 you won't be disgraced. Those half-plucked birds on the other
benches will take you for a swell porch-climber. They won't know
you are only an editor.'

'Smoke, Shack?' said Editor Westbrook, sinking cautiously

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upon the virulent green bench. He always yielded gracefully when
he did yield.

Dawe snapped at the cigar as a kingfisher darts at a sunporch, or
a girl pecks at a chocolate cream.

'I have just - ' began the editor.
'Oh, I know; don't finish,' said Dawe. 'Give me a match. You

have just ten minutes to spare. How did you manage to get past
my office-boy and invade my sanctum? There he goes now,
throwing his club at a dog that couldn't read the "Keep off the
Grass" signs.'

'How goes the writing?' asked the editor.
'Look at me,' said Dawe, 'for your answer. Now don't put on

that embarrassed, friendly-but-honest look and ask me why I
don't get a job as a wine agent or a cab-driver. I'm in the fight to
a finish. I know I can write good fiction and I'll force you fellows
to admit it yet. I'll make you change the spelling of "regrets" to
"c-h-e-q-u-e" before I'm done with you.'

Editor Westbrook gazed through his nose-glasses with a sweetly
sorrowful, omniscient, sympathetic, skeptical expression - the
copyrighted expression of the editor beleaguered by the unavailable
contributor.

'Have you read the last story I sent you - "The Alarum of the
Soul"?' asked Dawe.

'Carefully. I hesitated over that story, Shack, really, I did. It had
some good points. I was writing you a letter to send with it when
it goes back to you. I regret - '

'Never mind the regrets,' said Dawe grimly. 'There's neither
salve nor sting in 'me anymore. What I want to know is why.
Come, now; out with the good points first.'

'The story,' said Westbrook deliberately, after a suppressed
sigh, 'is written around an almost original plot. Characterization -
 the best you have done. Construction - almost as good, except for
a few weak joints which might be strengthened by a few changes
and touches. It was a good story, except - '

'I can write English, can't I?' interrupted Dawe.
'I have always told you, 'Said the editor, 'that you had a style.'
'Then the trouble is the - '
'Same old thing,' said Editor Westbrook. 'You work up to your

climax like an artist. And then you turn yourself into a photogra­pher. I don't know what form of obstinate madness possesses you,
Shack, but that is what you do with everything that you write.
No, I will retract the comparison with the photographer. Now

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and then photography, in spite of its impossible perspective, man­
 ages to record a fleeting glimpse of truth. But you spoil every
denouement by those flat, drab, obliterating strokes of your brush
that I have so often complained of. If you would rise to the liter­ary pinnacle of your dramatic scenes, and paint them in the high
colors that art requires, the postman would leave fewer bulky,
self-addressed envelopes at your door.'

'Oh, fiddles and footlights!' cried Dawe derisively. 'You've got
that old sawmill drama kink in your brain yet. When the man with
the black moustache kidnaps golden-haired Bessie you are bound
to have the mother kneel and raise her hands in the spotlight and
say: "May high heaven witness that I will rest neither night nor
day till the heartless villain that has stolen me child feels the
weight of a mother's vengeance!" '

Editor Westbrook conceded a smile of impervious complacency.
'I think,' said he, 'that in real life the woman would express her­

self in those words or in very similar ones.'
'Not in a six hundred nights' run anywhere but, on the stage,'

said Dawe hotly. 'I'll tell you what she'd say in real life. She'd say:
"What! Bessie led away by a strange man? Good Lord! It's one
trouble after another! Get my other hat, I must hurry around to
the police-station. Why wasn't somebody looking after her, I'd
like to know? For God's sake, get out of my way or I'll never get
ready. Not that hat - the brown one with the velvet bows. Bessie
must have been crazy; she's usually shy of strangers. Is that too
much powder? Lordy! How I'm upset!"

