

O. Henry's Story THE RUBAIYAT of a SCOTCH HIGHBALL



shoved over a dime and a nickel change for the quarter, ungarnished with his customary smile, and Babbitt walked out.

Now, Babbitt had a home and a wife—but that is another story. And I will tell you that story, which will show you a better habit and a worse story than you could find in the man who invented the phrase.

It began away up in Sullivan county, where so many rivers and so much trouble begins—or begin; how would you say that? It was July, and Jessie was a summer boarder at the Mountain Squint Hotel, and Bob, who was just out of college, saw her one day, and they were married in September. That's the tabloid novel—one swallow of water, and it's gone.

But those July days! Let the exclamation point expound for it, for I shall not. For particulars you might read up on "Romeo and Juliet," and Abraham Lincoln's thrilling sonnet about "You can fool some of the people, etc.," and Darwin's works.

But one thing I must tell you about. Both of them were mad over Omar Rubaiyat. They knew every verse of the old bluffer by heart—not consecutively, but picking 'em out here and there as you fork the mushrooms in a fifty-cent stake a la Bordelaise. Sullivan county is full of rocks and trees; and Jessie used to sit on them, and—please be good—used to sit on the rocks; and Bob had a way of standing behind her with his hands over her shoulders holding her hands, and his face close to hers, and they would repeat over and over their favorite verses of the old tent-maker. They saw only the poetry and philosophy of the wonderful lines then—indeed, they agreed that the wine was only an image, and that what was meant to be celebrated was some divinity or maybe Love or Life. However, at that time neither of them had tasted the stuff that goes with a sixty-cent table d'hôte.

Where was I? Oh, they were married and came to New York. Bob showed his college diploma, and accepted a position filling in stands in a lawyer's office at \$15 a week. At the end of two years he had worked up to \$50, and gotten his first taste of Bohemia—the kind that won't stand the borax and formaldehyde tests.

They had two rooms and a little kitchen. To Jess, accustomed to the mild but beautiful savor of a country town, the dreary Bohemia was sugar and spice. She hung fish seines on the walls of her rooms, and bought a rakish-looking sideboard, and learned to play the barjo. Twice or thrice a week they dined at French or Italian tables d'hôte in a cloud of smoke and brag and unshorn hair. Jess learned to drink a

cocktail in order to get the cherry. At home she smoked a cigarette after dinner. She learned to pronounce Chianti, and leave her olive stones for the waiter to pick up. Once she essayed to say la, la, la in a crowd, but got only as far as the second one. They met one or two couples while dining out and became friendly with them. The sideboard was stocked with Scotch and rye and a liqueur. They had their new friends in to dinner, and all were laughing at nothing by 1 a. m. Some plastering fell in the room below them, for which Bob had to pay \$4.50. Thus they footed it merrily on the ragged frontiers of the country that has no boundary lines or government.

And soon Bob fell in with his cronies and learned to keep his foot on a little rail six inches above the floor for an hour or so every afternoon before he went home. Drink always rubbed him the right way, and he would reach his rooms as jolly as a sandboy. Jessie would meet him at the door, and generally they would dance some insane kind of a rigadon about the floor by way of greeting. Once when Bob's feet became confused and he tumbled headlong over a footstool, Jessie laughed so heartily and long that he had to throw all the pillows at her to make her hush.

In such wise life was speeding for them on the gay when Bob Babbitt first felt the power that the giftie g'ied him.

But let us get back to our lamb and mint sauce.

When Bob got home that evening, he found Jessie in a long apron cutting up a lobster for the Newburg. Usually when Bob came in mellow from his hour at the bar, his welcome was hilarious, though somewhat tintured with Scotch smoke. By screams and snatches of song and certain audible testimonials to domestic felicity was his advent proclaimed. When she heard his foot on the stairs the old maid in the hall room—always stuffed cotton into her ears. At first Jessie had shrunk from the rudeness and flavor of these spiritual greetings, but as the fog of the false Bohemia gradually encompassed her she came to accept them as love's true and proper greeting.

Bob came in without a word, smiled, kissed her neatly and noiselessly, took up a paper and sat down. In the hall room the old maid held her two plugs of cotton poised, filled with anxiety.

Jessie dropped her lobster and knife and ran to him with frightened eyes.

"What's the matter, Bob? Are you ill?"

"Not at all, dear."

"Then what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

Hearken, brethren. When She—who has-a-right-to-ask interrogates you concerning a change she finds in your mood answer her thus: Tell her that you, in a sudden rage, have murdered your grandmother; tell her that you have robbed orphans and that remorse has stricken you; tell her your fortune is swept away; that you are beset by enemies, by bunions, by any kind of malevolent fate; but do not, if peace and happiness are worth as much as a grain of mustard seed to you—do not answer her "Nothing."

