

PROOF OF THE PUDDING.

Being Another Case of Truth Stranger Than Fiction.

By O. HENRY.

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Spring winked a virtuous 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 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 fallow 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 garnishings of the fish course of a forty cent dinner. The sky above was of that pale aqua-



SAW THAT HIS CAPTOR WAS DAWE—SHACKLEFORD DAVE.

marine 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 black cravenette 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 course 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 'em. 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 down the wards of the convalescent city.

While Editor Westbrook was sauntering between the 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—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 flashlight 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 theaters and dinners together, Mrs. Dawe and Mrs. Westbrook became "dearest" friends. Then one day a little tentacle of the octopus, just to amuse itself, ingratiated 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 excellencies of certain French writers. At dinner they sat down to a dish that a hungry schoolboy could have encompassed as 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 Martin Crawford serial with an Elia 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 his 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 upon the virulent green bench. He always yielded gracefully when he did yield.

Dawe snapped at the cigar as a kingfisher darts at a sun perch or a girl pecks at a chocolate cream.

"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 'e-b-e-c-k' 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 Alarm 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 'em any more. 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 is 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."

"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 obnoxious mad possession you, Shack, but that is what you do with everything that you write. No; I will retract the comparison with the photographer. Now and then photography, in spite of its impossible perspective, manages 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 mustache kidnaps golden haired Bessie you are bound to have the mother kneel and raise her hands in the spot light 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 herself 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. "Eh? 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.

"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 apposite, 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 is dramatically as far above her customary wailing and purr as the kingly and transcendent utterances of Lear are above the level of his senile vapors. 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 the seven sardine 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.

Editor Westbrook looked at his watch with an affected show of leisure.

"Tell me," asked Dawe, with truculent anxiety, "what special faults in 'The Alarm 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 32 bullet make a big hole? It's kind of hard luck, ain't it? Could you get me a drink from the sideboard, Tommy? No; straight, nothing on the side.'"

"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 manicurist 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 anticlimax, plunging the story into hopeless pathos. 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 indigence and inside information.

"Say, Westbrook," said Dawe, pinning him by the lapel, "would you have accepted 'The Alarm of the Soul' if you had believed that the ac-



"AIN'T IT E-L, NOW, SHACK—AIN'T IT?"

tions 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."

to life fiction be recognized by editors by the magazines. I've found it so for three years, and I'm down to a fast dollar, with two months' trade due."

"I have applied the opposite of your theory," said the editor. "In doing so the fiction for the *Minerva* Magazine. The circulation has gone up from 100,000 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.

"Well, not exactly by her, but with her," said Dawe. "Now, you 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 genus 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—Louise told me she was going to visit her aunt in Eighty-ninth street. She said she would return home at 3 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 3," 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."

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.

The two experimenters in art left the square and hurried eastward 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 mirror. 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 facade. To the fifth story they toiled, and Dawe, panting, pushed his latchkey 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. Hello! 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 company, and we start on the road today at 12 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, teabag 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. Goodbye!

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 by words of traitors and fends!"

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:

"Say, Shack, ain't that a h-l of a note? Wouldn't that knock you off your perch, Shack? Ain't it h-l, now, Shack—ain't it?"

TIMELY HINTS FOR FARMERS

Besting the Hog Lice.

Up to this year my young pigs have been badly troubled with hog lice writes A. J. Legg in Farm and Fireside. Although I killed the lice on the old hogs repeatedly with kerosene, in a few weeks there would be lice again on them sufficient to infest the young pigs. The trouble was that while the kerosene would kill every louse it touched, there were sure to be some lice left to hatch out or else a few lice escaped and the oil was soon gone.

Last spring I separated my sows into pens a few days before they were due to farrow and covered their backs with a mixture of kerosene and hog lard. The lard stayed on for several days. When the oil was about all gone from their backs I applied it again. Not a louse was to be found on either the sows or their pigs until the pigs were weaned, nor have there been any since. The hog lard and kerosene mixture is a much more satisfactory lice remover than kerosene alone, and it is not so hard on the hog's skin.

Supply Fodder Early to Calves.

Young dairy calves—and, indeed, all calves—should be given good foddere early. It is important that these should be given to them early, so that the proper distension of the paunch may take place in due order. If it does not the capacity to take food becomes limited. Even with calves of the beef breeds the tendency is in the direction of giving too little attention to this matter. The free feeding of meal to calves makes flesh in good form, but it does not distend the stomach.

Brood Sows and Corn.

