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STORIES FOR IDLE HOURS



Tobin's Palm

By O. HENRY

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Tobin and me, the two of us, went down to Coney one day, for there was \$4 between us, and Tobin had need of distractions. For there was Katie Mahorner, his sweetheart of County Silgo, lost since she started for America three months before with \$200, her own savings, and \$100 from the sale of Tobin's inherited estate, a fine cottage and pig on the Bog Shanaghua. And since the letter that Tobin got saying that she had started to come to him not a bit of news had he heard or seen of Katie Mahorner. Tobin advised in the papers, but nothing could be found of the colleen.

So to Coney me and Tobin went, thinking that a turn at the chutes and the smell of the popcorn might raise the heart in his bosom. But Tobin was a hard-headed man and the sadness struck in his skin. He ground his teeth at the crying ballrooms, he cursed the moving pictures, and though he would drink whenever asked, he scorned the punch and Judy and was for licking the fifty-cent me as they came.

So I got him down a sideway on a board walk where the attractions were some less violent. At a little 6 by 8 stall Tobin halts, with a more human look in his eye.

"This here," says he, "I will be diverted. I'll have the palm of me hand investigated by the wonderful palmist of the Nile and see if what is to be will be."

Tobin was a believer in signs and the unnatural in nature. He possessed illegal convictions in his mind along the subjects of black cats, lucky numbers and the weather predictions in the papers.

We went into the enchanted chicken coop, which was fixed mysterious with red cloth and pictures of hands with lines crossing 'em like a railroad center. The sign over the door says it is Mme. Zozo, the Egyptian palmist. There was a fat woman inside in a red jumper with polka-dots and beanie embroidered upon it. Tobin gives her 10 cents and extends one of his hands. She lifts Tobin's hand, which is own brother to the hoof of a dray horse, and examines it to see whether 'tis a stone in the frog or a cast shoe he has come for.

"Meh," says this Mme. Zozo, "the line of your fate shows—"
"This is not me foot at all," says Tobin, interrupting. "Sure, 'tis no beauty, but ye hold the palm of me hand."
"The line shows," says the madame, "that ye've not arrived at your time of life without bad luck. And there's more to come. The mound of Venus—or is that a stone breast?—shows that ye've been in love. There's been trouble in your life on account of your sweetheart."

"This Katie Mahorner she has references with," whispers Tobin to me in a loud voice to one side.
"I see," says the palmist, "a great deal of sorrow and tribulation with one whom ye cannot forget. I see the lines of designation point to the letter K and the letter M in her name."
"What?" says Tobin to me. "Do ye hear that?"
"Look out," goes on the palmist. "For a dark man and a light woman, for they'll both bring ye trouble. Ye'll

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cannot conceive that ye would hold a spelling bee upon the street corner. Will ye name some reasonable excuse for being at large?"

"By the two signs," answers Tobin, trying to explain, "which ye display according to the reading of the Egyptian palmist from the sole of me hand ye've been nominated to offset with good luck the lines of trouble leading to the nigger man and the blond lady with her feet crossed in the boat, because of the financial loss of a dollar sixty-five all so far fulfilled according to Hoyle."

The man stopped smoking and looked at me.
"Have ye any amendments," he asks, "to offer to that statement, or are ye one too? I thought by the looks of ye ye might have him in charge."
"None," says I to him, "except that as one horseshoe resembles another so are ye the picture of good luck as predicted by the hand of me friend. If not, then the lines of Danny's hand may have been crossed, I don't know."

"There's two of ye," says the man with the nose, looking up and down for the sight of a policeman. "I've enjoyed your company immense. Good night." With that he shoves his cigar in his mouth and moves across the street, stepping fast. But Tobin sticks close to one side of him and me at the other.

"What?" says he, stopping on the opposite sidewalk and looking back his hat. "Do ye follow me? I tell ye," he says very loud, "I'm proud to have met ye, but it is my desire to be rid of ye. I am off to my home."
"Do," says Tobin, leaning against his sleeve. "Do be off to your home. And I will sit at the door of it till ye come out in the morning, for the dependence is upon ye to obviate the curse of the nigger man and the blond lady and the financial loss of the one-hundred-and-sixty-five."