Jessie went back to the lobster in silence. She cast looks of darkest suspicion at Bob. He had never acted that way before.

When dinner was on the table she set out the bottle of Scotch and the glasses. Bob declined.

"Tell you the truth, Jess," he said. "I've cut out the drink. Help yourself, of course. If you don't mind I'll try some of the seltzer straight."

"You've stopped drinking?" she said, looking at him steadily and unsmilingly. "What for?"

"It wasn't doing me any good," said Bob. "Don't you approve of the idea?"

Jessie raised her eyebrows and one shoulder slightly.

"Entirely," she said with a sculptured smile. "I could not conscientiously advise any one to drink or smoke or whistle on Sunday."

The meal was finished almost in silence. Bob tried to make talk, but his efforts lacked the stimulus of previous evenings. He felt miserable, and once or twice his eye wandered toward the bottle, but each time the scathing words of his bibulous friend sounded in his ears and his mouth set with determination.

Jessie felt the change deeply. The essence of their lives seemed to have departed suddenly. The restless fever, the false gaiety, the unnatural excitement of the shoddy Bohemia in which they had lived had dropped away in the space of the popping of a cork. She stole curious and forlorn glances at the dejected Bob, who bore the guilty look of at least a wife-beater or a family tyrant.

After dinner the colored maid who came in daily to perform such chores cleared away one thing, Jessie, with an unreadable countenance, brought back the bottle of Scotch and the glasses and a bowl of cracked ice and set them on the table.

"May I ask," she said, with some of the ice in her tones, "whether I am to be included in your sudden spasm of goodness? If not, I'll make one for myself. It's rather chilly this evening, for some reason."

"Oh, come now, Jess," said Bob good-naturedly, "don't be so rough on me. Help yourself, by all means. There's no danger of you overdoing

it. But I thought there was with me; and that's why I quit. Have yours, and then let's get out the banjo and try over that new quickstep."

"I've heard," said Jessie, in the tones of the oracle, "that drinking alone is a pernicious habit. No. I don't think I feel like playing this evening. If we're going to reform, we may as well abandon the evil habit of banjo-playing, too."

She took up a book and sat in her little willow rocker on the other side of the table. Neither of them spoke for half an hour.

And then Bob laid down his paper and got up with a strange, absent look in his face and went behind her chair and reached over her shoulders, taking her hands in his, and laid his face close to hers.

In a moment to Jessie the walls of the seine-hung room vanished, and she saw the Sullivan county hills and rills. Bob felt her hands quiver in his as he began the verse from old Omar:

"Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling;

The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing!"

And then he walked to the table and poured a stiff drink of Scotch into a glass.

But in that moment a mountain breeze had somehow found its way in and blown away the mist of the false Bohemia.

Jessie leaped and with one fierce sweep of her hand sent the bottle and glasses crashing to the floor. The same motion of her arm carried it around Bob's neck, where it met its mate and fastened tight.

"Oh, my God, Bobbie—not that one—I see now. I wasn't always such a fool, was I? That other verse, boy—the one that says: 'Remold it to the Heart's Desire.' Say that one—to the Heart's Desire."

"I know that one," said Bob. "It goes:

"Ah, Love, could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp his sorry Scheme of Things entire
Would not we—"

"Let me finish it," said Jessie. "Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire."

"It's shattered all right," said Bob, crunching some glass under his heel.

In some dungeon below the accurate ear of Mrs. Pickens, the landlady, located the smash.

"It's that wild Mr. Babbitt coming home soused again," she said. "And he's got such a nice little wife, too."

THIS document is intended to strike somewhere between a temperance lecture and the "Bartenders' Guide." Relative to the latter, drink shall swell the theme and be set forth in abundance. Agreeably to the former, not an elbow shall be crooked.

Bob Babbitt was "off the stuff." Which means—as you will discover by referring to the unabridged dictionary of Bohemia—that he had "cut out the booze"; that he was "on the water wagon." The reason for Bob's sudden attitude of hostility toward the "demon rum"—as the white ribbons miscall whiskey (see the "Bartenders' Guide") should be of interest to reformers and saloon keepers.

There is always hope for a man who, when sober, will not concede or acknowledge that he was ever drunk. But when a man will say (in the apt words of the phrase-distiller), "I had a beautiful skate on last night," you will have to put stuff in his coffee as well as pray for him.

One evening on his way home Babbitt dropped in at the Broadway bar that he liked best. Always there were three or four fellows there from the downtown offices whom he knew. And then there would be highballs and stories, and he would hurry home to dinner a little late, but feeling good, and a little sorry for the poor Standard Oil Company. On this evening as he entered he heard some one say: "Babbitt was

in last night as full as a boiled owl."