It is just as far wrong to feed and sow corn entirely to make a lot of milk rich in protein at pigging time as it is to feed the dairy cow nothing but corn. If corn alone is neither a satisfactory nor economical ration for a milk cow it certainly is not for a milk sow.

A Lazy Man.

A worthy old citizen of Newport who had the reputation of being the laziest man alive among "them hillocks," so lazy, indeed, that he used to weed his garden in a rocking chair by rocking forward to take hold of the weed and backward to uproot it, had a way of fishing peculiarly his own. He used to drive his old white faced mare to the spot where the tautog (blackfish) might be depended on for any weight, from two to twelve pounds, backed his gig down to the water side, put out his line and when the tautog was safely hooked started the old mare and pulled him out.

TALKING LIGHTHOUSES.

A Swedish Invention to Give Mariners Warning.

Wonderful possibilities are claimed for a Swedish invention called the photophone, by means of which it is said that sound waves can be registered on a sensitized plate.

The negative is developed in the ordinary way and the sound curves transferred to ebony plates, from which the sound is reproduced as by the gramophone.

The photophone records can be reproduced an infinitum, and if the original music or song should not be strong enough to fill a large concert hall, the sound can be increased as desired. On account of the immense volume of its sound the inventor prophesies that the photophone will replace fog sirens in lighthouses.

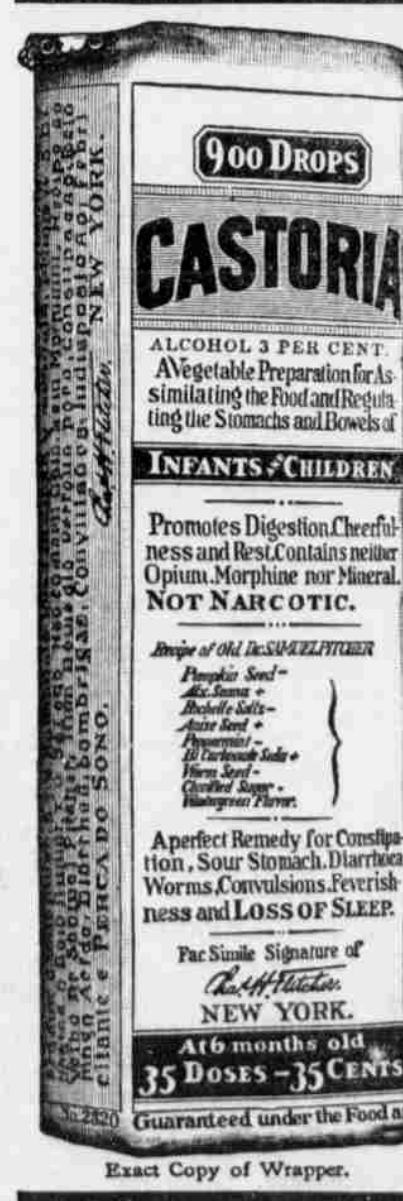
Instead of the inarticulate howl which the sirens send out in the night the photographic foghorn will call out the name of the lighthouse for miles over the ocean.—London Daily Graphic.

Chimney Sweep Brutality.

This is almost too shocking for print. Jim Seaward, just elected an English Alderman, says he was "Tom," the little chimney sweep of Kingsley's "Water Babies." Here is part of Seaward's story: "When I was only 8 years old I went up my first chimney. Left an orphan I fell into the hands of a chimney sweep, and a cruel master was he. He would shove me up the chimney like a helpless little monkey, set straw afire under me, and stick pins into the soles of my bare feet to make me climb up the chimney. He would say, 'Climb, damn you, climb.' And when I came down my knees and elbows would be covered with blood and soot, and here are still blue scars. I was soaked in strong salt and water to make my flesh hard and tough, and sometimes I was kept up a bad chimney six hours at a stretch."

A Country With One Railroad.

Persia, like Turkey, is awakening from her sleep of centuries, and aspires to reassume the position she once occupied in the affairs of the great world. She has a constitution and some other modern improvements, but she hasn't caught up with the times enough to provide herself with a real transportation system. Horses and donkeys still constitute the passenger and freight carrying resources of the empire which once dominated the East. Still, Persia has one railroad. It is 10 miles long and runs from Teheran, the capital, to the shrine of a defunct shah. The general manager of this road hasn't much trouble in figuring his ton-mile costs. Strikes do not disturb his slumbers. The finance committee does not bother itself with dividend policies or bond issues, nor does it lie awake nights wondering if rate-regulating bills are going to pass the Persian Parliament.—Moody's Magazine.



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