"'Tis a strange hallucination," says the man, turning to me as a more reasonable lunatic. "Hadin' ye better get him home?"
"Listen, man," says I to him. "Daniel Tobin is as sensible as he ever was. Maybe he is a bit deranged on account of having drunk enough to disturb his wits, but he is no more than following out the legitimate path of his superstitions and predicaments, which I will explain to you." With that I relate the facts about the palmist lady and how the finger of suspicion points to him as an instrument of good fortune.

"Now, understand," I conclude, "my position. I am the friend of me friend Tobin, according to me interpretations. 'Tis easy to be a friend to the prosperous, for it pays. 'Tis not hard to be a friend to the poor, for ye get puffed up by gratitude and have your picture printed standing in front of a tenement with a scuttle of coal and an orphan in each hand. But it strains the art of friendship to be a true friend to a born fool, and that's what I'm doing," says I. "And that's what I'm doing, there's no fortune to be read from the palm of me hand that wasn't printed there with the handle of a pick. And, though ye've got the crookedest nose in New York city, I misdoubt that all the fortune tellers doing business could milk good luck from ye. But the lines of Danny's hand pointed to ye fair, and I'll assist him to get the money ye've until he's convinced ye're dry."

After that the man turns, sudden, to me and looks at me with a grin that laughs and laughs considerably. Then he clasps me and Tobin on the backs of us and takes us by an arm apiece.
"Tis my mistake," says he. "How could I be expecting anything so fine and wonderful to be turning the corner upon me? I came near being found unworthy. 'Tis hard by 'tis hard by, but ye've got to be a man of some entertainment of idiosyncrasies. Let us go there and have drink while we discuss the unavailability of the categorical."

So saying, he marched me and Tobin to the back room of a saloon and ordered the drinks and laid the money on the table. He looks at me and Tobin like brothers of his, and we have the cigars.
"Ye must know," says the man of destiny, "that me walk in life is no I'm doing literary. I wander abroad being night seeking idiosyncrasies in the masses and truth in the heavens above. When ye came upon me I was in contemplation of the elevated road in conjunction with the chief luminary of night. The rapid transit is poetry and art, the moon but a tedious, dry body moving by rote. But these are private opinions, and in the business of literature the conditions are reversed. I hope to be writing a book to explain the strange things I have discovered in life."

"Ye will put me in a book," says Tobin, disgusted. "Will ye put me in a book?"
"I will not," says the man, "for the covers will not hold ye—not yet. The best I can do is to do ye a mezzell, for the time is not yet for destroying the limitations of print. Ye would look fantastic in ink. All alone by mezzell must I drink this cup of joy. But I thank ye, boys. I am truly grateful."

"The talk of ye," says Tobin, blowing the table with his fat, "is an eye-sore to me patience. I asked him for the time to do ye a mezzell, for the time is not yet for destroying the limitations of print. Ye would look fantastic in ink. All alone by mezzell must I drink this cup of joy. But I thank ye, boys. I am truly grateful."

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"I like this fat very well," she said.
"I will be very glad to rent it to you," replied the landlord.
"But we have two children."
"They need not interfere with you and your husband having the fat. I have a house two blocks down the street which you can rent for the children and the nurse!—Yonkers Statesman."

Armour's Generosity.
The employees of the late P. D. Armour always referred to him as "the old man." This was not so much the result of a habit among workmen of calling their employer "the old man" as an eccentricity of the "old man" himself. When he wanted to give aid anonymously he said, "That's from the old man." Many gifts went out of his pocket under the signature of "The Old Man."

A young girl went to the business office of the great packing concern one day to report the illness of a friend who worked as a stenographer in the office. Mr. Armour happened to stand near and overheard the girl's request for an advance in her friend's salary with which to pay the doctor's bill. Thrusting his thumb into his vest pocket—that pocket which seemed a mint of greenbacks—he handed the girl a roll of bills.

"Take that to your friend," he said, then adding to relieve the girl's astonishment, "Tell her the old man sent it."
Before the girl could thank him he was gone, but just as she left the building he again appeared, and finding her gone, hurried helter-skelter into the street.

"Here, here! I forgot something," he called.
The girl turned back, and without a word Mr. Armour pressed something into her hand. She looked down. It was a twenty-dollar bill.
Mr. Armour had decided that his gift was not sufficient and hastened to increase it.