'That's the way she'd talk,' continued Dawe. 'People in real life
don't fly into heroics and blank verse at emotional crises. They
simply can't do it. If they talk at all on such occasions they draw
from the same vocabulary that they use every day, and muddle up
their words and ideas a little more, that's all.'

'Shack,' said Editor Westbrook impressively, 'did you ever pick
up the mangled and lifeless form of a child from under the fender
of a street-car, and carry it in your arms and lay it down before the
distracted mother? Did you ever do that and listen to the words of
grief and despair as they flowed spontaneously from her lips?'

'I never did,' said Dawe. 'Did you?'
'Well, no,' said Editor Westbrook, with a slight frown. 'But I

can well imagine what she would say.'
'So can I,' said Dawe.
And now the fitting time had come for Editor Westbrook to play

the oracle and silence his opinionated contributor. It was not for an

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unarrived fictionist to dictate words to be uttered by the heroes and
heroines of the *Minerva Magazine,* contrary to the theories of the
editor thereof.

'My dear Shack,' said he, 'if I know anything of life, I know that
every sudden, deep and tragic emotion in the human heart calls
forth an opposite, concordant, conformable, and proportionate
expression of feeling? How much of this inevitable accord between
expression and feeling should be attributed to nature, and how
much to the influence of art, it would be difficult to say. The sub­limely terrible roar of the lioness that has been deprived of her
cubs are dramatically as far above her customary whine and purr as
the kingly and transcendent utterances of Lear are above the level
of his senile vaporing's. But it is also true that all men and women
have what may be called a subconscious dramatic sense that is
awakened by a sufficiently deep and powerful emotion - a sense
unconsciously acquired from literature and the stage that prompts
them to express those emotions in language befitting their impor­tance and histrionic value.'

'And in the name of seven sacred saddle-blankets of Sagittarius,
where did the stage and literature get the stunt?' asked Dawe.

'From life,' answered the editor triumphantly.
The story-writer rose from the bench and gesticulated elo­quently but dumbly. He was beggared for words with which to
formulate adequately his dissent.

On a bench near by a frowsy loafer opened his red eyes and
perceived that his moral support was due to a down-trodden
brother.

'Punch him one, Jack,' he called hoarsely to Dawe. 'Wat ' s he
come making' a noise like a penny arcade for amongst gentlemen
that comes in the Square to set and think?'

Editor Westbrook looked at his watch with an affected show of
leisure.

'Tell me, 'Asked Dawe, with truculent anxiety, 'what especial
faults in "The Alarum of the Soul" caused you to throw it down.'

'When Gabriel Murray,' said Westbrook, 'goes to his telephone
and is told that his fiancée has been shot by a burglar, he says - I
do not recall the exact words, but - '

'I do,' said Dawe. 'He says: "Damn Central; she always cuts me
off." (And then to his friend): "Say, Tommy, does a thirty-two
bullet make a big hole? It's kind of hard luck, aren't it? Could you
get me a drink from the sideboard, Tommy? No; straight; nothing
on the side." '

**97**

 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
'And again,' continued the editor, without pausing for argu­ment, 'when Berenice opens the letter from her husband inform­ing her that he has fled with the manicure girl, her words are - let
me see - '

'She says,' interposed the author: ' "Well, what do you think of
that!" '

'Absurdly inappropriate words,' said Westbrook, 'presenting
an anti-climax - plunging the story into hopeless bathos. Worse
yet; they mirror life falsely. No human being ever uttered banal
colloquialisms when confronted by sudden tragedy.'

'Wrong,' said Dawe, closing his unshaven jaws doggedly. 'I say
no man or woman ever spouts highfalutin talk when they go up
against a real climax. They talk naturally, and a little worse.'

The editor rose from the bench with his air of indulgence and
inside information.

'Say, Westbrook,' said Dawe, pinning him by the lapel, 'would
you have accepted "The Alarum of the Soul" if you had believed
that the actions and words of the characters were true to life in the
parts of the story that we discussed?'