Babbitt walked to the bar, and saw in the mirror that his face was as white as chalk. For the first time he had looked truth in the eyes. Others had lied to him; he had dissembled with himself. He was a drunkard, and had not known it. What he had fondly imagined was a pleasant exhilaration had been mandrin intoxication. His fancied wit had been driven; his gay humors nothing but the noisy vagaries of a sot. But, never again!

"A glass of seltzer," he said to the bartender.

A little silence fell upon the group of his cronies, who had been expecting him to join them.

"Going off the stuff, Bob?" one of them asked politely and with more formality than the highballs ever called forth.

"Yes," said Babbitt.

Some one of the group took up the unwashed thread of a story he had been telling; the bartender

WHO IS BUILDING THIS MYSTERIOUS RAILROAD THAT WILL NOT CARRY PASSENGERS?

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entire length. It is stated by those in authority that such a grade will enable one locomotive to pull a train of eighty loaded cars. To those who are not familiar with railroad construction, perhaps this statement will mean very little until it is compared with the grades to be found on other roads. What is considered a ruling gradient, to be found on the Norfolk and Western road, is from fifty to eighty feet; whereas the maximum ruling gradient on the Deepwater-Tidewater line is twenty-five feet. For the greater part of its run there is a grade of less than ten feet to the mile.

Other Roads Showing Fight.

The official spokesmen for the mysterious owners of this line state that the Deepwater-Tidewater system will not take any business away from either the Norfolk and Western or the Chesapeake and Ohio, but that there will be a new market for the coal which it transports, and that the field is large enough for all competitors. New York is clamoring for more smokeless coal from the New River-Pocahontas fields, and yet today it is practically impossible for this coal to get into New York in any considerable quantities on account of the high cost of hauling. The principal markets which the present roads supply are to be found in the New England States, which annually consume about 5,000,000 tons of smokeless bituminous coal. New York yearly requires for consumption and distribution 14,000,000 tons of steam coal. The Deepwater-Tidewater line proposes to supply this demand and will not enter into competition in the New England field.

In spite of the protestations which are being made by the new road, it is quite natural that the older corporations are viewing with some uneasiness the new enterprise, and are looking upon it as a piratical scheme to poach upon their territory. As a consequence of this inimical feeling

the Deepwater-Tidewater system has been forced to overcome some very difficult points that have been raised to confound them. One of these is the effort being made by the Norfolk and Western to deny the Tidewater the almost essential privilege of grade crossings near Norfolk. The fact that the land is so level in this section of the country makes the idea of overhead crossings almost out of the question for a road such as the one now under construction for the reason that it will bring about one of those heavy grades which are being so assiduously avoided whenever possible. It is stated that should the Norfolk and Western persist in its antagonism it will cause a needless expenditure of a million dollars on the part of the new road.

The Deepwater-Tidewater people hold that in constructing their road they will bestow incalculable benefits on the section they open up and on the entire country as well, by developing fields now purposely idle, and by reaching markets in which West Virginia coals are now never seen.

Starting on the Kanawha at Deepwater, so selected because from this place up the Loup creek is the only pass through the hills to the south that has not been acquired by the Chesapeake and Ohio, the route lies for eighty-five miles through the richest coal fields of West Virginia, with the Kanawha coal on the one side and the New River-Pocahontas deposits on the other. This route gives to the new line a greater mileage through the New River-Pocahontas smokeless coal fields than the main lines of the Norfolk & Western and the Chesapeake & Ohio combined.

Buying No Land.

Unlike most railroads operating in the coal fields of the country, the Deepwater-Tidewater owners are making no effort to buy up all the contiguous sections. President W. N. Page, who is nominally the head

of all the work, says that it has been deemed unwise for a road to hamper its management by endeavoring to control all the coal lands. He says that the idea of his company is to afford a cheap rate from the fields to the coast, and that he has no misgivings as to the amount of freight that will be offered his road.

While it is the avowed purpose of the company to extend their line to some point on the lakes, it is denied that a terminus has as yet been selected, and it is certain that at present all the energies of the management are being concentrated on pushing the work from Deepwater to Norfolk.

The tidewater terminals of the road are said to be exceptionally good. It is claimed that Sewall's Point, where the road secures egress to the sea, is the best harbor in Hampton Roads, and Hampton Roads is the best in the world. There is a depth of thirty-six feet of water, and the roadstead is the holding point for the United States warships. The Tidewater road owns over five hundred acres of land at Sewall's Point, and has a water frontage of three thousand two hundred feet. No channel dredging will be necessary in order to gain a minimum depth of thirty feet at low water. The improvements here will be in accordance with the designs of the best engineering skill that unlimited financial backing can secure, while in completeness, in convenience, in the use of the latest devices and the most modern machinery no terminals in the world will surpass them.

