

Coming Stories by
Edward Worthy
Edward Lawson
Dorothy West

THE OMAHA GUIDE

JUSTICE / EQUALITY ALL THE NEWS WHILE IT IS NEWS NEW TO THE LINE

The Finest Writers
Send Their Stories
First to the Illus-
trated Feature
Section

W. B. Ziff Co., 608 Dearborn St., Chicago
Advertising Representatives

ILLUSTRATED FEATURE SECTION— July 16, 1932

BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN
THE FEATURE SECTION

BRIDE IN SPIRIT ONLY

By E. R. BENNETT

It was their first meeting in the old home town after a lapse of twenty years.

The three of them were seated in the cozy library, in the lovely home of the one who had remained and lived there.

The other two had returned because of the celebration of the city's centennial, as thousands of others of the city's sons had done in response to the cordial and pressing invitation of the mayor and city fathers, which had been broadcast far and wide.

These three had been chums from boyhood. They had attended grammar and high schools together and had separated for the first time, when each one had gone to a different college.

They were men now, successful men in the different professions each had followed. They were men in their early forties; healthy, upstanding specimens of good living, well-tailored, urbane, socially content gentry, whose very countenances beamed satisfaction with life in general, also with each one's personal, individual lot in particular.

One was a minister—the Reverend Barton Robbs. He was married and every whit content with his prolific mate, who continued to present an increase to the interesting, growing family, every other year.

Another was a physician—Dr. Tankey Rissmore. He was married also, but was such a devotee to "birth control" that, after nine years of connubial bliss, there was yet to be the first addition to his household.

The third member of the trio was a lawyer—William Lawton. He had remained a bachelor and was the only one of the three who apparently suffered no qualms of conscience in depriving some good woman the privilege of sharing his bed and board, together with the ample, physical comforts of life, which he was in such splendid circumstances to give.

To many, this would seem a strange method of existence for one who was so highly favored by Dame Fortune. But, as always, there was a real reason for Lawton's preference, even fanatic devotion to a state of single blessedness. In his case it was the sad death, after a lingering illness, of the girl to whom he was engaged.

The three friends were seated, snug and comfortable in the deep, upholstered chairs, chatting and reminiscing to their heart's content. The two married ones almost monopolizing the conversation, bubbled over with excitement as they recited incident after incident; funny, serious, mysterious and otherwise, of their experiences in the married estate. Lawton, however, sat complacent, smiling quietly, content in dropping an occasional word or two or in adding a few sentences once in a while to the fund of reminiscence and generous tattling.

The two chatterboxes realized almost at the same instant that they were carrying the full load of conversation.

One would think it was planned between them—the suddenness of the turn in their converse. As one,

they questioned, bantered good naturedly, and even chided, Lawton about his single mode of existence.

Lawton countered, calmly at first, then with vehemence at times, as the logic and argument of the teasing duo waxed insistent, hot, and persuasive.

Finally he seemed to yield as he told them he desired to make a confession. Immediately they sobered, grew gentle and tensed with expectancy.

In a low, calm tone, his powerful, pleading voice held as in leash, Lawton began—

"You wonder why it is my irrevocable decision never to marry? It is due to several reasons.

"First, in a physical sense, marital ambitions have dried up and withered in my amorous consciousness. The 'Font of Love' is an empty pool within my broken heart.

"You boys are familiar with much of my tragic experience in the realm of love. Why compel a recital of these and remembrances at this time? But I forgot! You have never heard the true story in detail. Listen carefully, for I speak in dead earnest.

"I regard myself as being a married man. Yes, as much married as either of you. In a certain sense, a much higher and loftier marriage than either of you can boast, for I am married in spirit, to a spirit.

"Don't become startled at my explanation. To me it all seems perfectly natural in a spiritual way, for I have devoted much time to a serious study of spiritualism for a goodly number of years. I am still deeply interested in the study of psychic phenomena. In fact, psychic research has become my pet hobby and has been for a long time. With your understanding of this attitude of mine, you will grasp more readily the significant facts in what I am about to say.

"I am giving you my main reason now, also the story which explains it.

"Both of you remember Mildred Tompkins, do you not?"

Both friends gave emphatic and vigorous avowals.

"Why, yes! Certainly we remember her very distinctly. Why should we not? How forget her when she was your fiancée?" said one and then the other.

Lawton continued in a voice as soothing as a mother's to a fretful baby:

"Then you recall easily, what a dear, sweet person she was. Yes, she was beautiful, beautiful in features and character. A girl who was a real chum, also an inspiration to a man.