'It is very likely that I would, if I believed that way,' said the
editor. 'But I have explained to you that I do not.'

'If I could prove to you that I am right?'
'I'm sorry, Shack, but I'm afraid I haven't time to argue any

further just now.'
'I don't want to argue,' said Dawe. 'I want to demonstrate to

you from life itself that my view is the correct one.'
'How could you do that?' asked Westbrook in a surprised tone.
'Listen,' said the writer seriously. 'I have thought of a way. It is

important to me that my theory of true-to-life fiction be recog­nized as correct by the magazines. I've fought for it for three
years, and I'm down to my last dollar, with two months' rent due.'

'I have applied the opposite of your theory,' said the editor, 'in
selecting the fiction for the *Minerva Magazine.* The circulation has
gone up from ninety thousand to - '

'Four hundred thousand,' said Dawe. 'Whereas it should have
been boosted to a million.'

'you said something to me just now about demonstrating your
pet theory.'

'I will. If you'll give me about half an hour of your time, I'll
prove to you that I am right. I'll prove it by Louise.'

'Your wife!' exclaimed Westbrook. 'How?'
'Well, not exactly by her, but with her,' said Dawe. 'Now, you

**98**

 **O HENRY - 100 SELECTED STORIES**
know how devoted and loving Louise has always been. She thinks
I'm the only genuine preparation on the market that bears the old
doctor's signature. She's been fonder and more faithful than ever,
since I've been cast for the neglected genius part.'

'Indeed, she is a charming and admirable life companion,'
agreed the editor. 'I remember what inseparable friends she and
Mrs. Westbrook once were. We are both lucky chaps, Shack, to
have such wives. You must bring Mrs. Dawe up some evening
soon, and we'll have one of those informal chafing-dish suppers
that we used to enjoy so much.'

'Later,' said Dawe. 'When I get another shirt. And now I'll tell
you, my scheme. When I was about to leave home after breakfast -
 if you can call tea and oatmeal breakfast - Louise told me she was
going to visit her aunt in Eighty-ninth Street. She said she would
return home at three o'clock. She is always on time to a minute. It
is now - '

Dawe glanced toward the editor's watch pocket.
'Twenty-seven minutes to three,' said Westbrook, scanning his

timepiece.
'We have just enough time,' said Dawe. 'We will go to my flat

at once. I will write a note, address it to her and leave it on the
table where she will see it as she enters the door. You and I will be
in the dining-room concealed by the portieres. In that note I'll say
that I have fled from her forever with an affinity who understands
the needs of my artistic soul as she never did. When she reads it
we will observe her actions and hear her words. Then we will
know which theory is the correct one - yours or mine.'

'Oh, never!' exclaimed the editor, shaking his head. 'That would
be inexcusably cruel. I could not consent to have Mrs. Dawe's
feelings played upon in such a manner.'

'Brace up,' said the writer. 'I guess I think as much of her as you
do. It's for her benefit as well as mine. I've got to get a market for
my stories in some way. It won't hurt Louise. She's healthy and
sound. Her heart goes as strong as a ninety-eight-cent watch. It'll
last for only a minute, and then I'll step out and explain to her.
You really owe it to me to give me the chance, Westbrook.'

Editor Westbrook at length yielded, though but half willingly.
And in the half of him that consented lurked the vivisectionist that
is in all of us.

Let him who has not used the scalpel rise and stand in his place.
Pity 'tis that there are not enough rabbits and guinea-pigs to go
around.

**99**

 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
The two experimenters in Art left the Square and hurried east­

ward and then to the south until they arrived in the Gramercy
neighborhood. Within its high iron railings, the little park had put
on its smart coat of vernal green, and was admiring itself in its foun­tain minor. Outside the railings the hollow square of crumbling
houses, shells of a bygone gentry, leaned as if in ghostly gossip over
the forgotten doings of the vanished quality. *Sic transit gloria Urbis.*

A block or two north of the park, Dawe steered the editor again
eastward, then, after covering a short distance, into a lofty but
narrow flat house burdened with a floridly over-decorated façade.
To the fifth story they toiled, and Dawe, panting, pushed his
latch-key into the door of one of the front flats.