The Deepwater company is capitalized at the paltry sum of one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, while the Tidewater company has the even more ridiculously low capitalization of one hundred thousand. The fact that the work now under construction amounts to thirty-six million, and that the line to the lakes will add fourteen millions to this figure demonstrates conclusively the preposterousness of the assumption that the road is be-

ing built only by those parties who are named in the two charters.

Indicates Standard Oil.

Those who have been giving the matter the most careful scrutiny seemed to have arrived at the conclusion that the Standard Oil magnates, John D. Rockefeller and Henry H. Rogers, are the controlling factors. This theory has been formulated on the ground that about twelve years ago a number of New Yorkers acquired large holdings in the Gauley Mountain Oil Company. Subsequently these holdings were

How Men in the Public Eye Avoid the Snapshot Fiend

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so well down on his chest as to present to the camera a most excellent view of the top of his hat. The presence of a photographer never seemed to disturb his equanimity, he passed along without seeming in any other way to have recognized his presence. His better-known namesake of New York doesn't seem to know that trick, and what ever plan he had in mind to dodge, he was not quite quick enough to avoid capture in the accompanying illustration.

Even the Roosevelt children, being by virtue of their father's position and of an energetic press to some extent public characters, are learning to dodge the camera quite as cleverly as some of the grown-ups. Thus, when a snapshotter caught sight of Archie Roosevelt swinging along gaily in front of the State, War, and Navy building, whistling at the top of his whistle like any free born American school boy, and arrayed in a rough rider costume that would have filled the heart of any free-born American school boy with envy, and tried to catch him on the fly, Archie would have none of it. He caught sight of the snapshot man leveling his camera and turning "bow face!" scattered like a flock of sheep. The

increased by the purchase of about twenty-five thousand acres of land adjacent thereto. Among those interested in the deal were Mr. Rogers, Abram S. Hewitt's heirs, Levi P. Morton, the banking house of Morton, Bliss & Co., and the Bliss estate. All the names which are connected with the present nominal management seem to indicate that the system is being financed and directed by the Rockefeller-Gould interests, and it is alleged that the construction of this line is another gigantic effort on the part of the Goulds to carry out their pet project

of securing a network of railroads in West Virginia.

President W. N. Page, who is in charge of the work, talks very fluently on all subjects pertaining to the road and its construction with the single exception of the momentous point as to the real ownership of the property. When asked about this matter he refuses to gratify the curiosity of the general public and the great interest manifested by those corporations which are directly affected by the creation of the competing line.

When the road is completed from

Even former Minister Wu, good-natured as he was about most things, drew the line at a snapshot. It was the one thing that ruffled his composure. Generally he managed to dodge behind a fan or some of the voluminousness of his Oriental garb. The one time the writer remembers to have seen him really angry was during a visit to Atlantic City as the guest and principal speaker for the Hebrew Chautauqua. He had been unfailingly courteous to the thousand and one sightseers who came to the hotel and attached themselves to the group which surrounded him and sheer nerve edged in until they had had a few words with the fine old Chinaman. He had written probably a thousand and one autographs to oblige a horde of strangers—in English; to the disappointment of many, he could not be induced to write his autograph in Chinese characters. But one day, when he thought to refresh himself by a dip in the surf in good American fashion, and to that end he took himself to the beach and found when ready for the plunge all the button pushers in Atlantic City—and it was the end of July—waiting to get snapshots, he lost his temper. He splashed water on them and their cameras and got just good plain American "mad."

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If any of them succeeded in get-

ting an exposure the writer never heard of it. One could not but sympathize with his excellency Wu Ting-fang. Nor could one help but sympathize with the expectant camera fiends. For a photograph of the Chinese ambassador in his bathing suit would have been, in vulgar phrase, "worth good money." And apart from any low commercial motive, such a photograph would certainly be a treasured souvenir to anyone fortunate enough to get it.

Naturally the happiest and most productive hunting grounds are in the vicinity of the Capitol and the White House. There, at all hours of the day men of national and international reputation come and go. There, then, is a reasonable chance of shooting a personage, while in other places one may, of course, meet one, but it is merely a chance. There, too, there is plenty of light and space, and the chances are favorable that an exposure, if accomplished, will produce a good negative. So it is there that the old Washingtonian most frequently smiles to see a group of camera fiends watching for game—smiles, that is, if by chance he be not official and likely himself to be "game"—in which case his eye roves madly for a corner to hide in and his mind jumps for some plan for a successful "dodge."

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