Mexican Funerals.
The Mexicans have a queer way of burying the dead. The corpse is tightly wrapped in century plant matting and placed in a coffin hired for about a shilling. One or two natives, as the case may be, place the coffin on their heads and go at a trot to the grave, where the body is interred, and the coffin is then returned.

Living in Egypt.
Thousands of Egyptians live in old tombs, eating, sleeping, working, laughing, dancing, singing, doing all their deeds of daily life and household work among the mummies and sarcophagi.

Man's Byproducts.
There is enough hydrogen gas in a man, says the Medical Index Lancet, to carry him up to the clouds. He contains enough fat to make seventy-five candles and a large cake of soap and enough phosphorus to make 8,004 boxes of matches. His remaining constituents will yield, if utilized, six cruets of salt, a bowl of sugar and ten gallons of water.

Striking a Match.
"It's a woman," said Lecoq, the detective, heatedly. "We're on the trail. It looks like a man to me," the reporter murmured.
"But didn't you notice how she struck that match," said Lecoq. "She struck it away from her—a sure sign of her sex. Men always strike matches toward them."

After the arrest of the suspect—a woman, sure enough—Lecoq amplified his match statement. "It is tobacco that causes this difference between the sexes in match striking," he said. "All has smoked dozens of strong cigarettes every day, and it can be said without fear of contradiction that he has been the most ardent devotee of the fragrant weed that was ever seated upon a throne."
Boy—Don't sit there, sir. That seat's broke. Tussy Old Gentleman—Humph! In my young days boys had a sense of humor—Funch.

"My family has gone away for a month, old man, and—"
"Can't come, old fellow. I have sworn off playing poker."
The man who is always making good resolutions is at least better than the man who is always doing mean things. —Acheson Globe.
"Why do people who keep house always talk about their domestic help?" "Because they are afraid to dismiss the subject." —Chicago News.

You get a ticket to see Gibraltar—a ticket to a town. After dark you can't get in from any point on any pier. It is anything but wide open.
"I thought you and Mrs. Brown were the best of friends."
"We were until we rented a summer cottage together." —Detroit Free Press.
"Doctor, have you ever done this operation before?"
The Surgeon (enthusiastically)—No, sir; I've never had the chance.

Do You Want to be Well Dressed?



"If you do, now is the time to buy your clothes. I am receiving New Fall Clothing every day, and if you come first you will get the choice of new and up-to-date goods. If I can't suit you in stock I have a large line of samples and will take your order and measure, and in a few days give you a suit specially made for you."

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A. M. HADLEY

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Cook failed because he carried something said to be just as good. All housekeepers will fail to have good bread unless they do as Peary did.

Land Sale!

By virtue of an order of the Superior Court of Alamance county, made at the September term of said court, in the undersigned as commissioners of said court, will sell to the highest bidder, for cash at the court house door in Graham, N. C., on

October 30, 1909,

the tract of land known as the John Honey tract and situate in Albright Township, in Alamance county, N. C., adjoining the lands of G. F. Thompson, the late Capt. D. S. Thompson, Isaac Crabtree and others.

This tract contains about eighty-five acres and is situated within one hundred yards of the new Macadam Highway now being built leading toward Gaston, N. C. and is about six miles south of Graham. The Macadam road will extend all the way from Graham to and beyond it. It is just about one hundred yards west of the Macadam highway. It has upon it a dwelling-house—well built and in good repair. A good spring runs through the lands. It has upon it a large quantity of wood, both oak and pine, and some fine timber, both oak and pine. It is fine land for all kinds of crops grown in this county, and is comparatively level—rolling enough to grade well and not costly to wash. The tract originally contained something over eighty-five acres, but three acres was sold off from the western side of the place and these three acres are not included in this sale. The title beyond question good. No ten percent bid will be allowed on this tract, and the successful bidder will get the tract upon complying with his bid.

This is a rare opportunity to buy a nice farm near market, good schools, churches and in a good community.

ELMER LONG,
W. H. CARROLL,
Commissioners.

Sept. 25, 1909.

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This time of the year are signals of warning. Take Taraxacum Compound now. It may avert you a spell of fever. It will regulate your bowels, set your liver right, and cure your indigestion. A good Tonic. An honest medicine

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