When the door opened Editor Westbrook saw, with feelings of
pity, how meanly and meagerly the rooms were furnished.

'Get a chair, if you can find one,' said Dawe, 'while I hunt up
pen and ink. Hallo, what's this? Here's a note from Louise. She
must have left it there when she went out this morning.'

He picked up an envelope that lay on the center-table and tore
it open. He began to read the letter that he drew out of it; and
once having begun it aloud he so read it through to the end.
These are the words that Editor Westbrook heard:

DEAR SHACKLEFORD, -
 'By the time you get this I will be about a hundred miles away

and still a-going. I've got a place in the chorus of the Occidental
Opera Co., and we start on the road to-day at twelve o'clock. I
didn't want to starve to death, and so I decided to make my own
living. I'm not coming back. Mrs. Westbrook is going with me.
She said she was tired of living with a combination phonograph,
iceberg and dictionary, and she's not coming back, either. We've
been practicing the songs and dances for two months on the quiet.
I hope you will be successful, and get along all right. Good-bye.

'LOUISE.'

Dawe dropped the letter, covered his face with his trembling
hands, and cried out in a deep vibrating voice:

*'My God, why hast Thou given me this cup to drink? Since she is*
*false, then let Thy Heaven's fairest gifts, faith and love, become the*
*jesting bywords of traitors and friends!'*

Editor Westbrook's glasses fell to the floor. The fingers of one
hand fumbled with a button on his coat as he blurted between his
pale lips:

**100**

 **O HENRY - 100 S E L E C T E D S T O R I E S**
'Say, Shack, aren't that a hell of a note? Wouldn't that knock you off

*your perch, Shack? Isn't it hell, now, Shack - aren't it?'*

**LIII**
**Past One at Rooney's**

ONLY ON THE LOWER East Side of New York do the Houses of
Capulet and Montague survive. There they do not fight by the
book of arithmetic. If you but bite your thumb at an upholder of
your opposing house you have work cut out for your steel. On
Broadway you may drag your man along a dozen blocks by his
nose, and he will only bawl for the watch; but in the domain of the
East Side Tybalt's and Mercutio's you must observe the niceties of
deportment to the wink of an eyelash and to an inch of elbow-
 room at the bar when its patrons include foes of your house and
kin.

So, when Eddie McManus, known to the Capulets as Cork
McManus, drifted into Dutch Mike's for a stein of beer, and came
upon a bunch of Montagues making merry with the suds, he began
to observe the strictest parliamentary rules. Courtesy forbade his
leaving the saloon with his thirst unslaked; caution steered him to
a place at the bar where the mirror supplied the cognizance of the
enemy's movements that his indifferent gaze seemed to disdain;
experience whispered to him that the finger of trouble would be
busy among the chattering steins at Dutch Mike's that night.
Close by his side drew Brick Cleary, his Mercutio, companion of
his perambulations. Thus, they stood, four of the Mulberry Hill
Gang and two of the Dry Dock Gang minding their P's and Q's so
solicitously that Dutch Mike kept one eye on his customers and
the other on an open space beneath his bar in which it was his
custom to seek safety whenever the ominous politeness of the rival
associations congealed into the shapes of bullets and cold steel.

But we have not to do with the wars of the Mulberry Hills and
the Dry Docks. We must to Rooney's, were, on the most
blighted dead branch of the tree of life, a little pale orchid shall
bloom.

Overstrained etiquette at last gave way. It is not known who
first overstepped the bounds of punctilio; but the consequences
were immediate. Buck Malone, of the Mulberry Hills, with a
Dewey-like swiftness, got an eight-inch gun swung round from his