"Mildred and I were sweethearts from early childhood days. Then, we played at love, but it was real love just the same. As we grew in age, size and knowledge, this enduring love and affection for each other grew, expanded and developed into a perfect case. Body, soul and spirit were wrapped together in an ecstasy of mutual admiration, which was mothered by a contented understanding.

"You spoke of her just now as having been my fiancée. You will recall also how our engagement was prolonged because of the stress of circumstances. It was a hard fight I was making then against ob-



"Boys, meet my wife! My one true enduring love—Mildred, my spirit bride."

stacles, which, at times, threatened to overwhelm me.

"Yet, I was a devoted lover, while a struggling young attorney. How much I stinted, sacrificed and saved, for the approaching day of my marriage, was common knowledge among all my friends and acquaintances.

"Then at last success came.

"It came with a rush and came with plenty of fame and money. It was my successful prosecution and winning of the 'Le Mar Will Case' which landed me securely on the 'Success Road.'

Dr. Rissmore drew his chair closer, touched Lawton gently on his knee and asked him apologetically:

"Pardon my interrupting you, Will. But—may I request a little enlightenment on the 'Le Mar Will Case?' I cannot seem to recall it. Just the bare facts will do, if you don't mind."

"Certainly, Tankey," came the ready reply from Lawton. "I shall be glad to refresh your memory, for you must have heard of it at the time. It was heralded far and wide, even appearing on the magazine page of the AFRO-AMERICAN."

"The 'Le Mar Will Case,' as it was called, involved a three-hundred-thousand-dollar cash inheritance, with property and jewelry besides, which totalled an equal

amount. This fortune I was fortunate in saving and saw it placed into the hands of the rightful heirs, winning for myself a very handsome fee, along with their gratitude and friendship.

"Jean Le Mar, a Frenchman by birth, came to this country in his early manhood. He was a dealer in antiques. His firm did a large business among the wealthy, who paid fabulous prices. Le Mar became rich. All these years he posed as a bachelor, lived frugally, was never mixed up in any scandal among the feminine gender. He had poor health in his later years, however. So while in a despondent mood one day, he blew out his brains. The act was a fearful shock to the city.

"He left no will; that is, no legal document disposing of his wealth. His partner produced what he claimed was an agreement made between them, stating that whichever of them survived the other's death, that one should inherit the other's share. This paper was not legally drawn, neither was it witnessed.

"Naturally, there was a search made for heirs. Numerous were the claimants, all proved false in the course of time.

"Le Mar's partner pressed his claims, swearing he had never heard during the twenty years of

his close association and partnership, Le Mar mention marriage, or speak of having any living heirs or relatives.

"It was due to Mildred's fine memory more than anything else, that I was given the lead which led to victory. She recalled that there was a French girl of that name in college at the same time she was there, though not in the same class. I started a thorough investigation, following the various clues as they opened up, most assiduously and with increasing vigor. I was on the right track.

"I sent a detective to France, who secured copies of all the essential papers, properly certified and signed by the French authorities. These proved Le Mar's marriage to a brown West Indian; the birth of two children, a boy and a girl; the death of his widow the coming of the children to America. There had been no divorce.

"The presenting of these documents, together with the living heirs in person, clinched the verdict in my favor. We won.

"From the court house I hurried just as soon as I had been able to escape the handshakes and congratulations which came from the judge, lawyers, attendants, spectators and everybody. How I hurried the legal formalities and got away at last, after what seemed ages, comes back to me now.

"Free at last, I was on my way to Mildred with laurels of victory resting on my brow. I wanted to tell her that all hindrances were removed; that we could marry at once; that she could set the date as early as she pleased.

"It was not to be. "Boys, the hour of our victory struck also the first stroke of our defeat."

A knock came at the library door. Lawton ceased speaking, rose from his chair and opened it. His one servant stood with a well-filled tray.

"Bring it in, John," Lawton said, as he held the door wide. "Many thanks for remembering. But for you, my guests must think me a very poor host, or at least a stingy one."

John entered, placed the tray of viands on the library table, left the room, and returned with a box of cigars and matches.

After serving the gentlemen until each said "enough," he filled their glasses from a bottle of rare vintage, passed the cigars and lighted each in turn.

As he removed the tray of empty dishes, the attorney halted him by saying:

"John, you need not trouble any more tonight. Don't wait up. We three intend to make a night of it."

John bowed and replied: "Are you certain there is nothing further, Sir?"

"Well, you may bring in a bowl of cracked ice. That will be all, I think," the lawyer made answer.

The servant did this shortly after, then retired.

"I enjoyed that repast," remarked the physician, "How about you, Barton?"

"Immensely," the minister replied, "although I regretted the interruption of friend William's re-

Continued on Page Two